Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 1

Laleh Bakhtiar

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

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

Revised Edition

Introduction by Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

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The Year 1 of the Revelation

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

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOURCES

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

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

TERMINOLOGY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

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

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

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

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

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

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

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

*****

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

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

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

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

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sources and Instruments of Knowledge

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING•

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

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

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

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

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ISLAM AND THE WEST

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

PRELUDE

THE BEGINNING OF THE REVELATION

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

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

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

It is CE 610. Muhammad is forty years old.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE EARLIEST CONVERTS

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

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

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

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

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

THE PAUSE IN THE REVELATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is recorded in regard to Khadija:

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

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

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

WRAPPED IN A CLOAK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIGNS 96:1-96:5

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

COMMENTARY°

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 96:1-96:5

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

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

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

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

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

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

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENTARY°

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 68:1-68:4

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

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

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

THINK ABOUT PURPOSE

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

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

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

Student Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENTARY°

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

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

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

TIME FOR COMFORT IS OVER

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

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

A HEAVY WEIGHT TO CARRY

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 73:1-73:9

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

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

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

Questions for Classroom Discussion

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

Questions to Ask Yourself

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

Student Assessment

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

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

LESSON 4. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

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

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

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

COMMENTARY°

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

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

Summary of Quranic Signs 74:1-74:7

How are the signs directed towards the Prophet Muhammad?

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

Questions for Classroom Discussion

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

Questions to Ask Yourself

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

Student Assessment

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

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

INTERLUDE

THE FORMAL PRAYER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary°

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary Quranic Signs 1:1-1:7

Who is God, the Lord?

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

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

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

Questions for Classroom Discussion

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

Questions to Ask Yourself

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

Student Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

What information is being used?

Where did the information come from?

How can that information be assessed?

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

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

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

Commentary°

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 111:1-111:3

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

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

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

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

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK TO DISCIPLINE YOUR THINKING

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

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

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

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

EPILOGUE

THE QURAYSH CLANS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENTARY°

ARROGANCE AND INGRATITUDE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET?

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

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

How to Raise Questions

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

Questions for Classroom Discussion

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

Questions You Can Ask to Discipline Your Thinking

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

Student Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENTARY°

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

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

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

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

THE IMPORTANCE OF MORAL TRAITS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and often lands the innocent in trouble.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

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

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

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

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

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

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

Questions to Ask Yourself

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

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

What would it take for me to compromise my values?

Student Assessment

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

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

I understand how the Prophet could not compromise his faith.

CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

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

QURANIC CHAPTER 68: REMAINING SIGNS

SIGNS 68:34-68:52

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

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

Commentary°

Can They Be Equal?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Almighty then discloses the fighting plan against this little,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Quranic Signs

Who is God, the Lord?

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

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

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

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

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

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

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

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

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

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

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

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

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

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

Questions for Classroom Discussion

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

Questions to Ask Yourself

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

Student Assessment

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

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

Appendix 3. Critical Thinking Strategy

Making Assumptions, Prepositions, Taking for Granted •

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

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

THE UNGRATEFUL

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 73:10-73:19

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

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

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

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

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

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

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

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

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

Student Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENTARY°

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 74:6-74:31

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET?

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

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

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

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

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

Questions for Classroom Discussion

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

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

Questions to Ask Students

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

Student Assessment

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

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

CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY • EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

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

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

QURANIC CHAPTER 74: REMAINING SIGNS

SIGNS 74:32-74:56

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

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

Commentary°

A Look at the Universe

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

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

Individual Responsibility

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHO HEEDS THE REMINDER?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

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

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

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Ask questions that probe implications and consequences.

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

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

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

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

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

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

What consequences are likely to follow if people take these Quranic

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

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

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

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

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

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

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES TO THE TEXT

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

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

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

4. Ibn Hisham, Note 156.

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

6. Ibn Hisham, Note 156.

7. Ibn Hisham, Note 156.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOURCES

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

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

TERMINOLOGY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

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

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

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

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

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

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

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

*****

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

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

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

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

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

desires. (28:50)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING•

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ISLAM AND THE WEST

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW

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

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

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

PRELUDE

ABU BAKR ABD GUS FRIENDS BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

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

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

SAAD IBN ABI WAQQAS

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

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

ZUBAYR IBN AL-AWWAM

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

TALHAH IBN UBAYD ALLAH

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

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

Talhah asks: Who is Ahmad?

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

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

UBAYD IBN HARITH

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

UTHMAN IBN AFFAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abu Ubayda, subsequently a warrior of note

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

Lesson 7. Critical Thinking Strategy
Clarifying Issues or Conclusions •

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

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

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

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

COMMENTARY°

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

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

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

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

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

As the chapter is so short, the rhythm, images and expressions combine together to produce a very strong and lasting effect.

UPHEAVAL IN THE UNIVERSE

These signs (81:1-81:14) sketch a scene of great upheaval that envelops the whole universe. It is an event that reveals every guarded secret and leaves nothing hidden away. The Prophet is told that every person faces what he has put forward for the Day of Reckoning and Judgment. The great events mentioned indicate that the present familiar state of the universe, with its perfect harmony, measured movement, controlled relations, perfected by the Creator whose work is flawless, will suffer a complete break down. Its role will be finished. Along with all creation, it will move into a new predetermined phase of life, unlike anything known to us in this world.

The chapter aims to establish this idea of the inevitable upheaval in the hearts and minds of the believers unless a person establishes a

firm bond with the Truth of God, the Eternal, who never changes when everything else changes and disappears.

Pregnant Camels Ignored

The Arabic description of the camel: *And when the pregnant camels are ignored* (81:4) specifies that she is in her tenth month of pregnancy. When in this state, she is to the Arab his most valuable possession because she is about to add to his wealth a highly valued young camel, and to give him a great amount of milk which he and his family will share with the new-born animal. However, on that day, which will witness such overwhelming events, these priceless camels will be left without care, completely untended. The Arabs who were the first to be addressed by this sign never left such camels untended, except at times of the gravest of dangers.

The Arabic term used: *Caused to overflow* (81:6) may mean that the seas will be overfilled with water, from floods similar to those which characterized the early stages of life on earth. On the other hand, earthquakes and volcanoes may remove the barriers now separating the seas so that the water of one will flow into the other.

The pairing of souls: *And when the souls will be mated* (81:7) may mean the reunion of body and soul at the time of resurrection. It may also mean their grouping.

Girls Buried Alive

The value of human life must have sunk very low in 7th century Arabia for the next sign says: *And when the buried infant girl will be asked for which impiety she was slain.* (81:8-81:9). There existed a convention of burying young girls alive, for fear of shame or poverty. The Quran describes this practice in order to portray its horror and denounce it as a practice of tribal honor. The condemnation of this practice by the Quran is to destroy tribal honor and save humanity from sinking into the depths of animality.

In chapter 16, The Bee, we will read: *When any of them is given good tidings of a female, his face stayed as one that is clouded over and he chokes. He is secluded from the folk because of the dire tidings he was given. Will he hold it back with humiliation or will he trample it in the earth dust? Truly how evil is the judgment they give!* (16:58- 16:59)

And in Chapter 17: *And kill not your children in dread of want. We will provide for them and for you alone. Truly the killing of them has been a grave inequity.* (17:31)

But for now, this second year of the revelation, the sign underlies cultural practices that killed female children in an extremely cruel way.

They were buried alive! According to reports from those days, the Arabs used different ways of doing so. Some would leave the girl until she was six years of age. The father would then say to his wife to dress the girl in her best clothes and make her presentable because she would be visiting her prospective in-laws. He would have already dug a hole for her in the desert. When the girl got there, he would tell her that the hole is a well and then tell her to look down it. As she stood at the edge, he would push her into the hole and as she fell, he would throw sand over her and bury her.

In certain tribes when a pregnant woman was about to give birth, she would sit over a hole in the ground. When the baby was born she would first establish its sex. If it was a boy, she would take him home, and if it was a girl, she would throw her in the hole and bury her. If a father decided not to bury his daughter alive, he would bring her up in a condition of deprivation until she was old enough to tend sheep or cattle, giving her only clothes made of rough wool and making her do this type of work.

Those Arabs who did not kill their young daughters or send them to mind the flocks, had different methods of ill-treating women. If a man died, the head of the clan would throw his gown over the widow. This was a gesture of acquisition that meant that the widow could not marry anyone except the owner of the gown. If he was attracted to her, he would marry her, paying absolutely no regard to her feelings. If he did not marry her, he would keep her until she died so as to inherit any money or property she might leave behind.

PRE-QURANIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN

Such was the attitude of the society in Arabia towards women based on tribal honor. The Quran condemns this attitude and these practices. It forbids the murder of young girls and shows its abhorrent and horrifying nature. It is listed as one of the subjects of reckoning on the Day of Judgment. Here, the chapter mentions it as one of the great events which overwhelms the universe in total upheaval. We are told that the murdered girl will be questioned about her murder. Those listening to these words who had committed such heinous crimes may have wondered about their fate.

TRIBAL HONOR

The social order of tribal honor will never help women gain a respectable, dignified position. This had to be decreed by God. The way of life God has chosen for humanity secures a dignified position for both men and women who share the honor of having a measure of the divine spirit breathed into them equally.

QURANIC VALUES REPLACE TRIBAL HONOR

With the Quranic message, the idea of a female being a financial burden to her family is no longer of any consequence in determining her position and the respect she enjoys. Such considerations have no weight on the scales of heaven. Real weight belongs to the noble human soul when it maintains its relationship with God. In this men and women are equal.

OUR DEEDS MADE KNOWN

This: *And when the scrolls will be unfolded* (81:10) is a reference to the records of our deeds. That our deeds will be made known must have been caused some reflection on the part of those listening to this revelation.

This image: *And when the heaven is stripped off* (81:11) corresponds closely to the opening of our secrets. When the word 'heaven' is used, the first thoughts extend to the blue cover above our heads. Its stripping means the removal of that cover.

The last scene of that fearful day is portrayed by the next two signs: *And when hellfire will be caused to burn fiercely and when the Garden will be brought close.* (81:12-81:13) This is the first mention of hell in the Quranic message.

Where is hell? How does it burn? What fuel is used in lighting and feeding its fire? The only thing we know of it is that its *fuel is humanity and rocks.* (66:6) Its true nature and its fuel prior to that is part of God's knowledge. Heaven, on the other hand, is brought near to those who have been promised admission. They see it to be of easy access. Indeed, the expression here shows it is ready to receive its dwellers.

When all these great events take place throughout the universe, changing the status of all life, no one can entertain any doubt about what they have done in this present life, or what they have carried with them into the next life: *Every soul will know to what it was prone.* (81:14) In the midst of all these overwhelming events, every soul shall know for certain what sort of deeds it has brought and that it cannot change, omit from or add to what it has done.

The listeners learn that they will be separated from all that has been familiar to them, and from their world as a whole. Everything will undergone a total change except God. If a person turns to God, he will find that His support is forthcoming when the whole universe is overwhelmed by change. Thus ends the first part of this chapter, leaving us with a vivid impression of the universal upheaval on the Day of Resurrection.

A SPLENDID UNIVERSAL SCENE

The second part of the chapter opens with a form of oath using some very beautiful scenes of the universe. Essentially, this oath is made to assert the nature of revelation, the angel carrying it, and the Messenger receiving and delivering it to us, as well as people's attitudes to it, all in accordance with God's will: (81:15-81:29)

The stars referred to here are those which turn in their orbit, and are characterized by their swift movement and temporary disappearance. In translating the text we have to forego the metaphor used in Arabic which draws an analogy between these stars and the deer, *the ones who run,* as they run at great speed towards their homes, disappear for a while and then reappear at a different point. This metaphor adds considerable liveliness and beauty to the description of the movement of the stars, which echoes the fine rhythm of the expression.

Again, the rhythm of the Arabic sign gives a feeling of life, depicting the night as a living being: *And by the night when it swarmed.* The beauty of the Arabic expression is of surpassing excellence. The same applies to the next sign: *So no! I swear an oath by the stars that recede,* is indeed more effective in portraying dawn as alive. breathing: *And by the morning, when it sighed.*

Its breath is the spreading light and the life that begins to stir in everything. It is doubtful to many whether the Arabic language, with its inexhaustible wealth of imagery and vivid expression, can produce an image portraying dawn that can be considered equal to this Quranic image in aesthetic effect. After a fine night, one can almost feel that dawn is breathing.

Any person having a special appreciation of art and beauty will readily perceive that the divine words of the first four signs of this second part of the chapter constitute a precious gem of expression and description: *So no! I swear an oath by the stars that recede, by the ones that run, the setting stars and by the night when it swarmed and by the morning, when it sighed.* (81:15-81:18) This descriptive wealth adds power to human feelings as those listening and the rest of us respond to the natural phenomena to which the signs refer.

THE TWO MESSENGERS

As the Quran makes this brief, full-of-life description of these phenomena, it establishes a spiritual link between them and us, with the result that, as we listen or read, we feel the power which created these phenomena, and the truth which we are called upon to believe. This truth is then stated in a manner that fits in superbly with the general theme of the chapter: *The Quran is a saying from a generous*

Messenger. possessed of strength, with the Possessor of the Throne, secure, one who is obeyed and, again, trustworthy. (81:19-81:21) This Quran with its description of the Day of Judgment is the word of a noble and mighty messenger, Gabriel, the angel who delivered it to Muhammad. The chapter then gives a description of Muhammad. He is: *'generous'*, honored by God who says that he is *'possessed of strength'*, which suggests that considerable strength is required to carry and convey the Quran, *with the Possessor of the Throne, secure.* (81:20)

These qualities add up to a definite conclusion: The Quran is a generous, strong and exalted message and God takes special care of us. It is a manifestation of this care that He has chosen an angel of Gabriel's caliber to bring His revelations to God's chosen Prophet. As we reflect on this divine care we should feel humble. For we ourselves are worth very little in the kingdom of God, were it not for the care God takes of us and the honor He bestows on us.

There follows a description of Muhammad who conveys this revelation to humanity. The chapter seems to say to the ungrateful Quraysh: You have known Muhammad very well over a considerable length of time. He is your old, honest, trusted friend. Why, then, are you fabricating tales about him, when he has been telling you the simple truth which he has been entrusted to deliver to you: *And your companion is not one who is possessed. And, certainly, he saw him on the clear horizon. And he is not avaricious for the unseen, nor is it the saying of the accursed Satan. So where are you going? Truly, it is not but a Remembrance to the worlds.* (81:22-81:27)

They knew the Prophet perfectly well. They knew that he was a man of steady character, great sagacity and complete honesty. But in spite of all this they claimed that he was mad, and that he received his revelations from a satan. Some of them took this view as the basis for their sustained attack on the Prophet and his message.

Others did so out of amazement and wonder at the words revealed to him, which are unlike anything said or written by a human being. Their claim confirmed the traditional belief that each poet had a satan writing his poems, and each monk had a satan uncovering for him the secrets of the unknown world. They also believed that the satan might come into contact with people causing them to say some very strange things. They ignored the only valid explanation, that the Quran was revealed by God, the Lord of all the worlds.

The chapter counters this attitude by a reference to the surpassing beauty of God's creation, noticeable everywhere in the universe, and by portraying some universal scenes, as they appear, full of life. This method of reply suggests that the Quran comes from the same creative power that has endowed the universe with matchless beauty.

It also tells them about the two Messengers entrusted with the Quran, the one who brought it down and the one who delivered it to them, i.e. their own friend whom they knew to be sane, not mad.

The chapter tells the ungrateful that Muhammad has indeed seen the other noble and mighty angel messenger, Gabriel, with his own eyes, on a clear horizon where no confusion is possible. He is faithful to his trust and cannot be suspected of telling anything but the truth. After all, they have never associated him with anything dishonest *nor is it the saying of the accursed Satan.* (81:25) Satans, by nature, cannot provide such a straight forward and consistent code of conduct. Therefore, the signs ask disapprovingly: *So where are you going* (with your thoughts?) (81:26) How far can you err in your judgment? And where can you go away from the truth which stares you in the face wherever you go?

The Quran is *not but a Remembrance to the worlds.* (81:27) It reminds us of the nature of our existence, our origin and the nature of the universe around us. The reminder is to all men and women.

The Quran here declares the universal nature of its call right from the beginning in Makkah in the early year of the revelation, where it will be subjected to sustained and unabating persecution: *It is not but a Remembrance to the world to whoever among you willed to go straight. But you will not, unless God wills, the Lord of the worlds.*

The chapter then reminds us that it is up to every individual to choose whether to follow the straight path or not. Since God has granted everyone his or her free will, then every human being is responsible for himself: *To whoever among you willed to go straight.* (81:28) That is to say, *to go straight* is to follow God's guidance. All doubts have been dispelled, all excuses answered by this clear statement of all the relevant facts. The straight path has been indicated for everyone who wishes to be on it. Anyone who follows a different path shall, therefore, bear the responsibility for his or her actions.

The chapter concludes by stating that the operative will behind everything is the will of God: *But you will not, unless God wills, the Lord of the worlds.* (81:29) We notice that the Quran will make statements of this type whenever the will of human beings or creatures generally is mentioned. The reason for this is that the Quran wants to keep the fundamental concepts of the Quranic message absolutely clear. These include the fact that everything in the universe is subject to God's will. No one has a will that is independent from that of God. That He grants the human being free will is part of His own divine will, like everything else. The same applies to His granting the angels the ability to show complete and absolute obedience to Him and to carry out all His commandments.

This fundamental fact must be clearly understood by believers, so that they have a clear concept of absolute truth. When they acquire this concept they will turn to divine will for guidance and support, and regulate their affairs according to this will.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 81:1-81:29

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who will cause the Upheaval or the Darkening of the universe, mentioning a time the stars, the night and the morning, all witnessed daily events, will change from what it was then must bring a sense of awe to them. Who is this who swears oaths by parts of the universe beyond their control? Then they hear that the words are from a messenger-angel.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad is not possessed when he says that he saw the angel-messenger Gabriel on the clear horizon. Muhammad does not seek the unseen nor are his Quranic revelation the words of satanic forces.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Their pregnant camels, so vital to the livelihood of the small group of believers in Makkah at this time listening to the recitation (al-Quran means "The Recitation"), will be left unattended. The female children who have been buried alive will ask what she did to deserve her death. This horrendous crime calls those who hear the words to begin to question their social system of "tribal honor" and "my tribe right or wrong," a system and slogan that the Quranic message has been revealed to change. The listeners learn that their actions, recorded in their "scrolls" actually have consequences, a new thought in seventh century Arabia as well as *hellfire that will burn fiercely and the Garden that will be brought close."*

They hear that this is a message from a messenger-angel. They are familiar with angels whom they had been taught were idols worshipped by their fathers and their ancestors. The recitation then questions the minds of those who may have such thoughts about Muhammad. It asks: Where are you going with such thoughts? And then it answers: This recitation is but a remembrance to those who wish to follow the straight path-the path they had learned of in the preceding days, weeks or months: *Guide us on the straight path.* (1:6) Then comes the caveat: You may will to follow the straight path, but you will only succeed if God so wills. What would this mean? They (and we) are left to think and reflect on it. Could it mean that it is based on what God willed to show them of the straight path by means of positive instincts that He has implanted in them as well as through the Quranic revelations that He has revealed to His prophets, implying that the choice of following the straight path is open

to everyone who is willing to avail himself or herself of God's universal guidance?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

The following questions may help the students in understanding point of view, frame of reference, perspective.

Is the purpose of these signs clear?
What would someone who disagreed with this do?
The Quran tells the Prophet to ask how they know this?
What is the answer to the Quranic question (81:26): *So where are you going?*

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to clarify how the pre-Quranic Arabs buried their female children alive.

I was able to clearly understand how the Quranic message changed this inhumane practice.

LESSON 8. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept.

On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept. The class should clarify and analyse the purpose of the words and concepts in the Quranic signs below.

QURANIC CHAPTER 87: THE LOFTY (AL-AALI)
SIGNS 87:1-87:19

Makkah: *Glorify the Name of your Lord,*
The Lofty (87:1)
Who created and shaped (87:2)
and who ordained and, then, guided (87:3)
and who brought out the pasture (87:4)
then, made it dark colored refuse. (87:S)
We will make you recite and you will not forget (87:6)
but what God willed.
Truly, He knows the openly published
and whatever is hidden. (87:7)
And We will make easy for you an easing. (87:8)
So remind if a reminder profited them. (87:9)
Whoever dreads God will recollect, (87:10)
but the disappointed will scorn it (87:11)
even he who will roast in the great fire (87:12)
again. neither dying in it nor living. (87:13)
He, surely, prospered, he who purified himself. (87:14)
and remembered the Name of his Lord and invoked blessings. (87:15)
Nay! You hold this present life in greater favor, (87:16)
yet the world to come is better. and one that endures. (81:17)
Truly, this is in the previous scrolls, (87:18)
the scrolls of Abraham and Moses. (87:19)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter turns the whole universe into a temple whose four corners echo the praises and glorification of God, the Sublime: (87:1-87:5)

RHYTHM OF THE CHAPTER

The rhythm of the chapter. characterized by the long vowels with which each of its signs ends, imparts a feeling of the praises echoed everywhere in the universe.

GOOD NEWS FOR PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Chapter 87 brings Prophet Muhammad good news. As God charges him with the double task of delivering His message and warning people, He makes promises to him: (87:6-87:9) God takes upon Himself the responsibility of making His Messenger not forget anything of the Quran. He also promises that his path will be smoothed in all his affairs, whether they are personal or concerned with his message. This is certainly a great favor.

This Chapter 87 accurately includes the basic ingredients of the Quranic concept of life and existence: The Oneness of the Creator; the reality of divine revelation; and the certainty of the life to come with the reward and punishment it involves. The chapter also affirms that these basic principles have well-established roots in earlier divine messages: *Truly this is in the previous scrolls, the scrolls of Abraham and Moses.* (87:18-87:19)All this is in addition to the impression it imparts of the easy nature of the Quranic ideology, the Messenger who conveys it, and the nation it builds.

A FAVORITE CHAPTER OF THE PROPHET

It has been related on the authority of Ali, Muhammad's cousin and Companion, that Muhammad loved this chapter. It is reported that he used to recite this chapter and Chapter 88 in the Festival (*id*) prayers and also in Friday formal prayers. If one of the festivals fell on a Friday, Muhammad would be sure to recite these two chapters in the formal prayers.[8]

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 87:1-81:19

WHO IS GOD?

The signs give further explanation of who Muhammad's Lord is: The Lofty, the one who creates, shapes, ordains (decrees) and guides. God knows the manifest and the hidden.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

It is his Lord who will make him recite and he will not forget but what God willed that he forget. God commands the Prophet: Glorify the name of your Lord. God will make the task easy for Muhammad. Whereas in a previous revelation (74:2) he was told to stand up and warn, now he is told that he

is commanded to remind, if a reminder profited them. (87:9)

The message confirms that Muhammad was not possessed when he says that he saw the angel-messenger Gabriel on the clear horizon. Muhammad does not seek the unseen nor are they the words of satan.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The people are used to their friends and relatives (and often themselves) swearing oaths to this or that, but now to bear oaths being taken to the stars, the night and the morning, all witnessed daily events, it must bring a sense of awe to them. Who is this who swears oaths by parts of the universe beyond their control? Then they hear that the words are from a messenger-angel. They are familiar with angels whom they had been taught were idols worshipped by their fathers and their ancestors, but here the angel is revealing the recitation to their trustworthy Muhammad.

Again, the Quran attacks the Makkan social system of tribal honor by forbidding female children to be buried alive. This horrendous crime calls those who hear the words to begin to question their social system of tribal honor and my tribe right or wrong, a system and slogan that the Quranic message has been revealed to change. The listeners learn that their actions, recorded in their scrolls. actually have consequences, a new thought in seventh century Arabia as well as *hellfire that will burn fiercely and the Garden that will be brought close.*

Imagine those early followers hearing the concept for the first time confirming that the revelation is from God. And again, reference to God's will. Who are they who will profit from the reminder? The ones who dread God. It is they who will recollect. Those who are disappointed when being reminded will roast in a fire. They will neither be dying nor living. What state could this be, neither dying nor living? Who among them will prosper? Those who purify themselves, who remember the name of their Lord and who invoke blessings. The recitation then questions the minds of those who may have such thoughts saying: Muhammad is possessed: Where are you going with such thoughts? This recitation is but a remembrance to those who wish to follow the straight path—the path they had learned of in the preceding days, weeks or months: *Guide us on the straight path.* (1:6) Then comes the caveat: You may will to follow the straight path, but you will only succeed if God so wills. What would this mean? They (and we) are left to think and reflect on it.

Some prefer the life of this world, yet the life to come is better. It is one that is eternal. All of this was in the previous scrolls of Abraham and Moses. Do they know who Abraham and Moses were? Clearly they do as the Quraysh considered themselves to be the inheritors of Abraham. The Hashim Clan traces its lineage directly back to Elijah (Ilyas) and from there back to Adam. As for Moses, there were many Jewish tribes, particularly in the Madinah area, so the people of Makkah were familiar with both Abraham and Moses.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in their own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF THE WORDS•

Give examples of a recollection and the opposite of it.
Why would the Quranic message want to bring it to our attention?
What are the practical consequences of saying this?
How do we feel about it? Why?

When giving examples and discussing them, teachers should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once the class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

When clarifying a concept expressed by a phrase rather than a single word, discuss cases in which the phrase applies, instead of merely discussing the individual words.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I clarified the meaning of the phrase: *He knows the openly published and whatever is hidden* (87:7) and *We will make easy for you an easing*, being to move carefully, gradually or gently.

LESSON 9. CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT
BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief in the divine causality and the presence of moral order in the universe where people are judged according to the merit of their deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

They are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to alter a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first alter what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. Be God-conscious. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)[9]

HOW DOES ONE REACH BELIEF THROUGH REASON?

The human reception of the Quranic signs depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable either of comprehending the signs or of responding to their message. The connection or nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Quranic spirituality, wherein human intellect (cognition) and emotions (affect) are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth.

The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)[10]

PROOF OF BELIEF IN THE ONE GOD IS THROUGH PERFORMING GOOD DEEDS

ONENESS OR UNITY IN OUR INNER SELF*

Unity, as one of the human ideals, implies unity in our internal self.

That is, a coordination of our reason, will, and action. It requires disciplining our passions and lust. It also stands for the unity of profession and practice. Belief in God is the necessary prerequisite of moral life, but it should not be mere verbal acceptance: *Truly, We caused the Torah to descend wherein is guidance and light. The Prophets give judgment with it, those who submitted to God.for those who became Jews and the rabbis and learned Jewish scholars who committed to memory the Book of God and they had been witnesses to it.* (5:44)

It must be accompanied by good deeds: *But for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We place no burden on any soul beyond its capacity. Those will be the Companions of the Garden. They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (7:42)[11]

Performing good deeds implies an attitude of mind which is motivated by a complete submission to God's will: When his Lord said to him: Submit! He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds. (2:131)[12]

PERFORMING GOOD DEEDS INDICATES UNITY IN OUR SOCIETY*

The ideal of unity in our society demands that people should develop a healthy social organization which traverses the middle path of moderation, integrity, goodness and morality, avoiding all forms of extreme: *Thus, We made you a middle community that you be witnesses to humanity, and that the Messenger be a witness to you.* (2:143)

The God-conscious (*muttaqī*) are advised to get together and strive so that tumult, oppression, and mischief are removed from the face of the earth. *If you accomplish not allying with other believers, there will be persecution on the earth and the hateful sin of corruption.* (8:73)

Unity also implies that members of a national or ideological group should develop ties of intimate relationship among themselves so that the ideal of an organic whole may be realized in a broader context. The Quran says that all Muslims are brothers: *Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters, so make things right between your two brothers/sisters. Be God-conscious so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (49:10)

Have great love and affection among themselves: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* (48:29) No excuse should be allowed to stand in the way of doing good or making peace between different persons: *Make God not an obstacle with your sworn oaths to your being good, and being God-conscious, and making things right among humanity.* (2:224)

Every effort should be made to bring about conciliation between people: *No good is there in most of their conspiring secretly, but for him who commanded charity or one who is honorable or makes things right between humanity. And whoever accomplishes that—looking for the goodwill*

of God—then We will give him a sublime compensation. (4:114) Yet we should co-operate in God-consciousness, not in sin and rancor.[13] We should be kind to those in need, to neighbors, and to the wayfarers.[14]

It is to see our society through reasoned judgment. That is, any belief or conclusion reached on the basis of careful thought and reflection, distinguished from mere or unreasoned opinion on the one hand, and from sheer fact on the other. Few people have a clear sense of which of their beliefs are based on reasoned judgment (*furqan*) and which on mere opinion.•

FAMILY UNITY*

This ideal of unity also implies peace and harmony among members of a family. A woman is a mate for man so that both may dwell in tranquillity with an attitude of mutual love and kindness;[15] Each is like a garment for the other.[16] For mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection. It is the duty of a man and woman to live with each other on a footing of kindness and equity.

UNITY WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS*

This attitude of toleration is to be cultivated in our relation to people of other faiths. The Quran aims at establishing a peaceful social atmosphere where people belonging to other faiths can enjoy freedom of conscience and worship: *There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable.* (2:256)

The believers are urged to purposefully rise and fight against the oppressors so that monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure may not be pulled down. *Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. Truly, Powerful is God to help them, those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him.* (22:39-22:40)

It unreservedly praises some of the people of the Book *for their faith: You had been the best community that was brought out for humanity. You command to that which is honorable and prohibit that which is unlawful and believe in God. If the People of the Book believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are the ones who believe* .... (3: 110)

It is as a consequence of this attitude of tolerance that according to the Quran all those who believe in God and the Last Day and practice God-

consciousness, whether they are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians or Sabaeans, shall get their reward from their Lord: *Truly those who have believed and those who have become Jews and the Christians and the Sabeans, whoever has believed in God and the last Day and is one who acted in accord with morality, then for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:62) *And, Truly, those who believed and those who became Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians and those who ascribed partner—truly, God will distinguish between them on the Day of Resurrection.* (22:17)[17]

The Quran gives an open invitation to the people of the Book to come together and work conjointly for the establishment of peace and social harmony based on the idea of the unity of God. *Say: O People of the Book! Approach now to a word common between us and between you that we worship none but God and ascribe nothing as partners with Him, that none of us take others to ourselves as lords besides God.* (3:64)

Unity of Humanity*

Above all, this ideal of unity leads to the conception of unity of the whole of humanity. Humanity was created from a single pair of a male and a female is and from a single breath of life.[18] All people are equal members of the human community. The only distinction recognized by the Quran is based on the degree of God-consciousness possessed by people: *O humanity! Truly, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and types that you recognize one another. Truly, the most generous of you with God is the most devout. Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* (49:13)

Quranic Chapter 92: The Night (al-Layl)

Signs 92:1-92:21

Makkah: *By the nighttime when it overcomes,* (92:1)
by the daytime when it self-disclosed, (92:2)
by Him Who created the male and the female, (92:3)
truly, your endeavoring is diverse. (92:4)
As for him who gave and was God-conscious (92:5)
and established the fairer as true, (92:6)
We will make easy for him the easing. (92:7)
And as for him who was a miser and was self-sufficient (92:8)
and denied the fairer, (92:9)
We will make falling into difficulty easy for him. (92:10)
And his wealth will not avail him when he succumbed. (92:11)
Truly, guidance is from Us (92:12)

and, truly, to Us belongs the last and the first. (92:13)
I warned you of a fire that blazes fiercely. (92:14)
It roasts none but the vile (92:15)
who denied and turned away. (92:16)
But the devout will be caused to turn aside from it. (92:17)
He who gives of his wealth to purify himself, (92:18)
and with him there is none for which recompense is expected to be given for divine blessing. (92:19)
but looking for the Countenance of his Lord, The Lofty, (92:20)
he will be well-pleased. (92:21)

COMMENTARY°

Within a framework of scenes taken from the universe and human nature, this chapter states emphatically the basic facts of action and reward.

The subject matter of the chapter, i.e. action and reward, is by nature double directional, so the framework chosen for it at the beginning of the chapter is of dual coloring. It is based on contrasting aspects in the creation of we human beings and the universe: (92:1-3) This is one form of artistic harmony used extensively in the Quran.

A JOURNEY WITH DIVERGENT ENDS

God swears by these contrasting aspects of the universe and of the creation of the human being and constitution that the striving of human beings is diverse. Since the roads they follow lead to different ends, their rewards are also diverse. Good is not the same as evil; following right guidance is unlike wrong-doing; and righteousness is different from corruption. Generosity and God-consciousness are unlike hoarding and conceit. The faithful are totally different from those devoid of faith. Variance of ways necessitates variance of destinations: (92:4-92:11)

These endeavors: *Truly, your endeavoring is diverse* (92:4), vary in essence, motives, directions and results. People have diverse temperaments, environments, concepts and concerns, so much so that every person seems to be a distinct world unto himself living in his own, special planet.

This is a fact, but along with it there is another general fact that applies to all beings and their different worlds. It groups them into two distinct classes and two contrasting positions. It assigns to each its distinctive label: *As for him who gave and was God-conscious and established the fairer as true, We will make easy for him the easing* (92:5-92:7) and another: *And as for him who was a miser and*

was selfsufficient and denied the fairer ... (92:8-92:9)

But as for him who is a miser and deems himself self-sufficient, and rejects the truth of the ultimate good: *We will make falling into difficulty easy for him. And his wealth will not avail him when he succumbed.* (92:10-92:11)

He who sacrifices nothing of himself or his wealth, professes that he is in no need of His Lord or His guidance and the ungrateful in His message and religion, makes himself vulnerable to evil. *And his wealth will not avail him when he succumbed.* (92:11) Facilitating evil and sin is the same as facilitating the way to affliction, even though the sinful may be successful and prosperous in this life. For is there any affliction worse than hell? Indeed, hell is affliction itself.

AND DIFFERENT ENDS

The second part states the fate of each group. It emphasizes firstly that the end and reward of each group is fair and inevitable, for guidance has been provided and warnings have been issued: (92:12-92:21)

One aspect of God's grace and mercy to His servants is that He has taken it upon Himself to provide clear guidance that is readily acceptable to human nature, and to explain it as well through His messages and messengers, and by means of the signs He has provided. Thus, no one has a valid argument for deviation, and no one will suffer injustice: *Truly, guidance is from Us.* (92:12) Then follows a straightforward statement of the essence of power which has control over us and everything around us, from which we can have no shelter: *And, truly. to Us belongs the last and the first.* (92:I3)

By way of elaboration on the two facts just mentioned, namely, God's provision of guidance and that to Him belongs this life and the hereafter, i.e. the realms of action and reward, there is a reminder to us that He has given clear warning to us all: *I warned you of a fire that blazes fiercely.* (92:14) It is only the most wretched of humanity who are thrown in this fire. Indeed there is no wretchedness worse than suffering in hell: *It roasts none but the vile* (92: I5) We then have a definition of such a wretched person: *who denied and turned away.* (92:16) He denies this message and turns away from divine guidance. He does not answer his Lord's beckoning so that He may guide him as He has promised any who come towards Him with an open mind.

A person who fears God will be the happiest: *But the devout will be caused to turn aside from it* (92:17), in contrast to the most hapless wretch. The chapter similarly gives a definition of such a person: *He who gives of his wealth to purify himself.* (92:18) He has no vain mo-

tive or need to satisfy any snobbery. He spends it voluntarily not out of any indebtedness, seeking gratitude from no one. His only objective is the pleasure of his Lord: *And with him there is none for which recompense is expected to be given for divine blessing. but looking for the Countenance of his Lord, The Lofty.* (92:19-92:20)

What can a person expect in return for spending his money in self-purification, and for seeking the pleasure of his Lord? The reward which the Quran states is indeed surprising, and very unfamiliar: *He* (God) *will be well-pleased.* (92:21)

Questions to Ask Students

What is your understanding of inner Unity? Of Social Unity?
Of Family Unity?
Of Unity with People of Other Faiths? Of the Unity of Humanity?
What are the Quranic arguments for each kind of unity?
Have any of you experienced this sense of Unity for yourselves?

Obstacle to Unity: Irrationality

Irrationality is defined as:

1. Lacking the power to reason.
2. Contrary to reason or logic.
3. Senseless, absurd.

Irrational, uncritical thinkers have failed to develop the ability or power to reason well. Their beliefs and practices, then, are often contrary to reason and logic, and are sometimes senseless or absurd.

If you find that you continually conclude that a rational person would b just as you behaved you are probably engaging in self-deception.

Summary of Quranic Signs 92:1-92:21

Who is God?

The chapter opens with God giving an oath by the nighttime and the daytime that it is He who created the male and the female, each with endeavors that are diverse. Guidance is from God and to God belongs the East and the West.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

Those who give are God-conscious, ones who established what is fairer as being that which is true. While things may be made easy for members of the community, their wealth will not help them at all.

For the miser who feels he is self-sufficient and denies what is fair, he

will easily fall into difficulty. The individuals in the community are warned of a blazing fire that roars with those who deny and turn away.

It will be other than this for those who are devout. Their good deeds will turn them away from the fire. They are the ones who give of their wealth to purify themselves without expecting anything in return. They give simply to be in the Presence of God, their Lord. They are the ones who will be well-pleased.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

Under what circumstances do you think with a bias in favor of yourself?
Did you ever become irritable over small things?
Did you do or say anything "irrational" to get your way?
Did you try to impose your will upon others?
Did you ever fail to speak your mind when you felt strongly about something and then later feel resentment?
What would a rational person feel in this or that situation?
What would a rational person do?
How does that compare with what I want to do?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized the importance of belief and actions, that my belief is manifested through my actions.

Lesson 10: Critical Thinking Moral Trait

Definitiveness (to be precise)

Definitiveness indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is precision a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 89: The Dawn (al-Fajr)

Signs 89:1-89:30

Makkah: *By the dawn* (89:1)
and the ten nights, (89:2)
by the even number and the odd number (89:3)
and at night when it sets out. (89:4)
Is there not in that an oath to be sworn for a possessor of intelligence? (89:5)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:6)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:7)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:8)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:9)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:10)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:11)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:12)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:13)
Then, as for the human being, when his Lord tested him (89:14)
and honored him and lauded him, he says:
My Lord honored me. (89:15)
But whenever He tested him and constricted his provision for him, he says: My Lord despised me. (89:16)
No indeed! Nay! You honor not the orphan (89:17)
and you encouraged not one another
about food for the needy (89:18)
and you consume the inheritance, a greedy consuming, (89:19)
and you love wealth with an ardent cherishing. (89:20)
No indeed! When the earth will be ground to powder,
ground to powder, ground to powder, (89:21)
and your Lord will draw near, and the angels,
ranged in rows, (89:22)

on the Day hell is brought about.
On that Day the human being will recollect.
And how will the reminder be for him? (89:23)
He will say: O would that I had put forward from this life
for the world to come! (89:24)
Then, on that Day. He will punish no one the like
of His punishment. (89:25)
And no one will bind as His restraints. (89:26)
O soul, one that is at peace! (89:27)
Return to your Lord, one that is well-pleasing, well-pleased: (89:28)
Enter you among My servants (89:29)
and you enter My Garden! (89:30)

COMMENTARY°

The present chapter follows, in general, the line of this part of the Quran, inviting the human heart to faith, urging the human being to awake, meditate and follow the path of God-consciousness.

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

It uses different kinds of emphasis, connotation and rhythm, but constitutes, nevertheless, a single harmonious piece of music, varying in tones but maintaining the same cadence. Some of its scenes impart a touch of quiet beauty and a light, pleasant rhythm. This is particularly evident in its opening, which describes certain charming aspects of the universe and provides at the same time an aura of worship and prayer: *By the dawn and the ten nights, by the even number and the odd number and at night when it sets out.* (89:1-89:4)

Other scenes are tense and dramatic in both what they describe and in their music, like this violent, frightening picture: (89:21-89:26) Some of the portraits drawn in the chapter are pleasing, gentle and reassuring, striking perfect harmony between subject matter and rhythm. This is especially true of its ending: *O soul, one that is at peace! Return to your Lord, one that is well-pleasing, well-pleased: Enter you among My servants and you enter My Garden!* (89:27-89:30)

We also have an outline of some human concepts and values that are at variance with faith. This part has its own style and rhythm: (89:15-89:16)[19]

A refutation of these erroneous concepts and values is provided through an exposition of the human conditions which give rise to them. Here we have two kinds of style and rhythm: (89:17-89:20)

It is clear that the latter style and rhythm serves as a bridge between the statement of erroneous human ways and that which explains their inevitable attendant fate. These signs are immediately followed

by a picture of the earth as it is leveled.

This brief overview reveals to us the numerous colors of the scenes described and explains the change of meter and rhyme according to the change of scenes. The chapter is indeed an excellent example of an exceptionally beautiful style which is varied and, at the same time, harmonious.

In Makkah, the Quranic message faced this common urge to accumulate wealth by every possible means. The weak position of orphans, and orphan girls in particular, tempted many to deprive orphans of their inheritance in different ways. The ardent love of wealth, the craving to accumulate it through usury and other means, isa distinctive feature of Makkan tribal society as it is a distinctive feature of all societies based on tribal honor at all times.

These few signs do not merely expose the true nature of such an attitude. They also condemn it and urge its discontinuation. Condemnation is evident in the repetition noted in these signs, their rhythm and meter. *And you consume the inheritance, a greedy consuming, and you love wealth with an ardent cherishing.* (89:19-89:20)

THE FATEFUL DAY

Once their erroneous concept of the trial with wealth and poverty is outlined, and their vile attitude is exposed there follows a stern warning about the Day of Judgment which comes after the result of the test is known. Here the rhythm is very powerful: (89:21-89:26)

It is a tender, compassionate and reassuring address: *O soul, one that is at peace!* (89:27) It speaks of freedom and ease, after the earlier reference to chains and affliction: *Return to your Lord, one that is wellpleasing. well-pleased:* (89:28) After your alienation on earth and your separation from the one you belong to, *return now to your Lord* with whom you have strong ties: *Well pleased, well pleasing: Return to your Lord, one that is well-pleasing, well-pleased:* (89:28) It is a gentle address that spreads compassion and satisfaction.

The believer's soul is at peace with its Lord, certain of its way, confident of its fate. It is a soul satisfied in all eventualities, happiness or affliction, wealth or poverty. It entertains no doubts; it is free from transgressions.The gentle music adds a feeling of intimacy and peace. The majestic face of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, with all His splendor looks on from above. *Enter you among My servants and you enter My Garden!* (89:29-89:30)

Summary of Quranic Signs 89:1-89:30

Who is God?

In this section, the people hear God swearing an oath by the dawn and the nights, by the odd number and the even. It then presents a rhetorical question: Will one who has intelligence not understand the meaning of these oaths and the truth of them? On the day of the Upheaval, He will punish those who did not heed the Prophet's warning and He will bind and restrain them.

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

When the Upheaval comes, the Prophet's Lord will draw near with the angels and hell will be brought about. Muhammad will return to His Lord well-pleasing, well-pleased and he receives the commands: *Return* and *Enter*: enter among God's servants, enter God's Garden, Paradise.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

That Day those who have not heeded the words of the Quranic message will recollect and ask themselves: Why did I not put forward from this life for the world to come?

The early believers hear: When God honors them and praises them, they acknowledge His existence and His presence, but when He tests them, they feel despair. Why would this feeling arise in some of them? Have they not honored the orphan and encouraged one another to feed the poor? Have they consumed the inheritance of an orphan greedily as if it belonged to them because they love wealth? The soul of those who continue to praise God, even when being tested, of those who honor the orphan and feed the hungry, of those who love God and humanity more than wealth, will be at peace.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask the Students

Could you be more specific in explaining what these signs mean to you?
Could you give more details about your understanding?
Could you be more precise?
How would you answer the Quranic questions: *Is there not in that an oath to be sworn for a possessor of intelligence?*(89:5) *And how will the reminder be for him?* (89:23)

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself! Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not de-

veloped any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that the Quranic message contains some signs that are precise.
I looked for interconnections between these various Quranic signs.
I realized the interconnectedness of ideas in these signs.
I did not memorize the signs and repeat them like a parrot does, but I studied them as a detective would, relating new things I learned to things that I previously knew.

Lesson 11. Critical Thinking Strategy
Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. In other words, the Quranic message advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of Book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of Prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[20]

Quranic Chapter 93: The Forenoon (al-Duha)
Signs 93:1-93:11

Makkah: *By the forenoon* (93:1)
and by the night when it brooded, (93:2)
your Lord deserted you not, nor is He in hatred of you. (93:3)
Truly, the last will be better for you
than the first. (93:4)
And your Lord will give to you.
Then, you will be well-pleased. (93:5)
Found He you not an orphan and He gave you refuge? (93:6)
And found He you one who goes astray,
then, He guided you? (93:7)
And He found you one who wants, then, He enriched you? (93:8)
So as for the orphan, oppress him not. (93:9)
And as for one who begs, scold him not. (93:10)
And as for the divine blessing of your Lord, divulge it! (93:11)

COMMENTARY°

Chapter 93 was revealed and it came as a river of compassion, mercy, hope, comfort and reassurance. (93:3-8) Do you not see the proof of all this in your own life? Do you not feel it in your heart? Do you not observe it in your world? (93:3) Never was His mercy taken away from you and nor will it be. Surely the life to come will be better for you than this present life: (93:4) And there will be much more: And, certainly, in time your Lord will be bounteous to you and you will be well pleased: (93:5)

This statement is given in the framework of a universal phenomenon: *By the forenoon and by the night when it brooded,* (93:1-93:2) The expression spreads an air of affection, kindliness and complete satisfaction: (93:3-93:8) Such tenderness, mercy, satisfaction and solace are all felt in the sweet and soothing words which softly thread along the chapter echoing the morning hours and still night, the times most conducive to clarity. During these periods one's reflections flow like a stream, and the human soul is best able to communicate with the universe and its Creator. The scene drawn here is one of perfect beauty. Such perfection is divine, unparalleled and inimitable.

God takes the opportunity of mentioning the Prophet's earlier orphanhood, error and poverty in order to instruct him, and all Muslims, to protect every orphan, be charitable to every beggar, and to speak of the great favors God has bestowed on them. The first and most important of these is having been guided to the Quranic message: (93:9- 93:11)

As we have frequently mentioned, these instructions reflect the needs of the day, in that greedy and materialistic society in which the weak, who could not defend their own rights, were not catered for. The Quran was revealed to reform that society with God's laws which establish equity, justice and goodwill. Speaking of God's bounties, especially those of guidance and faith, expresses gratitude to Him who has given us all that we have. It is the recipient's practical manifestation of thanks.

The chapter is dedicated in its entirety to the Prophet. It isa message from his Lord which touches his heart with pleasure, joy, tranquillity and contentment. All-in-all, it proffers mercy and compassion to his restless soul and suffering heart.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 93:1-93:11

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath by the forenoon and by the night when it covers with darkness. events that those who see it can accept as the Truth. It is God who

created the forenoon and causes the night to bring darkness.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Most of the passage relates directly to Muhammad as the revelation uses the second person singular pronoun. God has not deserted him nor does God hate him and the last will be better for him than the first. His Lord will give to him so that Muhammad will be well-pleased. The Quranic message then asks him: Did God not find that you an orphan and He gave you refuge? Did He not find you one who goes astray and guided you? Did He not find Muhammad in need and He enriched him? Now, as a result Muhammad is commanded to divulge, disclose, proclaim, broadcast the Word of the divine blessing of his Lord.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

As God in truth has supported and protected Muhammad, so the rest of humanity must not oppress the orphan nor scold the beggar.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

What does this passage say? What does it imply?
Assume? Is it clear? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized the truth in the Quranic questions in this section:
The Prophet was an orphan and God gave him refuge with his grandfather and later his paternal uncle.
The Prophet was looking for answers to the injustices he saw in the tribal society into which he was born and God guided him.
The Prophet had been in a state of spiritual need and the Quran enriched him with its message of compassion, mercy and justice.

LESSON 12. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to understand how the Quran raises questions.

QURANIC CHAPTER 94: THE EXPANSION (AL-INSHIRAH)
SIGNS 94:1-94:8

Makkah: *Expand We not your breast* (94:1)
and lifted from you the heavy loaded burden, (94:2)
that weighed heavily on your back? (94:3)
Exalted We not your remembrance? (94:4)
So, truly, with hardship, ease. (94:5)
Truly, with hardship, ease. (94:6)
When you had finished your duties,
then, work on supplication, (94:7)
and quest your Lord. (94:8)

COMMENTARY°

Here the feelings of sympathy and an atmosphere of delightful, friendly discourse abound. It portrays the divine care Muhammad enjoys and explains the measures taken out of concern for him. The chapter also gives the good news of forthcoming relief, points out to Muhammad the secret of ease, and emphasizes his strong ties with God.

These signs: *Expand We not your breast and lifted from you the heavy loaded burden, that weighed heavily on your back? Exalted We not your remembrance?* suggest that Muhammad is troubled for some reason concerning the message with which he had been entrusted and the obstacles in its way. These signs also suggest that the difficulties facing his mission weighed heavily on his heart, making him feel the need for help and backing. Therefore, this comforting address.

And lifted from you the heavy loaded burden, that weighed heavily on your back? (94:2-94:3) that it almost broke your back, but We relieved you of that. Relief took the form of giving your heart a lift so that you might feel your mission easier and your burden not so hard to shoulder. Do you not feel it to be lighter after We opened up your heart? *Exalted We not your remembrance?* (94:4) God addresses His beloved Messenger kindly. He comforts and reassures him, explaining to him how He has given him unceasing ease: *So, truly, with hardship, ease. Truly. with hardship, ease.* (94:5- 94:6)

Summary of Quranic Signs 94:1-94:8

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

These signs (94:1-94:8) refer directly to Muhammad and offer him comfort and reassurance. The signs begin with the question: Have We not opened up your spiritual heart, lifted from you the heavy burden that rested upon you by raising high your reputation among the people? Did We not exalt your remembrance among the people? The message then repeats twice for emphasis that hardship is followed by ease. It commands Muhammad, when he has finished his work, to trun his attention to his Lord, seeking the long and arduous search for his Lord.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Students Ask Themselves

What is the key question in this Quranic message?
How does the Quranic message reply to its own question?
Details are very important. Who are ones who deny this way of life?

Critical thinkers learn to be skilled at analyzing questions to determine what, precisely, it is asking and how to go about rationally responding to it.

Reminder to Students Regarding Questioning the Above Sign.

What are the questions we are asked?
What are the questions we are not asked?
What questions did you ask?
Should you have asked?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to:
Formulate a question in a clear and relevant way
Choose from among alternative expressions
Discuss the advantages of different types of the question at issue

Lesson 13. Critical Thinking Strategy
Questioning Deeply: Raising and Pursuing Significant Questions•

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah),* critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a huger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge through Quranic signs such as 103:1-103:3.

Quranic Chapter 103: By Time (al-Asr)
Signs 103:1-103:3

Makkah: *By time through the ages,* (103:1)
truly, the human being is, surely. in a loss (103:2)
but those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality,
and counseled one another to The Truth,
and counseled one another to having patience. (103:3)

Commentary°

This very short chapter outlines a complete system for human life based on the Quranic viewpoint. It defines, in the clearest and most concise form, the basic concept of faith in the context of its comprehensive reality. In a few words the whole Quranic constitution is covered and in fact, the Community is described in its essential qualities and message in one sign only, the last. Such is the clear and most expressive style of which only God is capable.

Whenever two Companions of God's Messenger were about to depart from each other, they would recite this chapter, after which they would shake hands. This was indicative of a pledge to accept this doctrine fully, to preserve this faith, piety and a willingness to counsel each other to follow the truth and to persevere in the face of adversity. It was a mutual compact to remain good elements in a Quranic society established according to that doctrine and to preserve the foundation of this society.[21]

Summary of Quranic Signs 103:1-103:3

Who is God?

God swears an oath by time as it has appeared through the ages.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Human beings are at a loss except those who believe. A sign of them being believers is that they act in accordance with morality and counsel one another to patience.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Seek Quranic examples and analogies to these signs.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of those who are unjust to themselves.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself! Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I routinely ask questions to fill in the missing pieces in my learning.
I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

Lesson 14. Critical Thinking Strategy
Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations•

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

Quranic Chapter 100: The Chargers (al-Adiyat)
Signs 100:1-100:11

Makkah: *By the chargers, panting,* (100:1)
by ones who strike a fire, striking fire, (100:2)
by the ones who are raiders in the morning, (100:3)
then, they plowed it to a trail of dust, (100:4)
and they penetrated the center with it, a multitude. (100:5)
Truly, the human being is unthankful to his Lord. (100:6)
And, truly, he is a witness to that. (100:7)
And he is more severe in the cherishing of good. (100:8)
Knows he not that when all that is in the graves
will be scattered about (100:9)
and will be shown forth what is in the breasts? (100:10)
Truly, their Lord on that Day is Aware of them. (100:11)

Commentary°

The Rhythm of the Signs

This chapter is presented in rapid and violent strokes. The text moves swiftly from one scene to another. As we come to the last sign, everything—the verbal expressions, connotations, subject matter and rhythm-settle down in a manner similar to that of a swift horse reaching the finishing line.

The chapter begins with a scene of war steeds running, snorting, striking sparks of tire with their hoofs, launching a raid at dawn and blazing a trail of dust. cleaving suddenly into the center of the enemies' camp, taking them by surprise and striking terror and fear in their hearts.

Then follows a picture of the human soul: A scene of ingratitude, ignobleness, greed and extreme miserliness. Immediately after that there is a description of graves laid open and their contents scattered, and the secrets of hearts poured out. Finally the trail of dust, ingratitude and miserliness, the contents of graves and

dragged out secrets all come to the same end. They come to God and settle down: *Truly, their lord on that Day is Aware of them.* (100:11)

The rhythm of the chapter is robust and thunderous, and thus sits well with the dusty and clamorous atmosphere generated by the upturned graves and the secrets violently pulled out of people's breasts. These characteristics of the rhythm are also appropriate to the picture of ingratitude, thanklessness and extreme miserliness. The framework for this picture is provided by a dusty and tumultuous stampede of horses racing and thundering. Thus the frame and the picture are in perfect harmony with each other.

The final touch in the chapter provides the cure for ingratitude, greed and miserliness. It portrays the scene of resurrection in a way that makes a person shudder, and puts his love for wealth and indulgence in worldly riches out of his mind, unshackling his soul and setting it free from earthly attachments: (100:9-100:11)

It is a violent and frightening scene in which we witness the scattering about of the contents of the graves and the bringing out of closely-guarded secrets. The Arabic terms used here for scattering and pulling are very forceful, suggesting an atmosphere of violence and force.

Does he not know what happens when this will take place? Mere awareness of all this is enough to inspire a person to seek an answer and explore every avenue in search of it. For it finally rests where every matter and destiny is settled: *Truly, their Lord on that Day is Aware of them.* (100:11)

So to their Lord is their end. On that day He shows that He knows them and all their affairs and secrets. God certainly knows everything at all times and in all conditions, but knowledge of "that day" has the effect of drawing their attention. It is a knowledge which necessitates reckoning and reward. This implicit meaning is the one underlined here. All in all this chapter is a swift, vehement and breathless piece, with a sudden end of meaning, expression and rhythm all at the same time.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 100:1-100:11

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath by horses at war, running, snorting, striking sparks of fire with their hoofs, launching raids at dawn, blazing a trail of dust, arriving suddenly in the center of an enemy's camp, striking them with terror and fear.

How are the signs directed to the Community?

Those who hear this are warned that they can be ungrateful to their Lord. As they are intense lovers of what they see as good-wealth and material things—they themselves will bear witness to their ingratitude. Do they not realize and recall that whatever remains of us in our graves will be scattered about? What they have done in their lives will be shown forth. Their Lord will be aware of all.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

What does this passage say? What does it imply?
Assume? Is it clear? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I learned to question my interpretation of a situation.
I listened to the Arabic recitation of this chapter and heard the rhythm described by the commentator.

LESSON 15. CRITICAL MORAL TRAIT

GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)•

The God-consciousness practiced by the Prophet is the whole pursuit of a person's principles or standards of behavior, judgment of what is important in life, moral code, code of behavior and avoidance of the unethical in general. It is designated by the Quran as *taqwa*. It is dependent on and is the result of faith in God: *O humanity! Worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you so that perhaps you will be God-conscious.* (2:21)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction[22] and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life,[23•] in sacrifice,[24] in different aspects of social life,[25] and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations.

To be God-conscious *(muttaqi)* is to believe in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Books, and the Messengers. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in formal prayers, and to pay the purifying alms *(zakat);* to fulfil the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular formal prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility. Critical thinkers recognize that there is a limit of their knowledge. They are sensitive to their being self-centered and egocentric as they know that this will only increase their self-deception.They are aware of bias and prejudice

in their views. The basis of humility is to be able to avoid claiming to know more than they actually know.

The presence of humility implies a lack of arrogance, conceit or pretentiousness as well as implying that we have insight into the basis for our beliefs. Students learn to know what evidence they have, how they came to believe something and what additional evidence they would need. This indicates that as Quranic critical thinkers they know what they know as well as what they do not know.

Humility is suspending judgment and having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including a sensitivity to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice, and limitations of one's viewpoint. Humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.

And of the servants of God the most gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, *'Peace';* those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrating and standing; those who, when they spend, are not extravagant nor miserly, but hold a just balance between these two extremes; those who invoke not, with God, any other god, nor slay such life as God has made sacred, except for just cause, nor commit fornication; those who witness no falsehood, and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable avoidance; those who, when they are admonished with the signs of their Lord, do not show indifference to them like the deaf or the blind; and those who pray: Our Lord! give us the grace to lead the God-conscious.[26]

In the Quranic context, humility is fostered through the concept of repentance. Though the human being is by nature after the pattern of God's nature[27] and, therefore, capable of approximating to the ideal embodied in the most beautiful names,[28] yet being prone to different weaknesses[29] he is often led to wrong his soul in spite of his best efforts to follow moral discipline.[30]

Quranic Chapter 108: The Abundance (al-Kawthar)

Signs 108:1-108:3

Makkah: *Truly, We gave you the abundance.* (108:1)
So invoke blessings for your Lord and make sacrifice. (108:2)
Truly, the one who detests you,
he is the one who is cut off. (108:3)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter exclusively concerns Muhammad, seeking to cheer him up and assure him of happier prospects in his struggle. In it God threatens his enemies with destruction while directing Muhammad to the path of giving thanks.

The chapter represents a glimpse of Muhammad's life and the course of his mission at the beginning of the revelation at Makkah. It deals with the plots and insults directed and to be continued to be directed against Muhammad and the divine message he conveys. The chapter is an example of God's protection of His servant, Muhammad, and the few who followed him and believed in God. It is an instance of God's direct support to the believers in their struggle, supplying them with fortitude, restraint and promise, while threatening a terrible fate on their antagonists.

In this way, the chapter symbolizes the reality of guidance, goodness and faith on the one hand and that of error, evil and disbelief on the other; the former category is one of abundance, profusion and expansive goodness, the latter one of scantiness, shrinking resources and annihilation.

Among the people of the ungrateful, the Arab tribe which controlled Makkah, there are some impudent folk who view Muhammad and his mission with no small degree of antagonism. They say about Muhammad that he is a man with no posterity, referring to the early death of his son. One of them once remarked: Do not be bothered with him; he will die without descendants and that will be the end of his mission.

Such a trivial and cunning taunt has a wide impact on the Arab society of the time, which set great store by sons. Such taunting delights Muhammad's enemies and undoubtedly this is a source of depression and irritation to his noble heart. This chapter is therefore revealed to comfort Muhammad and assure him of the abiding and profuse goodness which God has chosen for him and of the deprivation and loss awaiting his persecutors.

This chapter forecasts the great abundances to be given to the Prophet. The chapter does not give it a specific definition of the word abundance (*kawthar*). Several accounts relate that *al-kawthar* is a river in heaven granted to Muhammad. However, Ibn Abbas, Muhammad's learned cousin, contends that the river is but one part of the abundance which God has furnished for His Messenger. Keeping the circumstances and the whole context in mind, Ibn Abbas's view is the more valid.[11]

Summary of Quranic Signs 108:1-108:3

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

Signs 108:1-108:3 are directed to the Prophet. God promises him abundance. He is commanded to continue to invoke blessings for his Lord and make sacrifice. Muhammad is reassured that it is his enemies who will be cut off and humiliated.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?
How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question you are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things you are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which you have some control from questions over which you have no control. Set aside the questions over which you have no control, concentrating your efforts on those questions you can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information you need and actively seek that information.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information you collect, drawing what reasonable inferences you can.

5. Figure out your options for action. What can you do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under your control from questions beyond your control. Recognize explicitly your limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate your options, taking into account your advantages and disadvantages in the situation you are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When you act, monitor the implications of your action as you begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise your strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift your strategy or your analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to you.

What am I sure of?
What questions do I have?
What must I qualify?
How can I divide my ideas into intelligible parts?
What are the relationships between the pans?
How can I show those relationships?
How does this detail fit in?
How does that claim illuminate my main point?
What form of expression best gets this idea across?
Would the reader accept this?
What questions would the reader have?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson. you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at from a careful reading of how to formulate and answer questions.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct my weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

Lesson 16. Critical Thinking Strategy

Appropriateness (to be relevant)•

Relevance means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The relevance of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that a student puts into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of their learning. Quranic relevance connects to its teaching students how to think. Once students have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant tothe particular sign or signs, their thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete and relevant arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge relevance is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating relevance and by arguing for and against the relevance of facts.

Quranic Chapter 102: The Rivalry (al-Takathur)

Signs 102:1-102:8

Makkah: *Rivalry diverted you* (102:1)
until you stopped by the cemetery. (102:2)
No indeed! You will know! (102:3)
Again, no indeed! You will know! (102:4)
No indeed! If you will know
with the knowledge of certainty, (102:5)
you will, certainly, see hellfire. (102:6)
Again, you will see it with the eye of certainty. (102:7)
Again, you will, certainly, be asked on that day about the bliss. (102:8)

Commentary°

Rhythm of the Signs

This chapter has a rhythm that is both majestic and awe-inspiring; as if it were the voice of a warner standing on a high place, projecting his voice as it rings out in weighty emphasis. He calls out to people who are drowsy, drunken, confused. They approach a precipice with their eyes closed and their feelings numbed. So the warner increases the volume of his voice to the limit: *Rivalry diverted youl until you stopped by the cemetery.* (102:1-102:2)

Rivalry

With a deep and grave rhythm the chapter then strikes their hearts with the terror awaiting them after they are left in their graves: *No indeed! You will know!* (102:3) Then it repeats the same note, employing the same words and the same firm and terrifying rhythm: *Again, no indeed! You will know!* (102:4) Then it adds to the depth and awe of this assurance, and hints at the grave prospect that lies beyond, the terrifying essence of which they do not recognize in their flush of intoxication and rivalry for worldly riches: *No indeed! If you will know with the knowledge of certainty.* (102:5)

The conditional sentence is not completed in the text. This is acceptable as a refined form of Arabic. It adds to the feeling of awe generated by the chapter. The inference here is that had they known what they should know for certain, they would not have indulged in such rivalry for petty gain. The chapter then discloses the fearful fact which has been withheld: *It is the fire of God, that which is kindled eternally.* (102:6)

It then emphasizes this fact and enhances its impact on people's hearts: *Again, you will see it with the eye of certainty.* (102:7) Finally, it puts the last statement which makes the drunkard sober, the lethargic conscious, the confused attentive and the self-indulgent tremble and feel apprehension at his indulgence in comfort and pleasure: *Again, you will, certainly, be asked on that day about the bliss.* (102:8)

Summary of Quranic Signs 102:1-102:8

How are the signs directed towards the community?

Addressing the ungrateful in Makkah who are ridiculing and taunting Muhammad, their rivalry with the Word of God has diverted them. They will lose their sense of rivalry when they visit the cemetery. The signs then repeat twice: Then they will know, and, then, they will know for certainty because they will see the hellfire to which they are headed. On that Day they will be asked how they used the pleasures of this worldly life in which they engaged.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students

Is the Quranic message in a position to know?

What subjects or perspectives, what kinds of details,

what sorts of analyses would someone need knowledge of in order to develop a complete and fair-minded view of the Quran?

How is what you are saying relevant to the Quranic signs here?

How does what you are saying bear on the question?

How does what you are saying help us with the issue of relevance?

I don't see how what you said bears on the question. Could you show me how it is relevant?

Could you explain the connection between your question and the question we are addressing?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.

I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.

I was able to distinguish information that related to the problem of relevance from information that did not relate to it.

LESSON 17. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS•

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example below shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. Be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. Engage in an inward dialogue with yourselves or an outward one with other students. Learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

QURANIC CHAPTER 107: SMALL KINDNESSES (AL-MAUN)

SIGNS 107:1-107:7

Makkah: *Had you considered one who denies this way of life?* (107:1)
And that is he who drives away with force the orphan (107:2)
and urges not to give food to the needy. (107:3)
So woe to ones who formally pray. (107:4)
ones who are inattentive to their formal prayers, (107:S)
those who make display. (107:6)
yet they repulse giving the assistance. (107:7)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter of seven short signs tackles an important and vital issue which could very well change the common meanings normally assigned to the terms faith (*iman*), and ingratitude (*kufr*). Moreover. it brings out the fundamental truth intrinsic in the nature of the faith, the enormous benefit it offers to all humanity and the abundant blessings with which God favored humanity when He sent them His last message.

The signs: *Had you considered one who denies this way of life?* (107:1) begins with a question addressed to all who can see, generating suspense and holding their attention in order to make them discover the target and subject of the chapter. Who is this creature identified by the Quran as the one who denies the Quranic message? The answer is given immediately: *And that is he who drives away with force the orphan and urges not to give food to the needy.* (107:2-107:3)

This definition of ungrateful may sound surprising when compared with a traditional definition of faith, but this is the crux of the matter. Indeed the one who denies the faith is he who harshly pushes

away the orphan, humiliating him and hurting his feelings, and who does not care for the needy or their welfare.

For if the truth of the Quranic message has touched his heart in any degree, he would not commit such acts. True belief in the Quranic message is not a verbal statement, but an overall change of the individual's heart, motivating him to benevolence and goodwill for all his fellow beings that are in need of his care and protection. God does not want mere words from His servants but demands deeds to support the spoken words which, otherwise, are as weightless and valueless as blown ash. Nothing can be more forceful than these three signs in affirming this fact which represents the nature of faith.

Next, God offers a practical illustration of what is meant above: *So woe to ones who formally pray, ones who are inattentive to their formal prayers.* (107:4-107:5) These signs contain God's invocation against, or a threat of destruction to, those who offer formal prayers but are careless about them. Who exactly are such people? *Those who make display, yet they repulse giving the* assistance.(107:6-107:7)

There is a report from one commentator that this chapter is revealed about al-As ibn Wail al-Sahmi.[32] Another states: Abu Sufyan ibn Harb was in the habit of slaughtering two camels every week. On one occasion, an orphan came to him asking him for something. Abu Sufyan responded by hitting him with a stick. So this chapter was revealed. The chapter is one interwoven entity, aiming at the establishment of one of the most fundamental aspects of faith. It relates to the phenomena of hypocrisy and false pretenses which were previously unexposed among the Muslim community in Makkah.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 107:1-107:7

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad is asked to consider the fate of those ungrateful who deny the way of life that he is proclaiming to them. It is the one who denies the message who drives the orphan away with force and who does not urge food for the needy. Then, the signs refer to those who may have accepted the message, but who are hypocritical because they offer the formal prayer, but their intention in doing do is to show off. Another of their signs is that they do not offer assistance to the poor and needy.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (ayah) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

What would someone who disagreed say?
Why? How could the first respond? Why?

List points from multiple perspectives for reference, then write dialogues of people arguing about the issues as the dialogue between Pharaoh and Moses:

*Pharaoh said: Did we not raise you up among us as a child? Had you not lingered in expectation with us for many years of **your** lifetime?* (26:18) *And you had accomplished **your** accomplishment that you had accomplished and you are among the ones who are ungrateful.* (26:19)

Moses said: I accomplished it when I was of the ones who go astray. (26:20) *So I ran away from you when I feared you. Then, my Lord bestowed on me critical judgment and made me among the ones who are sent.* (26:21) *Beyond this past favor with which you reproach me, you enslaved the Children of Jacob (Israel).* (26:22)

Pharaoh said: What is the Lord of the worlds? (26:23)

Moses said: The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two of them if you had been ones who are certain. (26:24)

Pharaoh said to whoever was around him: listen you not! (26:25)

Moses said: Your lord and the Lord of your fathers, the ancient ones.(26:26)

Pharaoh said: Truly, your Messenger who was sent to you is one who is possessed! (26:27)

Moses said: The Lord of the East and the West and whatever is between the two of them if you had been reasonable! (26:28)

Pharaoh said: If you took to yourself a god other than me. I will, certainly assign you to be imprisoned! (26:29)

Moses said: What if I drew near you with something that makes it clear? (26:30)

Pharaoh said: Bring it, if you are among the ones who are sincere. (26:31)

So he cast his staff; that is when it was a clear serpent. (26:32) *He drew out his hand and that is when it was shimmering white to the ones who look.* (26:33)

QUESTIONS ABOUT OTHER VIEWS (PHARAOH AND MOSES)•

What did the other (group of people) think? Why? (Take specific statements from the Quranic signs here.)
Would others see it this way?

Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?
What does X think is the cause? Y?
Why do they differ?

Class Discussion

The above signs teach dialogical thinking. Have students discuss perspectives in this Quranic message. Such discussion should be integrated with other Quranic signs so that the ideas are synthesized. Rather than separate activities or discussions about different perspectives, you can have students move back and forth between the points of view of Pharaoh and Moses.

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I routinely ask questions to fill in the missing pieces in my learning.
I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 18: CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS•

As opposed to dialogical thinking, dialectical thinking is such that it tests the strengths and weaknesses of differing points of view. It puts idea against idea or reasoning against counter-reasoning. The goal is to reach the truth of an issue under discussion. Ideas that are inconsistent with one another are eliminated and reconciled.

In order to develop integrative thinking, you need to learn to evaluate conflicting ideas and determine which are strong and which are weak. As you develop dialectical reasoning skills, your thinking easily moves between different points of view.

QURANIC EXAMPLES

If you are in doubt, ... then,[33]
Do they say ... ? Rather, [34]
Bring forward your witnesses[35]
Bring your proof[36]
Have they not considered?[37]
Let the human being consider ... [38]
Clear Proof *(bayyinatun, nazar)...*[39]

Dialectical thinking is practiced whenever two conflicting points of view, arguments, or conclusions are being discussed as in the case of Pharaoh and Moses or between Abraham and his father that follows:

> *Remember Abraham in the Book. Truly. he had been a just person, a Prophet.* (19:41) *That is when he said to his father: O my father! Why will you worship what hears not, and perceives not, and avails you not anything?* (19:42) *O my father! Truly. I, there drew near me of the knowledge of what approaches you not. So follow me and I will guide you to a path without fault.* (19:43) *O my father! Worship not Satan. Truly. Satan had been rebellious towards The Merciful!* (19:44) *O my father! Truly, I fear that a punishment should afflict you from The Merciful so that you become a protector of Satan.* (19:45)
>
> *He* (Abraham's father) *said: Are you one who shrinks from my gods, O Abraham? If you will not refrain yourself, certainly, I will stone you. so abandon me for some while.* (19:46)
>
> *He* (Abraham) *said: Peace be to you. I will ask for forgiveness from my Lord for you. Truly, He had been One Who is Gracious to me.* (19:47) I *will withdraw from you and what you call to other than God and I will call to my Lord. Perhaps I will not be disappointed in*

my supplication to my Lord. (19:48) *So he withdrew from them and what they worship other than God. We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We made a Prophet.* (19:49) *We bestowed on them from Our mercy and We assigned them the tongue of lofty sincerity.* (19:50)

Quranic Chapter 109: The Ungrateful (al-Kafirun)

Signs 109:1-109:6

Makkah: *Say: O ones who are ungrateful!* (109:1)
I worship not what you worship, (109:2)
and you are not ones who worship what I worship. (109:3)
And I am not one who worships what you worshipped. (109:4)
And you are not ones who worship what I worship. (109:5)
For you is your way of life, and for me is my way of life. (109:6)

Commentary°

These signs were revealed about a group of people from the ungrateful who said to the Messenger: Come follow our religion and we will follow yours. You worship our idols for a year and we worship your God the following year. In this way, if what you have brought us is better than what we have, we would partake of it and take our share of goodness from it; and if what we have is better than what you have brought, you would partake of it and take your share of goodness from it. He said: God forbid that I associate anything with Him.

Questions to Ask Students

What was Abraham's argument to his father?
Is there another view one could have to object to his reasoning?
What?
And the answer to that objection?
Does Abraham use language appropriately and consistently as he dialogues within his father?
Is the evidence he gives from both sides relevant?
Is it questionable, or acceptable?
Which argument is more trustworthy?
How can we know which of these conflicting assumptions is best?
Is there a way of reconciling these views? The evidence?
What is this side right about?
The other side?

Which of these views is strongest? Why?

Summary of Quranic Signs 109:1-109:6

How are the signs directed towards the community?

The signs I09:1-109:6 are directed at the ungrateful Quraysh who refuse to accept the Quranic message that *there is no god but He.* (73:4) but rather suggest that they will worship no god but He if Muhammad will worship their gods. He is told by the revelation to recite the next signs for them. He then says, drawing a line in the sand: For them is their way of life and for him is his.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

What am I sure of!
What questions do I have?
What must I qualify?
How can I divide my ideas into intelligible parts?
What are the relationships between the parts?
How can I show those relationships?
How does this detail fit in?
How does that claim illuminate my main point?
What form of expression best gets this idea across?
Would the reader accept this?
What questions would the reader have?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to practice a dialectical discussion with a friend.
We still disagreed at the end. I said to my friend:
To you is your opinion and to me is mine.

Lesson 19. Critical Thinking Strategy Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments•

Any questions students ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. Thinking has a goal, agenda, purpose.
2. Questions being asked either explicitly or implicitly.
3. Information is being used.

If students have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers students must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions they draw from them.•

Quranic Chapter 105: The Elephant (al-Fil)

Signs 105:1-105:5

Makkah: *Have you not considered what your Lord accomplished*
with the Companions of the Elephant? (105:1)
Makes He not their cunning leading to nothing? (105:2)
And He sent upon them flocks of birds, (105:3)
throwing at them rocks of baked clay. (105:4)
Then, made He them like ones who are consumed
by stalks of husked grain. (105:5)

Commentary°

The various reports about this incident relate that after the Abyssinians had expelled the Persians from Yemen and established their rule there, the Abyssinian governor of Yemen, Abraha, builds a superbly luxurious church giving it the name of the then Abyssinian Emperor. He does this after he had observed the love and enthusiasm of Yemeni Arabs—the same as those felt all over the Arab land—or the Kabah, the Sacred Mosque at Makkah. His purpose behind building the church is to make the Arabs forsake their attachment to the Mosque at Makkah and turn instead to his new luxurious church.

But the Arabs do not turn away from their historical shrine. They believe themselves to be the descendants of Abraham and Ishmael who built the House, which is the name they often used for the Kabah. For them, this fact is a source of pride in line with their tradition of honoring their forefathers. Vain and hollow as they are, their beliefs were, in their

eyes, better and more profound than those of the people of earlier revelations. They view these religions as contradictory and futile.

As a result, Abraha decides to pull the Kabah down in order to achieve his objective of turning the Arabs away from it He, therefore, marchs at the head of a great army equipped with elephants. At the front is a huge elephant which enjoys special fame among Abraha's men. News of Abraha's march and his objective travels throughout Arab lands giving rise to very strong feelings amongst the Arabs about the destruction of their sacred House.

A nobleman of the royal family of Yemen, called Dhu Nawas, tries to stop the Abyssinian governor, calling on his people and other Arabs to fight Abraha and defend the House. Some Arab tribes join him in a battle against Abraha which Dhu Nawas lost before he is taken prisoner.

Later, while Abraha is on his way, he is intercepted by Natl ibn Habib al-Khathami, who had mobilizes two Arab tribes as well as other Bedouin volunteers, but Abraha again wins the battle and captures Natl. Natl then agrees to act as a guide for Abraha showing him the way.

When the Abyssinian governor approaches Taif, a number of its leaders go to him to say that the House he wants to pull down is in Makkah and not at Taif. They do this in order to prevent him from destroying the house they had built for their idol, al-Lat They also provide him with a guide to show him the way to the Kabah.

Then, on his arrival at al-Mughammas, a valley en route from Taif to Makkah, Abraha dispatchs one of his commanders to Makkah where he loots some belongings of the Quraysh and other Arabs, including 200 camels which belong to Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim, the chief of Makkah and the Prophet's grandfather.

The Quraysh, Kinanah, Hudhayl and neighboring Arab tribes then gather together to fight Abraha, but realize that they stand no chance of winning, so they do not proceed any further. Then Abraha sends a messenger to Makkah to meet its chief.

Ibn Ishaq says that Abd al-Muttalib is a most handsome, charming and venerable-looking person. When Abraha sees him, he feels much respect for him. He feels that Abd al-Muttalib is too noble to sit beneath his royal bed, but at the same time he does not wish his officers and troops to see him elevate his guest and sit him on his own couch, so instead he sits with Abd al-Muttalib on the carpet. Then Abraha orders his interpreter to ask his guest what he wants. Abd al-Muttalib says he wants to request the king to give him back his 200 camels which had been looted by his commander. Abraha orders his interpreter to tell Abd al-Muttalib on his behalf: I had admired you when I first saw you but when I speak to you I am disappointed. Do you come

to talk to me about 200 looted camels and forget about the House which is an embodiment of your and your forefathers' religion and which I have come to destroy? You do not even say a word to persuade me to spare it.

Abd al-Muttalib says: I am only the master of my camels, but the House has its own Lord who is sure to protect it. Abraha snaps: It cannot be defended against me. The Makkan chief says: You take your chance! Abraha returns his camels to him.

Abd al-Muttalib goes back to the Quraysh and tells them of his encounter with the Abyssinian commander. He orders them to leave Makkah and seek shelter in the surrounding mountains. Then he accompanies a few Quraysh dignitaries to the Kabah where he holds the ring on its door in his hand. They all pray to God for His help and protection of the House. Abd al-Muttalib is reported to have recited the following lines of poetry in his prayer: Our Lord, a creature protects his property, so protect **Yours.** Let not their cross and their might ever overcome **Your** might. If **You** are leaving them to destroy our House of worship, then You surely have something in mind.

Abraha, on the other hand, orders his army to march with the elephants to complete their mission, but at a short distance from Makkah, their famous, huge elephant sits down and refuses to go any further. The soldiers exert all efforts to persuade the elephant to enter the city, but their attempts are in vain.[40]

Then God's will to destroy the Abyssinian army and its commander is fulfilled. He sends groups of birds to stone the attackers with pebbles of sand and clay, leaving them like dry and torn leaves, as the Quran describes. Abraha suffers physical injuries. The remainder of his army carries him back to Yemen, but his limbs begin to separate from the rest of his body and he starts losing one finger after another, until they arrive at Sanaa. According to various reports, Abraha dies after his chest is cleaved apart.

Versions of this event vary with regard to the description of the bird flocks, their size, the nature of the stones and the manner of their effect. Some accounts add that smallpox and measles broke out in Makkah that year. Those who are inclined to limit the scale of miracles and unfamiliar phenomena, seeking to explain all events as resulting from the operation of natural phenomena that are familiar to us, prefer to explain this event as an actual outbreak of smallpox and measles that afflicted the army. They further explain that the 'birds' could have been flies or mosquitoes carrying germs. The word 'bird' in Arabic refers to whatever flies.

Ikrimah says: It was the first time smallpox had appeared in the Arabia. Yaqub ibn Utbah says: That was the year when measles

and smallpox appeared in Arabia. The diseases had an almost unparalleled effect on their bodies: their flesh began to fall apart. The soldiers and their commander were horror-stricken and ran away. Abraha is also hit. His flesh continues falling off his body, finger by finger, until eventually his chest breaks up and he died at Sanaa.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true?
False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized in reading about Abraha's goal that he had an agenda.
I learned about the difference between Abraha's agenda
and that of the Prophet's grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib.

LESSON 20. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS•

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

THE CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence42
Meditation, pondering, considering43
Recollection44
Reflection *(tafakkur)*45
Taking to heart, taking for granted *(tadhakkur)*46
Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises47
Bringing your proof, showing your evidence48
People of intellect and reflection49
Explaining distinctly50
Being reasonable" Being just and fair51

QURANIC CHAPTER 113: THE DAYBREAK (AL-FALAQ)
SIGNS 113:1-113:5

Makkah: *Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Daybreak* (113:I)
from the worst of things (m) *that He created* (113:2)
and from the worst of the darkness (m) *of the night*
when the dark intensified, (113:3)
and from the worst of the blowers (f),

blowing on the knots (113:4)
and from the worst of one who is jealous (m)
when he is jealous. (113:5)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter, along with the following one, contains a directive from God primarily to His Prophet and secondly to the believers at large, to take refuge in Him and seek His protection in the face of any source of fear, subtle or apparent, known or unknown. It is as if God is unfolding His world of care, and embracing the believers in His guard. He is kindly and affectionately calling on them to resort to His care through which they will feel safe and at peace. It is as if He is saying to them: I know that you are helpless and surrounded by foes and fears. Come to Me for safety, contentment and peace. Therefore, the two chapters start with: *Say: I take refuge.*

Several accounts have been handed down concerning the revelation and popularity of Chapters 113 and 114. They all fit in neatly with the above interpretation that God, the Merciful, offers His care and shelter to His faithful servants. God's Messenger loved these two chapters profoundly, as is clearly apparent in his traditions.

God refers to Himself in this chapter as the *Lord of Daybreak.* The Arabic term, *falaq,* simply means 'daybreak', but it could be taken to mean 'the whole phenomenon of creation,' with reference to everything springing forth into life.

The phrase: *From the worst of things that He created* (113:2) contains no exceptions or specifications. Mutual contact between various creatures, though no doubt advantageous, brings about some evil. Refuge from it is sought with God by the believers in order to encourage the goodness such a contact produces. For He who created those creatures is surely able to provide the right circumstances that lead them on a course where only the bright side of their contact prevails. *And from the worst of the darkness of the night when the dark intensified.* (113:3) What is probably meant here is the night, with all that accompanies it when it rapidly engulfs the world. This is terrifying in itself. In addition it fills our hearts with the possibility of an unknown, unexpected discomfort caused by a savage beast, an unscrupulous villain, a striking enemy or a hissing poisonous creature, as well as anxieties and worries which may lead to depression and uneasiness, evil thoughts and passions that are liable to revive in the dark, during one's state of solitude at night. This is the evil against which the believer needs God's protection.

And from the worst of the blowers, blowing on the knots (113:4)

refers to various types of magic, whether by deceiving people's physical senses or by influencing their will-power and projecting ideas onto their emotions and minds. The sign specially refers to a form of witch craft carried out in Arabia at the time by those who tied knots in cords and blew upon them with a spoken curse.

And from the worst of one who is jealous when he is jealous. (113:S) Envy is the evil, begrudging reaction one feels towards another who has received some favor from God. It is also accompanied by a very strong desire for the end to such favors. I

Summary of Quranic Signs 113:1-113:5

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

Muhammad is told to say that he seeks refuge in the Lord of daybreak from the worst of things that God has created. He is to include three things: The darkening of night when it intensifies, those who blow on knots and those who are jealous of him and the role for which he has been chosen.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students

What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Based on the history in this section I realized that when evaluating a statement as, for example, one found in the Hadith, I have to be cautious.
I learned to follow the criteria when interpreting a Quranic sign based on a Hadith.

LESSON 21. CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE•

Integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind,[52] to pay the purifying alms,[53] to spend in charity secretly and openly, [54]—a beautiful loan to God[55]—a bargain that will never fail,[56] involving a glad tidings for the believers[57] and a cause of prosperity[58] and spiritual joy.[59] Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord.[60] They remove the stain of evil from the people[61] and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deed.[62]

It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. *Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth, they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms and they commanded to that which is honorable and they prohibited that which is unlawful. And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.* (22:41)

Moral discipline or integrity involves the recognition of the need to be true to one's own thinking, to be consistent in the standards one applies, to hold oneself to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which one holds one's antagonists, to practice what one advocates for others, and tc honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in one's own thought anc action. This trait develops best in a supportive atmosphere in which people feel secure and free enough to honestly acknowledge their inconsistencies, and can develop and share realistic ways of ameliorating them. It requires honest acknowledgment of the difficulties of achieving greater consistency.

Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. Students learn to practice what they advocate for others. They are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in their own thought and behavior. They are fervent believers in what has been justified by their own thought and experience. They bring together the person they want to be with the person that they are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. People cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like them and underate those who do not. If their ego dominates them, they become blind to their understanding. They promote whatever serves their needs and disregard whatever does not support what they want.

QURANIC CHAPTER 114: HUMANITY (AL-NAS)

SIGNS 114:1-114:6

Makkah: *Say: I take refuge with the Lord of humanity,* (114:1)
King of humanity, (114:2)
God of humanity, (114:3)
from the worst of the sneaking whisperer of evil (m) (114:4)
who whispers evil (m) *in the breasts* (m) *of humanity,*
genie (f) *and humanity.* (114:6)

COMMENTARY°

In this chapter refuge is sought in the Lord, Sovereign and God of humanity from the insidious whisperer, jinn or human, who prompts evil ideas in people's minds. The chapter presents God's relevant attributes to keep away this invisible evil which the mind on its own cannot shut out. For the Lord is He who preserves, directs, cherishes and protects humanity; the Sovereign is He who owns, governs and independently runs the world; and God is the One who supersedes all other beings and supervises over all their affairs. The particular mention of humanity here brings us closer to God's protection and care.

God, in His grace, instructs the Messenger and his community of followers to recognize these of His attributes, and to seek His protection against this *sneaking whisperer of evil* which locates itself within their hearts. For they cannot rid themselves of such an evil which surreptitiously and imperceptibly creeps into their hearts, unless they are helped by God, the Lord, the Sovereign.

The nature of this evil-importing medium is identified in the text first as *the sneaking whisperer of evil.* Its function is outlined as to *who whispers evil in the breasts of humanity.* Then its origin is specified as from among jinn and humanity.

The style adopted here is quite significant because it draws our attention fully to the identity of this *sneaking whisperer* after describing its nature in order to show the process by which such evil is insinuated. This enables us to be alert and able to confront it. When we are given the full picture we know that this *sneaking whisperer* operates secretly. We also realize that it can be either jinn or human, for human beings can easily spread their evil stealthily.

We do not know how the jinn perform this whispering, but we certainly find its repercussions in the behavior of individuals as well as in human life generally. We know for sure that the battle between Adam (man) and Iblis (Satan) is a very old one. War be-

tween the two was declared by Satan out of the evil inherent in him, his conceit, envy and resentment of the human being. He was given God's permission to carry out this battle for some purpose which only God knows. But, significantly, the human being has not been left alone, dispossessed of the necessary means of protection. He has been provided with the power of faith—that is, conscious belief in, and knowledge of, God and His attributes through conviction and sincere devotion. Meditation and seeking refuge in God are among the most effective weapons. When the human being neglects these means of security and defense, he indeed has only himself to blame.

As for humans, we know a great deal of their curious ways of whispering and prompting. Some types are more devilish than satan, such as: 1) a bad companion who injects evil into his comrade's heart and mind while be is unaware, thinking bis friend to be trustworthy; 2) a ruler's counselor or advisor who 'whispers' all sorts of evil thoughts to him, trying to tum him into a tyrant; 3) an unscrupulous slanderer who fabricates and decorates tales to make them sound factual and convincing; 4) a hustler of immoral business dealings who tries to get through to people by exploiting their sensual, carnal desires. There are scores of other 'whisperers' who inconspicuously lay their traps, utilizing different weak points which they deliberately look for. These are more devilish than even the jinn themselves. Faced with evil in this guise, the human being is incapable of ensuring his own safety. God, therefore, points out to him the means be can employ in this fierce battle. There is also a very direct significance in describing the *sneaking.*

The battle is everlasting since this *'sneaking whisperer'* is always watchful for the right moment, when one neglects remembrance of God, to implant its evils. For a believer to be conscious of God once in a while is not sufficient, as the war continues till the end of time.

This concept of the battle and the source of evil in it, whether provoked by Satan himself or by his human agent, inspires us to feel that we are not helpless in it; since God, our Lord and Sovereign of the universe controls all creations and events. Though He has permitted Satan to attack, He has supreme power over him and He has also provided guidance for humanity. God leaves to Satan only those who neglect Him. By contrast, those who live in consciousness of Him are safe and protected against his intimidation and incitements. Thus, God-consciousness is supported by the only true power, God's, whereas evil is backed by a *'sneaking*

whisperer', cowardly in the open field, quick to retreat in war, and easily defeated when we seek refuge with God. This is the most perfect concept of the battle between good and evil. It is a concept which protects human beings against defeat and provides them with strength, confidence and contentment.

Praise be to God at the beginning and at the end. From Him we derive confidence and success. To Him we tum for unfailing support.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 114:1-114:6

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad is told to recite to the people that he seeks refuge in the Lord, King and God of humanity from those who whisper evil. They are from among the people themselves or from among the jinn and they whisper evil in people's minds.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

When have you found it difficult to listen to others?
Or: Why are people often unfair?
Would you have done otherwise? Would it have been easy?
Why or why not?
Why do so few people do this?

Critical thinkers team to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

Other signs of an affective or emotional response to a situation showing a lack of wisdom and integrity are:

Contradiction (a combination of statements, ideas, or features of a situation that are opposed to one another),
Contrariety (opposition or inconsistency between two or more things),
Insatiability (incapable of being satisfied),
Importunity (insistent solicitation and entreaty when you beg someone to do something) and
Impossibilities.

The first two (contradiction and contrariety) have to do with reason. It often happens that when we least expect it, while we are thinking and reasoning in our minds, an emotion or feeling finds its way into our mind and carries us beyond all control. The cause of these systems not working is because we become incapable of reflecting.

When you are reading, notice whether you are clear about what you are reading. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourselves whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to your choice of words),
2. Elaborating on their meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean. In other words, you will frequently: **state, elaborate, illustrate** and exemplify your points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

OBSTACLES TO DEVELOPING INTEGRITY

ERROR*

Error and conjecture are obstacles to integrity which the Quran at several places denounces as equivalent to untruth or lies and which do not lend support to an individual in his moral life.[63] *I will turn away from My signs those who increase in pride on the earth without right. If they see every sign, they believe not in it.If they see the way of right judgment, yet they will not take that way to themselves. But if they see the way of error; they will take themselves to that way. That is because they denied Our signs and had been ones who are heedless of them.* (7:146)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

How would someone else interpret them?

How can I adjust or support my interpretation?
What implications does the Quran want the reader to draw?
How can I help another reader to see that I mean this and not that?
Which of all of the things I'm saying is the most important?
How will another reader know which is most important to me?
Why is this detail important?
Have I assumed as a Quranic reader that I know something my classmates may not know?

Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is another obstacle to developing integrity. A hypocrite is one who says with his tongue what is not in his heart,[64] who is distracted in mind, being sincerely neither for one group nor for another.[65] Hypocrites are liars.[66] They expect people to praise them for what they never do,[67] compete with one another in sin and rancor,[68] and hold secret counsels among themselves for iniquity, hostility, and disobedience.[69] Hypocrites-men and women-enjoin evil and forbid what is just,[70] and if by chance they come into possession of a position of authority, they make mischief in the land, break ties of kinship,[71] and yet claim to be peace-makers.[72]

Questions You Can Ask to Discipline Your Thinking

What precise question are we trying to answer?
Is that the best question to ask in this situation?
Is there a more important question we should be addressing?
Does this question capture the real issue we are facing?
Is there a question we should answer before we attempt to answer this question?
What information do we need to answer the question?
What conclusions seem justified in light of the facts?
What is our point of view?
Do we need to consider another?
Is there another way to look at the question?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on developing moral integrity and I was able to learn how to internalize this moral trait.

LESSON 22. CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS•

The sections (*ruku*) and signs (*ayat*) in the Quran contain a depth of complexities and interrelationships as here between ourself and God. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. The classroom experience exploring the Quranic message depends on the quality of your commitment to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

CHAPTER 112: SINCERE EXPRESSION
SIGNS 112:1-112:4

Makkah: *Say: He is God, One,* (112: 1)
God, the Everlasting Refuge. (112:2)
He procreated not nor was He procreated (112:3)
and there be not anything comparable with Him. (112:4)

COMMENTARY°

Say: He is God, One. (I12:I) The Arabic term, *ahad*, used here to refer to God's Oneness is much more precise than the more frequently used tenn, *wahid*, which means One, *Ahad* has the added connotations of absolute and continuous unity and an absence of equals.

God, the Everlasting Refuge. (112:2) God's Oneness is such that there is no reality and no true and permanent existence except His. Moreover, every other being acquires whatever power it may possess from God who rules over this world. Nothing else whatsoever plans anything for the world nor, for that matter, decides anything in it.

The *Everlasting Refuge* also means the Lord to whom all creation turns for help, and without whose permission nothing is decided. God is the One and only Lord. He is the One God and Master while all other beings are but His servants. To Him and Him alone are addressed all prayers and supplications. He and only He decides everything independently. No one shares His authority.

He procreated not nor was He procreated. (112:3-112:4) This means that the reality of God is deep-rooted, permanent and everlasting. No changeable circumstances ever affect it. Its quality is absolute perfection at all times. Birth is descent and multiplication and implies a developed being after incompleteness or nothingness. It requires espousal which is based on similarity of being and structure. All this is utterly impossible in God's case.

And there be not anything comparable with Him (112:4) means that no one resembles Him in anything or is equivalent to Him in any respect, either in their reality of being, in the fact that He is the only effective

power, or in any of His qualities or attributes. This is implied in the statement of his being One made in the first sign, but it is repeated so as to contain and elaborate upon that fact.

The idolaters asked the Messenger of God: What is the lineage of your Lord? So God revealed what is to become Chapter 112. This short chapter is equivalent to one-third of the Quran, as authentic ahadith confirm. A man heard another man reciting this chapter repeatedly. He went to the Messenger the following morning and told him disapprovingly about what he had heard, as though he felt that it was too little. The Messenger commented: I swear by Him who holds my soul in His hand that it [i.e. this chapter] is equivalent to one third of the Quran.

And, indeed, there is nothing surprising in that. For God's Oneness which the Messenger was ordered to declare to the whole world is a belief to be ingrained in our minds, an explanation of human existence and a way of life in itself. From this standpoint, the chapter can be said to have embraced, in the clearest of terms, the principal and most fundamental ideas of the great truth of the Quranic message.[73]

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 112:1-112:4

WHO IS GOD?

Now the revelation clearly and precisely states who God is: The One, God, the Everlasting Refuge. He is not brought forth as the result of any procreation nor does he bring forth offspring. While previous signs had made reference to God (Allah) with whom the Makkans were familiar and some of His qualities He creates, shapes forms, guides and so forth, no where had it been made clear to them who God was until these signs were revealed for the first time to them.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

Why does the text tell you about interrelationships among the hypocrites and among the believers?

Why does the Quranic message think this interrelationship is worth knowing?

What factors make the interrelationship among hypocrites a difficult problem in tenns of being part of a community?

What are some of the complexities of this question? Is this question simple or complex?

Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly? What makes this a complex question?

How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships between myself and God as expressed in these signs.

I was able to explain the main points of the sings to another student.

LESSON 23(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS•

In order for Quranic critical thinkers to develop their own point of view on an issue, they have to analyze their actions and then evaluate them. Practice develops into good judgment—judging behavior, explaining and justifying those judgments, hearing alternative judgments and their justifications, and assessing judgments.

When Quranic critical thinkers evaluate the behavior of themselves or that of others, they are aware of the criteria that they use so that the criteria themselves become part of the evaluation. They look at the consequences of their actions and see them as basic to the criteria for assessing behavior and policy. They base their evaluations of behavior on assumptions that have been reasoned through. This allows them to articulate and rationally apply principles.

QURANIC CHAPTER 53: THE STAR (AL-NAJM)
SIGNS 53:1-53:25

Makkah: *By the star when it hurled to ruin,* (53:I)
neither your companion went astray, nor he erred (53:2)
nor speaks he for himself out of desire. (53:3)
It is but a revelation that is revealed, (53:4)
taught to him by The One Stronger in Strength, (53:5)
Possessor of Forcefulness. Then, he stood poised (53:6)
while he was on the loftiest horizon. (53:7)
Night Journey: *Moreover, he came to pass near*
and hung suspended (53:8)
until he had been at a distance
of two bow lengths or closer. (53:9)
Then, He revealed to His servant what He revealed. (53:I 0)
The mind lied not against what it saw. (53:11)
Will you altercate with him about what he sees? (53:12)
And certainly he saw it another time (53:13)
near the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary (53:14)
near which is the Garden of the Place of Shelter(53:15)
when overcame the Lote Tree
what overcame it. (53:16)
The sight swerved not, nor was it defiant. (53:17)
Certainly, he saw some of the greatest signs of his lord. (53:18)
Saw you, then, al-Lat and al-Uzza (53:19)
and another, Manat, the third? (53:20)
Have you males and has He females? (53:21)
That, then, is an unfair division. (53:22)
They are but names that you named,
you and your fathers, for which God caused not
to descend any authority.

They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn. And, certainly, drew near them the guidance from their Lord. (53:23)
Or will the human being have what he coveted? (53:24)
Then, to God belongs the last and the First. (53:25)

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

As a whole, this chapter comes across as a superb symphony. From start to finish, a fine tune runs through its verbal structure, as well as its rhyming sign endings. This is especially apparent and deliberate at certain points, where a word is added or preferred to maintain the beat or the rhyme, in addition to how it enhances the meaning. One example is found in the two signs saying: *Saw you, then, al-Lat and al-Uzza and another. Manat, the third?* (53:19-20)

Had the second sign said: *and Manat, the third*, the meter would have been broken and the beat would not have been maintained. On the other hand, had it said, *and Manat*, the other one, the rhyme would not have been maintained. Each of the words used contributes to the meaning, but maintaining the meter and the rhyme is also deliberate. The same may be said where the word then is used in the signs: *Have you males and has He, females? That, then, is an unfair division.* (53:21-53:22) This word *idhan*, or then, is necessary to maintain the meter and the beat, but it also serves an artistic purpose.

The theme the chapter tackles is the one that pervades all chapters revealed in Makkah: Faith and its major concepts consisting of revelation, God's Oneness and the hereafter. The chapter tackles this from a particular angle emphasizing the truth of revelation and the solid foundation of faith as compared with the fallacy of idolatry, which lacks foundation.

EXPERIENCING THE MESSENGER'S HEART

As we recite this opening: *By the star when it hurled to ruin* (53:1), we live for a few moments on the sublime expanse experienced by the Messenger's heart. We rise over wings of light to join the company on high. We listen to the smooth beat echoed in the words, their meanings and the message they impart. We live with the Messenger's heart as it looks on, with all curtains and covers removed. He receives revelation from on high, listens and looks, and be commits to memory what was revealed to him. These moments were a special experience given only to his purified heart, but God favors His servants by giving them an inspiring description that imparts to them a feeling of the message, its echoes and meanings. He describes to them the journey that took his blessed heart to the heavens above, step by step, scene by scene and stage after

stage, as if they too are witnessing it all.

This inspiring description starts with an oath made by God: (53:1) The brilliant shining of stars before they set on the horizon is similar to the image drawn of Gabriel, the object of the oath.....*while he was on the loftiest horizon*.... Then, *He revealed to His servant what He revealed.* (53:7) Thus starts the harmony between the scene, the movement, the connotations and the rhythm.

Reports differ as to the star referred to in this *oath: By the star when it hurled to ruin.* (53:1). The closest that comes to mind is that of Sirius, which was worshipped by some people in the past. It is mentioned later in the chapter, as it says of God*: And that it is He, He Who is the Lord of Sirius.* (53:49) People in olden times paid special attention to this star. Ancient Egyptians used to link the flooding of the Nile to Sirius as it crossed the highest orbit. They watched it carefully to monitor the level of water in the Nile. It also has a special position in Persian and Arabian legends. It is probable, therefore, that the oath by the star at the beginning of the chapter refers to it. That the image chosen here is that of the star's hurling to ruin is significant, as it suggests that no matter how great a star is in size and position, it changes. It does not, then, deserve to be worshipped. What is worshipped should always be high and permanent.

The main object of the oath is the Messenger and the revelation given regarding those who are denying him: *Neither your companion went astray. nor he erred nor speaks he for himself out of desire. It is but a revelation that is revealed.* (53:2-53:4) This friend of yours is on the right course, well guided, sincere, gives you good advice, delivering the truth, free of error, illusions, fabrications and fancy. It is all a revelation bestowed on him from on high, and he delivers what is revealed to him in all honesty. The one who brings him this revelation is well known, following a well-charted course. The Messenger saw Gabriel with his own eyes and mind: *Taught to him by The One Stronger in Strength, Possessor of Forcefulness.* Then, he stood poised while he was on the loftiest horizon.... T*hen, He revealed to His servant what He revealed. The mind lied not against what it saw. Will you altercate with him about what he sees?* (53:5-53:7; 53:10-53:12)

It is a case of seeing someone very close up after he had initially appeared at a distance, and then there is revelation, teaching, looking closely and being certain. In such conditions there can be no lie in what is reported. This truth does not allow for argument or dispute: *The mind (heart) lied not against what it saw. Will you altercate with him about what Ire sees?* (53:11-53:12) A heart's vision is more certain because it precludes any deception that might cloud a persons eyesight. He saw and made sure. His heart was then certain that he saw the angel bearing divine revelations. The angel is a messenger God sends to teach the Messenger

and assign to him the task of delivering to humanity what he has learns.

CLAIMING DIVINITY FOR IDOLS

Such is the irrefutable truth in which Muhammad called them to believe. What basis, then, do they have for their worship and superstitions of alleged deities? How can they justify their worship of al-Lat, al-Uzza and Manat? How can they prove their dubious claims that these were angels, and that the angels were God's daughters, or that they can intercede with God on peoples behalf? Do they have anything to support these claims? (53:19-25)

There were many other idols venerated by different tribes, but these three were the major ones. It is thought that these idols were symbols representing angels whom the Arabs considered to be female and who they also claimed to be God's daughters. Therefore, why they were originally worshipped. What happens in such cases is that the original idea is lost and the symbol becomes, for the majority of people, the thing to be worshipped. Only a handful of knowledgeable people continue to remember the original legend.

God mentions these three worshipped objects, implying in the very question He asks that to worship such things is indeed singular: *Saw you, then, al-Lat and al-Uzza and Manat, the third, the other?* (53:19-53:20) Such singularity is clearly highlighted in His starting the question with: Have you considered, and in describing Manat as the third other. After this initial question, He then adds that their other claim that He had daughters while they had sons was even more singular: *Have you males and has He.females? That, then, is an unfair division.* (53:21-53:22)

The whole thing is based on illusion. It has no basis in human knowledge or in reality. No evidence or argument can be given in support of such claims: *They are but names that you named, you and your fathers.for which God caused not to descend any authority.* (53:23)

These names, al-Lat, al-Uzza, Manat, and all others like them, which are called deities, angels, female and God's daughters, are false and cannot be substantiated. God has given you no evidence in support of such claims. What God does not sanction is certainly insupportable. It carries no weight.

This address to the ungrateful ends in the middle of the sign. The chapter turns away from them as if they were not even there. Indeed, it speaks of them in the third person: T*hey follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23)

They lack argument, fact and certainty. They base their beliefs on surmise, and tum to their whims for evidence. Faith, however, cannot be based on either surmise or whim. True faith must be based on certainty and irrefutable evidence, without reference to whim or desire. The un-

grateful had no excuse to justify their following whim and surmise: *And, certainly, drew near them the guidance from their Lord.* (53:23)

When the deciding factor is ones own whim and desire, nothing can be right, and no guidance is of any use. The problem is not the absence of truth or evidence supporting it The problem isa powerful desire that wants certain things, seeking justification for what it wants. This is the worst situation we can find ourselves in, because then no guidance is of any benefit and no proof is convincing.

Therefore, the chapter disapprovingly asks: *Or will the human being have what he coveted?* (53:24) Will everything the human being wishes come true, have reality? Things are not like that Truth and reality are different from wishful thinking, which cannot change facts. The fact is that the human being errs when he follows his own desires. He is too weak to change the nature of things. Everything in this life and the next belongs to God who accomplishes whatever He wills in both worlds. *Then, to God belongs the Last and the First.* (53:25)

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 53:1-53:25

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath by the star when it is hurled to ruin, something the Makkans had witnessed as a falling star. They are told: Just as stars are hurled to ruin, so to God belongs the Last and the First.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Many of these signs (53:1-53:25) relate to Muhammad directly, confirming his character: He has not gone astray, he has not erred and he does not speak out of any desire on his part. It is a revelation from the One God whereby he warns and reminds people to be aware of their actions. Muhammad does not lie about the fact that he saw Gabriel when he came to pass near and hug suspended. Muhammad has seen some of the greatest signs of his Lord. Muhammad brings to the people the guidance from their Lord.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs address the tribes who worship three female gods: Lat, Uzza and Manat. It asks if this worship is to say that God had female offspring while they have males? Is this not an unfair division it asks rhetorically (not expecting an answer). These gods that you Arab tribes worship are nothing but names that you yourselves and your ancestors have named. You had no authority from the One God to do this. You follow nothing but opinion, conjecture and what you yourselves wish to have. The Quranic message asks: Will you have which you covet?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

What comparison is the sign making?
Was this the real reason? Why do you think so?
What are the probable consequences of most of them who know not'?
What reasons were your evaluations based on?
Might someone else use a different standard to evaluate? Why?
Do you think the action was fair, smart, etc.? Why or why not?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I learned how the Quran analyzed the Prophet's actions on his Night Journey.
The Quran is speaking about worshipping something other than God simply because my ego wants to.

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LESSON 23(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS•

Students should learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. Students should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

QURANIC CHAPTER 53: THE STAR (AL-NAJM)
SIGNS 53:26-53:32

Makkah: *And how many an angel in the heavens is there*
whose intercession will avail nothing at all,
but after God gives permission to whom He wills
and He is well-pleased? (53:26)
Truly, those who believe not in the world to come
naming the angels with female names, (53:27)
while they have no knowledge of it,
they follow nothing but opinion.
And, truly, opinion avails them not at all
against The Truth. (53:28)
So turn you aside from him who turns away
from Our Remembrance and he wants nothing
but this present life. (53:29)
That is their attainment of the knowledge.
Truly, your Lord, He is the One Who is greater in knowledge
of whoever went astray from His way.
And He is greater in knowledge
of those who are truly guided. (53:30)
And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth
that He may give recompense to those who did evil
for what they did and give recompense/airer
to those who did good, (53:31)
Madinah (53:32)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter tells the Messenger in this section that he should ignore those who turn away from God's message, those who preoccupy themselves with this present world, knowing nothing beyond it. It also refers to the hereafter and what it provides of requital for people's actions. It mentions that God knows all beings, ever since He originated them from the earth and when they were still in their mothers' wombs. Indeed: He knows them better than they know their own selves. Their requital will

be based on this certain knowledge. It defines their destiny.

Since everything belongs to God in both this world and the life to come, there can be no basis for the conjectures of the ungrateful that their false deities can intercede with God on their behalf: *And how many an angel in the heavens is there whose intercession will avail nothing at all, but after God gives permission to whom He wills and He is well-pleased.* (53:26)

Even the angels in the heavens shall not intercede but with God's permission; those who set imaginary gods for themselves follow only their own conjecture. Good and evil shall be duly recompensed. Having been proved in the previous signs to be false, their claims now fall apart. All fallacy and doubt is now removed from faith. Everything in this world and the following one belongs to God. Whims and desires cannot change reality. Intercession can only be accepted by God's leave. The final judgement is His alone.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 53:26-53:32

WHO IS GOD?

Only God gives permission to angels to intercede. It is Muhammad's Lord who is greater in knowledge of those who are truly guided and those who turned away from His ways.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad is told to turn aside from those who turn away from the remembrance of God and who want nothing but the present life. As they have rejected the remembrance of God, their knowledge only extends to the present life.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who name angels with female names follow only conjecture and opinion. Their conjecture and opinion will not help them at all against the truth.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

How would you answer the Quranic question?

What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear another's heavy load?

What issues are the sign addressing?

Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover lhat sometimes you must argue for lhe relevance of a particular fact to an issue.

Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.
I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.
I was able to distinguish information that related lo the problem of relevance from information that did not relate to it.

LESSON 23(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE•

Quranic critical thinkers have learned to examine their reasoning by taking it apart and evaluating the components of the signs. They have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. Evidence and factual claims should be scrutinized and evaluated.

QURANIC CHAPTER 53: THE STAR (AL-NAJM)
SIGNS 53:33-53:62

Makkah: *Had you considered him who turned away* (53:33)
and gave a little, giving grudgingly? (53:34)
Is the knowledge of the unseen with him so that he sees it? (53:35)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses (53:36)
Makkah: Book 26 Abraham (53:37)
The burdened soul will not bear the heavy load of another. (53:38)
'The human being is not but what he endeavored for (53:39)
and that his endeavoring will be seen. (53:40)
Again, he will be given recompense for it
with a more true recompense, (53:41)
and that towards your Lord is the Utmost Boundary, (53:42)
and that He caused laughter and caused weeping, (53:43)
and that He caused to die and gave life (53:44)
and it is He, He created the pairs, the male and the female (53:45)
from seminal fluid when it is emitted, (53:46)
and that with Him is another growth (53:47)
and it is He, He Who Enriched and made rich (53:48)
and that He, He is the Lord of Sirius (53:49)
Makkah: Book 25 Aad (53:50)
Makkah: Book 25 Thamud (53:51)
Makkah: Book 25 Noah (53:52)
Makkah: *He caused to tumble that which are cities overthrown,* (53:53)
then, enwrapped them with what enwrapped. (53:54)
Then, which of the benefits of your Lord
will you quarrel with? (53:55)
This is a warner among the previous warnings. (53:56)
The Impending Day is impending. (53:57)
There is not other than God, One Who Uncovers it. (53:58)
Then, at this discourse you marvel? (53:59)
And will you laugh and not weep (53:60)
while you are ones who pass life in enjoyment? (53:61)
So prostrate yourselves to God and worship Him. (53:62)

COMMENTARY°

The final section speaks about the main themes of faith, which have remained the same since the earliest of the divine messages: namely, individual responsibility, accurate reckoning,just reward, and the return of all creatures to their Lord who determines what happens to them as He wills. Added to this is a quick reference to the fate suffered by earlier communities that denied the divine message. The chapter then concludes with a strong beat commanding all humanity to prostrate themselves before God and worship Him alone. Thus, the opening and the end provide a harmony of images, connotations, effects and musical tones.

The chapter moves now to its final part which maintains the same rhythm as the first part. It states the basic concept of divine faith, as it has been ever since the time of Abraham, who delivered the first full code for living. It makes their Lord known to humanity. It shows them how His will influences their lives, portraying its effects one after another in a way that strongly shakes the human conscience.

The chapter ends with a loud command that strikes both our ears and hearts, telling us what we should do to save ourselves from the abyss at the edge of which we perilously stand: *So prostrate yourselves to God and worship Him.* (53:62) Coming after such a discourse creating immense influences, this command struck awe in their hearts and they prostrated themselves as commanded.

These idolaters, who endlessly argued about the Quran and revelation, and about God and His message, prostrated themselves at this point. All the people listening to the Messenger reciting this chapter felt its strong beat like a blacksmith's hammer. All of them, Muslims and ungrateful alike, saw the Messenger prostrating himself at its end and they did likewise.

They could not resist the power of the Quran or question its authority. When they came to, they were stunned as they realized what they had just done.

There are numerous reports describing this event. While they are all unanimous about its details, they differ in explaining what appears to be a strange happening. In fact, though, it is not strange at all. It is an example of the effect the Quran produces and how hearts interact with it.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 53:32-53:62

WHO IS GOD?

The Lord is towards the Utmost Boundary. It is He who causes laughter and weeping, who causes death and life; who created the human being in pairs, males and females and that it is He who causes another growth. It is He who enriches and makes rich. He is the Lord of the Sirius. He caused the Aad and Thamud to

perish and the folk of Noah. They did great wrong and had been defiant. He causes cities to be overthrown. With all of this, it asks, which of the benefits of God will you quarrel with?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Consider the one who turns away and gives a little and even that is given grudgingly, reluctantly, resentfully and with an attitude of annoyance to have to give. Does this person have knowledge of the unseen? Does he know what was in the scrolls of Moses and Abraham?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

A person's burdened soul is only responsible for himself. No one else will be held accountable. We human beings are only what we word and endeavor for and we will be compensated for just this. Muhammad is bringing you a warning, a warning of the Impending Day. Only God will uncover it. Will you laugh and weep, passing life in enjoyment without any concern for the Impending Day? Prostrate yourselves to God and worship Him.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS·

What evidence do the above signs give?
Why would the facts be true?
What assumptions are you making?
Do you have reason to think your assumptions are true?
Do you talk about what you have not yet done?
Why do you do so?
What evidence do you have?

If the reasons that you give as evidence are incomplete, you should ask yourself some exploring questions in order for the student to give a fuller explanation of how they reasoned an issue. When given written material to evaluate and interpret, you should reference specific Quranic signs that you have used on which to base your interpretation. In this way, you will be able to better clarify your understanding of a sign(s) and your interpretation better understood.

QUESTIONS THAT EXPLORE REASONS AND EVIDENCE:

INFORMATION

On what evidence is this conclusion based?
Where did we get the evidence?

How could we find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do we need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?
Why do you think that is true?
Do you have any evidence for that?
What difference does that make?
What are your reasons for saying that?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered the Quranic questions in these signs. Two questions are directed to the Prophet:

Is the knowledge of the unseen with him so that he sees it? (53:35)
Then, at this discourse you marvel? (53:59)
And will you laugh and not weep while you are ones who pass life in enjoyment? (53:60-53:61)

CONCLUSION

Through reciting the revelation, Muhammad invites the people to think about creation, about the universe, about purity and friendship, knowledge and loyalty, about understanding the meaning of existence, life and humanity's destiny yet they seek miracles from him and ask about the unseen. Signs are revealed that attempt to turn the people away from only thinking about unusual happenings, miracles, and extraordinary events and, instead, consider intellectual, logical, scientific, natural, social, and ethical issues. The Quran invites people to tum their sensitivities for the unseen and the unusual into a perception of Reality and Truth. And this to a people who only submit to the extraordinary and that from a person who tells them he is a Messenger! He invites the people to his divine mission and, at the same time, he officially announces: I do not know the unseen.

What also causes each person's amazement is in the Messenger's behavior and his continuous efforts and endeavors to lessen himself from what the people see in him. Although his Companions know him to be the extraordinary person that he is, he always refers to himself as just another human being like everyone else. He does this through his words, his behavior, his way of life, and his encounters with other people. His efforts are not to make him appear to be humble. Rather, they come from the innermost recesses of his heart. He who is a worshipper of the One God with his total being, he whose only desire is to establish the worship of the One God, the belief in monotheism, knows that whatever becomes exaggerated about him decreases the greatness of the message of monotheism, the genuineness of the revelation, and his prophethood. He sits like a servant sits, eats what a servant eats, and he knows that he is, in truth, the Servant of God. This title is his greatest source of pride and happiness.

EPILOGUE: THE QURAYSH CLANS REVISITED

The Quraysh are a powerful merchant tribe that control Makkah and its Kabah and that according to tradition descend from Ishmael. The tribe traditionally traces a genealogical history backwards from their ancestor Mudhar to Adam, Abraham and Ishmael: According to this tradition, Quraysh is Nadhr ibn ("son of") Kinanah ibn Khuzaymah ibn Madrakah ibn Ilyas (Elijah) ibn Mudhar ibn Nazar ibn Maad ibn Adnan ibn Add ibn Sind ibn Qadar, ibn Ishmael ibn Abraham, ibn Azar, (Terah) ibn Nahur, ibn Serug, ibn Reu, ibn Peleg, ibn Eber ibn Salah, ibn Arpachshad, ibn Shem ibn Noah ibn Lamech, ibn Methuselah ibn Idris (Enoch) ibn Jared ibn Mahalalel ibn Kenan ibn Enos ibn Seth ibn Adam.

According to history, the Quraysh tribe is a branch of the Kinanah Tribe, which descends from the Mudhar tribe. For several generations they are spread about among other tribal groupings. About five generations before Muhammad the situation is changed by Qusayy ibn Kilab. By war and diplomacy he assembles an alliance that delivers to him the keys of the Kabah, an important pagan shrine at that time which brings revenues to Makkah because of the multitude of pilgrims that it attracts. Qusayy then gathers his fellow tribesmen to settle at Makkah, where he enjoys such adulation from his kin that they make him their king. a position that is enjoyed by no other descendant of his. Different responsibilitie sare apportioned between different clans. There are some rivalries among the clans, and these become especially pronounced during Muham--mad's lifetime.

The Quraysh branch out into various sub-clans, who in tum branched out into yet further sub-clans. Roughly the division corresponds to the family lines of the current chieftain of that clan having sons.

Names of tribe, clan or sub-clan of early Muslims based on Ibn Ishaq.

1. **Abd al-Dar: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan**
Abd al-Dar Clan Confederate: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan
Abd al-Dar Clan Slave: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan

2. **Abd Manaf: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan**
   a. Abd Shams Clan: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan, parent clan of the Children of Umayyah
   b. Abd al-Shams Confederate: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan, parent clan of the Children ofUmayyah
      1) Umayyah Clan: Sub-clan of the Abd Shams Clan (Abu Sufyan, Uthman ibn Affan)
      2) Umayyah Sub-clan of Abd Shams Confederate
   c. Hashim Clan: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan, Clan of the Prophet's Great-Grandfather

d. Hashim Confederate: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan
e. Hashim Freed: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan
f. Muttalib Clan Confederate: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan
g. Nawfal Clan: Sub-clan oftheAbd ManafClan

3. Makhzum Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Khalid ibn Walid)
4. Makhzum Clan Confederate: Sub-clan of Quraysh

5. Zuhrah Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Sad Ibn Abi Waqqas)
6. Zuhrah Clan Confederate or Taym Confederate: Sub-clan of the Quraysh

7. Taym Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Abu Bakr)
8. Taym: Fihr Ibn Malik Clan (al-Harlth Ibn Fihr): Sub-clan of the Quraysh

9. Adiyy Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Umar ibn al-Khattab)
10. Adiyy Confederate: Adiyy or Makhzum Clan Confederate

11. Asad Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Abd Allah ibn Zubayr and Khadlja)

12. Abd ibn Qusayy Clan: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan
13. Amir ibn Luayy Clan
14. Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza Clan

15. Jumah Clan
16. Jumah Clan Confederate Freed

17. Sahm Clan
18. Sahm Clan Confederate

Non-Quraysh:
Hun Tribe
ibn Khuzaymah
Khazraj
Muammil tribe
Khazraj Tribe
Malik ibn al-Najjar Clan
Khuzaah Tribe
Kinanah Tribe
Ghiffar Clan Sulaym Tribe
TamimTribe

APPENDIX 1: QURANIC SIGN 73:20

While Chapter 73 is first revealed around the beginning of the revelation, according to historical references, this particular sign was revealed one year later.

Makkah: *Truly, your Lord knows that you be standing up*
for nearly two thirds of tire nighttime, or a half of it or a third of it
along with a section of those who are with you.
And God ordains the nighttime and the daytime.
He knew that you would not be able to keep count of it,
so He turned towards you in forgiveness,
then recite of the Quran as much as was easy.
He knew that some of you are sick
and others travel on the earth looking for the grace of God
and others fight in the way of God.
So recite of it as much as was easy.
And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms
and lend to God a fairer loan.
For whatever of good you put forward for your souls,
you will find the same with God.
It is good and a sublime compensation.
And ask God for forgiveness.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (73:20)

COMMENTARY°

The second part of the Chapter 73, consisting of a single, long sign that was revealed one year after the first part, that was revealed in the first year of the revelation according to the more authentic reports brings a compassionate touch, providing relief after much fatigue. It is a relaxation by God granted to Muhammad and the believers, when they have proved themselves to be dedicated totally to His divine message. They were exhausted after having stood up for long hours at night offering prayers in which very long passages of the Quran were recited. God never wanted to afflict Muhammad with the Quran, putting him to such hardship. Rather, He was only preparing him for the hard task that he was to undertake for the rest of his life. The believers who followed him would also have to share in this heavy burden.

The sign begins with friendly reassurance: *Truly, your Lord knows that you be standing up for nearly two thirds of tire nighttime, ora half of it or a third of it along with a section of those who are with you.* (73:20) The night may get longer or shorter, but you are all carrying on with the duty required of you, staying up close to two-thirds of the night, or half of it, or even a third. He is aware of your weakness. He does not want to

afflict you or put you to unbearable hardship; all He wants is that you should have the necessary training. Now that you have been trained, you can relax and take things easier: He knew that you would not be able to keep count of it, so He turned towards you in forgiveness, then recite of the Quran as much as was easy. (73:20)

These need to attend to their work and earn their living. This is essential. God does not want people to abandon their life's needs and lead the life of a monk who is totally devoted to worship. He knew that some of you are sick and others travel on the earth looking for the grace of God and others fight in the way of God. (73:20) God will permit you to stand up and fight against those who wage aggression against you. He will permit you to fight so that the Quranic message will have its safe and sovereign place. You may, then, relax and approach your duty in a comfortable way: *So recite of it as much as was easy.* (73:20)

Let there be no exhaustion or hardship. However, you must attend to all obligatory worship: *And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and lend to God a fairer loan.* (73:20) When you have done this you may wish to add voluntary charity, which will increase your reward: *For whatever of good you put forward for your souls, you will find the same with God. It is good and a sublime compensation.* (73:20) *Turn to God, appealing for forgiveness of your shortcomings. The human being remains short of what is needed, no matter how diligent be tries to be. And ask God for forgiveness.* (73:20)

Truly. God is Forgiving, Compassionate.(73:20) This is a compassionate touch, providing relaxation and reassurance after a whole year of night worship. God relaxed this duty for the followers of Muhammad, making night worship voluntary, rather than an obligatory duty. Muhammad, however, continued on the same lines, offering night worship for no less than one-third of the night. He would appeal to his Lord in the depths of the night, and receive from Him what he needed for his struggle in life. Although his eyes might sleep, his heart would not. His heart was always busy with God's remembrance. It had no desire for anything else in this life.

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION OF ORIGINAL CHAPTERS WITH CHAPTERS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

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1. *Kitab al-Waqidi,* pp 211 1/2; Tabari p 112
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 115 ff.
5. See 6:7S-6:79.
6. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p I ISff.
7. See 58:11
8. Qutb, *In the Shade of the Quran,* vol. 18, p 118.
9. See also 3:81-3:87; 5:13; 5:15; 7:172.
10. Ibid.
11. See also 10:4; 13:29.
12. See also 9:112.
13. See 2:247.
14. See 28:14.
15. See 21:79.
16. See 12:68.
17. See 12:22.
18. See 28:14.
19. See 6:75-5:79
20. See Introduction to this work, p. 20.
21. S. Qutb, op. cit.
22. See 27:83; 41:18.
23. See 1:24; 4:129.
24. See S:30; 22:37.
25. See 2:177.
26. See M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran."
30. See 30:30.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibn Ishaq, op.cit.
33. See 22:8
33. See 16:12.
34. See 23:70; 32:3; S2:33.
35. See 6:I50.
36. See 2:211.
37. See 34:9.
38. See 80:24.
39. See 7:185.
40. Ibn Ishaq, op. cit.
41. Ibid.
42. See 6:104.
43. See 30:21.
44. See also 9:112.
45. See 30:21.
46. See 2:219.
47. See 21:24.
48. See 27:64

S4. See 16:10-16:11
49.See 6:97-6:98.
*S6.*See 16:12. S7. SeeS:8. *S8.*See 2:238. *S9.*See *98.S.*
60. See 2S:29.
61. See 72:20.
62. See 2S:29.
63. See 22:34.
64. See 31:S.
6S. See 20:139.
66. See 31:5.
67. See 11:114
68. See 29:45.
69. See 6:148.
70. See4:157.
71. See 2:167.
72. See4:143.
73. See 22:34.
74. See 3:188.
75. See 5:65.
76. See 57:8.
77. See 11:114.
78. See 29:45.
79. See 6:148.
80. See 15:36-15:40.
81. See 6:99.
82. See 2:36.
83. See 3:I 75.
84. See 3:122.
85. See 16:27.

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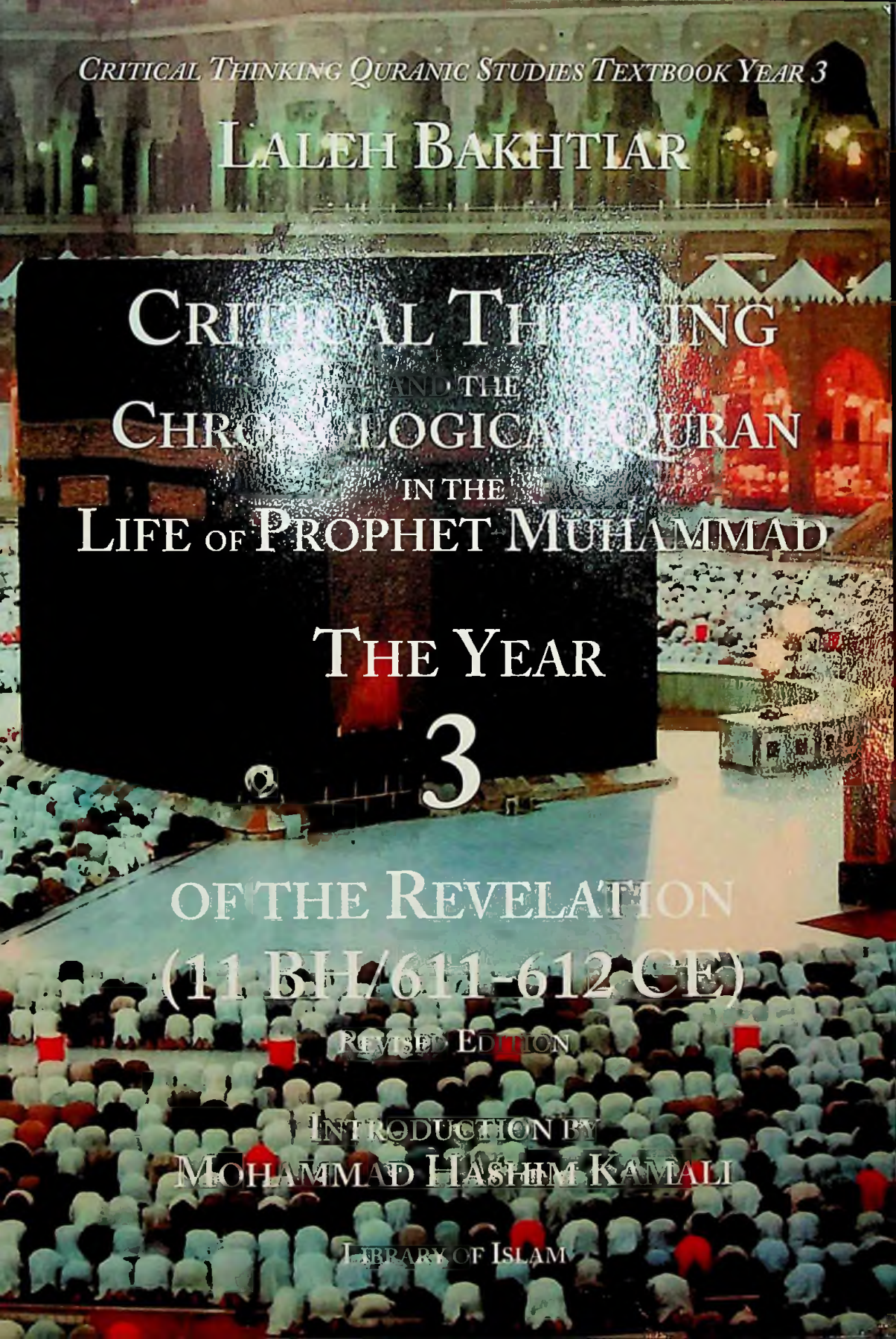
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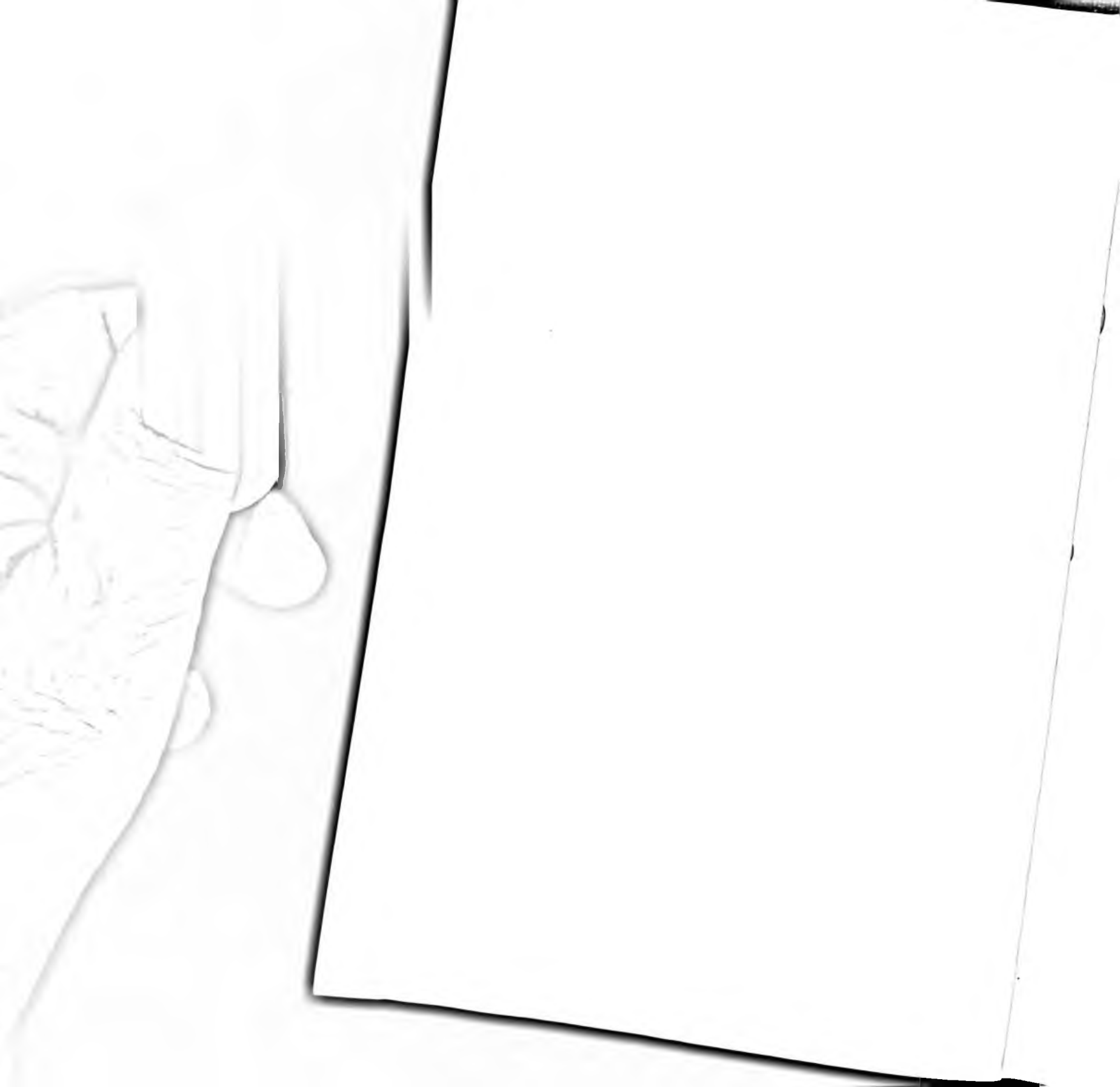
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 3 covers Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 11 BH/ ca. November 13, 611 CE-October 31, 612 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufir*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
DEEP QUESTIONING

4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a*

clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and

taqlid and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment,

but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations

of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today

are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on compre-

hension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) strategy. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 3* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 3*, we begin with Lesson 24, that is, the Quranic Chapter 80 which is the 24th Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 97, 91, 85, 95, 106, 101, 75, 104, 77, 50, 90, 86, 54 and finally, Chapter 38, the 38th Chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary, an analysis of the signs that answer three questions: Who is God?, How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad? and How are the signs directed towards the Community? Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons while the information related to the chapters (*ayat*) and sections (*ruku*) can be found in Appendix 1. Here appears the list of Muhammad's early Companions, the names of some who do not appear in Ibn Ishaq or Ibn Hisham, but have been recorded by other early scholars. We will hear of some of them who played significant roles in the future development of the community (*ummah*).

LESSON 24. CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth. The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

Here we note that the multiple points of view have created a difference of opinion among Muslims as to whether or not it was a Quraysh leader who was speaking to the Prophet who turned away when the blind man approached or the Prophet.

There is a difference of opinion among the various schools regarding the historic incident that the following first ten signs (80:1-80:10) refer to. Some scholars/historians say that it was one of the Quraysh chieftains who frowned and turned away. Others say that it was Prophet Muhammad who frowned and turned away.

> Once the Prophet was with some chieftains of the Quraysh, namely, his uncle al-Abbas Ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Umayyah Ibn Khalaf al-Jumahi and Safwan Ibn Umayyah, who were at that time were among the ungrateful. At some point during their conversation, Abd Allah son of Maktum, a maternal cousin of Khadija, approached the group. As he was blind, he could not see that the Prophet was sitting with a group of people.[1]
>
> Ibn Maktum said: O Messenger of God! Teach me of that which God has taught you.
>
> The Prophet received this relative of his beloved wife, Khadija, with honor and pleasure and gave him the place closest to him. Since Ibn Maktum was poor and blind, the chieftains of the Quraysh looked down upon him and did not like the honor done and the place given to him by the Prophet in their presence. One of them frowned at Abd Allah and sat, turning his back to him. This displeased God and Gabriel brought this chapter and revealed it to the Prophet then and there.
>
> This chapter commends Abd Allah's position, though poor and blind and condemns the attitude of the Quraysh chieftains. *He frowned and turned away that the blind man drew near him.* (80:1-80:2) Note the address is to the third person singular, *him*. This indicates that the sign was referring to one of the Quraysh chieftains as the Quran addresses the Prophet as "thou" or "thee"or **you** in this translation.[2]

The questioning in this sign clearly indicates that the doubt about Abd Allah being benefited by the talk with the Prophet or not could have been in the mind of one who had not yet embraced the faith and that could never have occurred to a Messenger of God who has been sent to preach the faith to one and all irrespective of any worldly position of the people. The questioning clearly indicates that the addressee was someone other than the Prophet.

The fact that this sign wants to teach is that no spiritual value should be assigned to material wealth and the prospects of guidance being effective or not should not be measured by anyone's economic position in life or his influence in society. *And what will cause you to recognize so that perhaps he will purify himself.* (80:3) The sign is speaking to the Quraysh chieftain who turned his back.

What is wanted to acquire knowledge is the will to learn. The essential urge in any poor man, may help him to grow more in spiritual excellence than the arrogant self-exaltation wealthy one puffed up from his riches and position. *Or yet recollect and a reminder profit him?* (80:4)

Faith requires humility and naturally goes with meekness and the humble: *But as for he who was self-complacent* (80:5) the divine will is opposed to any attention paid to such an arrogant one who looked down at Abd Allah ibn Maktum because of his poverty and being blind and helpless. *Then, you have attended to him.* (80:6) Here, the sign says that Muhammad (thou) attended to him.

It was not the concern of Muhammad if the Quraysh chieftain did not benefit himself by the preaching of the Prophet: *And not upon you is any blame if he purifies not himself. Yet as for him who drew near to you, coming eagerly for knowledge* (80:7-80:8) attention should be paid first to the one who comes striving with earnestness. *And he dreads God, then, you have paid no heed to him?* (80:9-89:10) Muhammad is then directed told, other than giving him a place of honor and having him sit next to you, you need to pay more attention to Ibn Umm Maktum as he is a believer.[3]

The other view states: *He frowned and turned away that the blind man drew near him.* (80:1-80:2) These signs refer to Ibn Umm Maktum. The latter went to see the Messenger while the latter was meeting Utbah ibn Rabiah, Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib, and Ubayy and Umayyah the sons of Khalaf. He was calling them to God, hoping that they might embrace the Quranic message.

Ibn Umm Maktum stood up and said: O Messenger of God, teach me of that which God has taught you. He kept on requesting him and repeating his request, not knowing that he was busy and

dealing with someone else. Signs of annoyance appeared on the face of the Messenger because of being repeatedly interrupted.

The Messenger frowned and turned away from him, and faced toward the people he was addressing. God then revealed these signs. After this, the Messenger used to honor him, and would say, whenever he saw him: Welcome to the one about whom my Lord has rebuked me![4]

QURANIC CHAPTER 80: HE FROWNED (AL-ABASA)
SIGNS 80:1-80:42

Makkah: *He frowned and turned away* (80:1)
that the blind man drew near him. (80:2)
And what will cause ***you*** *to recognize*
so that perhaps he will purify himself (80:3)
or yet recollect and a reminder profit him? (80:4)
But as for he who was self-complacent, (80:5)
then, ***you*** *attend to him* (80:6)
and not upon ***you*** *is any blame*
if he purifies not himself. (80:7)
Yet as for him who drew near to ***you***
coming eagerly for knowledge (80:8)
and he dreads God, (80:9)
then, ***you*** *have paid no heed to him?* (80:10)
No indeed! Truly, this is an admonition. (80:11)
So let whoever willed, remember it (80:12)
in scrolls to be held in esteem, (80:13)
ones that are exalted and ones that are purified (80:14)
by the hands of generous writers (80:15)
and ones who are kindly, generous. (80:16)
Perdition to the human being! How ungrateful he is! (80:17)
From which thing did He create him? (80:18)
He created him from seminal fluid then,
ordained that he be. (80:19)
He made the way easy for him again. (80:20)
Again, He caused him to die and be buried. (80:21)
Again, when He willed, He will revive him. (80:22)
No indeed! The human being finishes not
what He commanded him. (80:23)
Then, let the human being look on his food— (80:24)
how We, truly, unloosed rain water with a pouring out. (80:25)

Again, We split the earth, a splitting. (80:26)
And We put forth in it grain (80:27)
and grapevines and green fodder (80:28)
and olives and date palm trees (80:29)
and dense fertile gardens (80:30)
and sweet fruits and whatever grows on the earth, (80:31)
an enjoyment for you and your flocks. (80:32)
Then, when the blare drew near, (80:33)
that Day a man will run away from his brother (80:34)
and his mother and his father (80:35)
and his companion wife and his children. (80:36)
For every man of them on that Day
will be a matter that will preoccupy him. (80:37)
Faces that Day will be ones that are polished, (80:38)
ones who are laugh and ones who rejoice at good tidings. (80:39)
And faces on that Day will be dust-stained. (80:40)
Gloom will come over them. (80:41)
Those, they are the ones who are ungrateful,
ones who act immorally. (80:42)

COMMENTARY°

THE RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

This chapter discusses certain principles of grave importance. It is unique in its images and the impressions it leaves. Furthermore, it combines its marked spiritual effect with superb musical rhythm. (80:1-80:16)

INGRATITUDE

Human ingratitude to God and his denial of Him come up for discussion in the second part. Here a person is reminded of his origin; how his life is made easy; how God determines his death and resurrection; and how, after all this, he fails to carry out His orders: (80:17-80:23)

FOOD AND SUSTENANCE

The third part directs a person to reflect upon things of immediate concern to him, namely, his food. Absolute perfection of creation is obvious in the provision of food for us as it is obvious in the creation, proportioning and development of we ourselves: (80: 24-80:32)

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

The final part touches upon "*the blare*" and its fearful effects.

The very sound of the words gives the impression of horror. It will make everyone unaware of anything around them. Our faces, however, provide a lucid account of what is happening to us. (80:33-80:42)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 80:1-80:42

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who gives rain water, who splits the earth so that it puts forth grain, grapevines, green fodder, olives, date palm trees and dense, fertile gardens and sweet fruits and whatever grows in and on the earth for us and our flocks. God created us from a seminal fluid, made our way easy and causes us to die and to live again. Once again He will revive us when He wills.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

There is a difference of opinion regarding who the Quran is speaking about in Signs 80:1-80:16. If to the Prophet, he is admonished for frowning and not giving proper attention to Ibn Umm Maktum, the blind man, when he approached the Prophet. The message makes clear that there is no blame on the Prophet.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Depending on how one interprets 80:1-80:16, if one thinks that "him" (80:2) refers to the Quraysh chieftain who frowned and turned away from Ibn Umm Maktum, then, the Quranic message tells the ungrateful in the community not to be self-complacent.

The community at large is told that their deeds will be recorded by scribe-angels, ones who are exalted, purified, generous and kind. Those who deny the Quranic message are damned for their ingratitude. The Quran says that the human being does not finish what God has commanded of him. There will come the Day when he will run from his brother, his mother and father, his companion wife and children. Something else will preoccupy him on that Day.

There will be those who are happy and those who are not. Those who will not be happy are those who are ungrateful and who act immorally.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What are some of the multiple viewpoints presented in these signs?

What relevant points of view have been ignored thus far?

Have you considered this issue from an opposing perspective?
Are you not open to changing your view?
Have you entered the opposing views in good faith, or only enough to find flaws in them?
Do you need to look at this from another perspective?
Do you need to consider another point of view?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered class time as a time in which I practiced thinking (within the subject) using the fundamental concepts and principles of the course.
I did not sit back passively, waiting for knowledge to fall into my head.

LESSON 25. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS, SOLUTIONS• (UNDERSTANDING)

We further develop our reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding how to make interpretations, inferences (a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning) and/or conclusions based on the Quranic message.

Thinking differs from reasoning. Thinking is simply a succession of thoughts that are not necessarily related to one another. Reasoning, on the other hand is where one thought leads directly to another. When you actively engage in reasoning, it is called 'to infer' or to make inferences.

When you infer something from a Quranic sign from something else that it says, you move from the second thought back to the first thought because you infer that the second thought makes it reasonable for you to believe in the truth of the first thought.

Words that indicate that one thought supports another thought are called "inference indicators'. Some examples are: Since, thus, implies, consequently, because, it follows that or given that. Inference indicators may or may not be present in the Quranic signs.

In this section, the Quran asks a question: *What will cause you....* infers that you do not know so the Quran responds telling you what it is: *It is better than a thousand months....*? When you read signs 97:3-97:5 and you refer back to the question asked (97:2), you are "interpreting, inferring, arriving at conclusions" and the answer to the question is: The night of power. By asking a rhetorical question to which God does not expect an answer, the use of "cause" here is an "inference indicator." Who other than God can "cause" you to know something?

QURANIC CHAPTER 97: THE NIGHT OF POWER (AL-QADR) SIGNS 97:1-97:5

Makkah: *Truly, We caused it to descend*
on the night of power. (97:1)
And what will cause you to recognize
what is the night of power? (97:2)
The night of power is better than a thousand months. (97:3)
The angels come forth and the Spirit during it
with their Lord's permission, with every command. (97:4)
Peace it is until the time of the rising dawn.(97:5)

COMMENTARY°

A MOST DISTINGUISHED NIGHT

This chapter speaks about the promised great night which the whole universe marks with joy and prayer. It is the night of perfect communion between this world and the Supreme society. That night marked the beginning of the revelation of the Quran to Muhammad, an event unparalleled in the history of humanity for its splendor and the significance it has for the life of humanity as a whole. Its greatness is far beyond human perception: (97:1-97:3)

There is also the light of the angels and the Spirit moving between the earth and the Supreme society: *The angels come forth and the Spirit during it with their Lord's permission, with every command.* (97:4) In addition, there is also the light of dawn which the chapter represents as perfectly harmonious with the light of the Quran and the angels as well as with their spirit of peace: *Peace it is until the time of the rising dawn.* (97:5)

This means that the night of power marked the beginning of the revelation of the Quran to the Messenger and his mission of delivering it to humanity.

This night is too sublime for proper human perception: *And what will cause you to recognize what is the night of power?* (97:2) That night is great because of what the Quran includes: An ideology, a basis for values and standards and a comprehensive code of moral and social behavior, all of which promote peace within the human soul and in the world at large. It is great because of the descent of the angels, and Gabriel, in particular, by their Lord's leave, carrying the Quran. They fill all the space between heaven and earth in such a splendid, universal celebration, vividly portrayed in this chapter.

The Quranic method of education and character building links worship with faith and establishes truth in our hearts and consciences. By this method, worship is considered a means for maintaining full awareness of this truth, its clarification and firm establishment in our minds, hearts and souls. This method has been proved to be the best for the revival of this truth so that it has an unfailing influence on people's behavior. The theoretical understanding of this truth cannot, on its own and without worship, establish it or give it the necessary impetus for its operation in the life of the individual or society. This link between the anniversary of the night of power and its consecration in faith and devotion is a part of the successful and straightforward method of the Quranic message.

STUDENTS MAKING INFERENCES SHOULD•

Draw conclusions
Give meaning to data
Infer only what the evidence implies
Check inferences for their consistency with each other
Identify assumptions underlying your inferences.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 97:1-97:5

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who causes the night of power to descend.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quran itself asks Prophet Muhammad: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the night of power is?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

After reasoning (discerning) the main points, we can decide what the best answer or conclusion to the question is.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What inferences, judgments or conclusions does this sign make?
What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on this Quranic sign?
Here is the information.
How are you interpreting it?
What is it telling you?
What meaning would you give to it?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to take problems one by one, state each one clearly.
I studied the problem to make sure I knew what the problem was.
I figured out what things I had to do to solve it.
I was able to distinguish between problems over which I had control and ones over which I did not have control.

I was able to figure out the information I needed and I actively sought that information.

I carefully analyzed and interpreted the information I collected and was able to draw reasonable inferences from it.

I figured out what my options for action were and what I needed to do in the short term.

I figured out what my options for action were and what I needed to do in the long term.

I evaluated my options taking into account their advantages and disadvantages.

I adopted a strategic approach to the problem and followed through.

As I took action, implications began to emerge and I was ready to immediately change the strategy if necessary.

As more information became available, I was able to shift my strategy, analysis and/or statement of the problem when more information became available to me.

LESSON 26. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY•

Quranic thinking offers us concepts and principles that help us analyze, assess and improve our thinking when we better understand the meanings of the Quranic signs.

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas as here with the multiple oaths that God swears by (91:1-91:8). It is these concepts that it uses that we need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what we include and exclude because of them.

What are principles? Principles express the relationship between concepts. What are the principle of these signs? Their relationship?

Quranic thinkers begin developing their reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what it means to utilize concepts, definitions, principles, models and vocabulary.

QURANIC CHAPTER 91: THE SUN (AL-SHAMS) SIGNS 91:1-91:10

Makkah: *By the sun and its forenoon* (91:1)
and by the moon when it related to it (91:2)
and by the daytime when it displayed it (91:3)
and by the nighttime when it overcomes it (91:4)
and by the heaven and what built it (91:5)
and by the earth and what widened it (91:6)
and by the soul and what shaped it (91:7)
and, then, inspired it to its acting immorally and God-consciousness, (91:8)
he who made it pure prospered. (91:9)
Surely, is frustrated whoever seduced it. (91:10)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:15)

COMMENTARY°

THE RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

This chapter, which maintains the same rhyme in all its signs and keeps the same musical beat throughout, starts with several aesthetic touches which seem to spring out from the surrounding uni-

verse and its phenomena. These phenomena form the framework which encompasses the great truth which is the subject matter of the chapter, namely, our human nature, his inherent abilities, choice of action, and responsibility in determining our own fate.

GOD'S SOLEMN OATH

By the sun and his morning brightness...: (91:1-91:10) God swears by these objects and universal phenomena as He swears by our human soul, how it is fashioned and the inspiration it receives. The oath gives these things an added significance and draws the human being's attention to them. We ought to contemplate these phenomena and try to appreciate their value and the purpose of their creation.

There exists in fact, some kind of a special language through which the human heart communicates with the universe. This language is part of our human nature. It is a language which does not use sounds and articulation. It is a communication to hearts and an inspiration to souls which come alive whenever we look up to the universe for an inspiring or cheerful sight. Therefore, the Quran frequently urges us to reflect upon our surroundings. It does this in various ways, sometimes directly and sometimes with hints, incidental touches and stimuli. In this case, for example, some phenomena of the universe are made the subject of God's oath, in order to serve as a framework for what follows in the chapter. These explicit directives and indirect hints are very frequent in the chapters of the present volume. There is hardly any chapter which does not encourage us, in one way or another, to communicate with the universe, in secret language, so that we may appreciate its signs and understand its address.

A LOOK INTO THE HUMAN SOUL

The chapter moves on to state the basic truth about the human being, and relates this truth to the various phenomena of the universe, for we are one of the most remarkable wonders in this harmonious creation: (91:7-91:10)

God has created us with a duality of nature and ability. What we mean by duality is that the two ingredients in our make-up, i.e. earth's clay and God' spirit, that forms within us two equal tendencies to good or evil, to either follow divine guidance or go astray. We are just as capable of recognizing the good as we are of recognizing the evil in everything we encounter, and we are equally capable of directing ourselves one way or the other. This dual ability is deeply ingrained within us. All external factors, like divine messages, only serve to awaken our ability and help us take its chosen way. In other

words, these factors do not create this innate ability. They only help it to develop.

In addition to his innate ability, we are equipped with a conscious faculty which determines our line of action. Therefore, we are responsible for our actions and decisions. We who use this faculty to strengthen our inclinations to what is good and to purify ourselves and to weaken our evil drive will be prosperous and successful. By contrast, a person who uses this faculty to suppress the good in him will ruin himself: *He who made it pure prospered. Surely, is frustrated whoever seduced it.* (91:9-9:10)

There must be, then, an element of responsibility attached to the human conscious faculty and freedom of choice. Since we are free to choose between our tendencies, our freedom must be coupled with responsibility. We are assigned a definite task related to the power given to him. But God, the Compassionate, does not leave us without guidance other than our natural impulses or our conscious, decision-making faculty. God helps us by sending us messages which lay down accurate and permanent criteria. He and points out the signs to us, within us and in the world at large, which should help us choose the right path and clear our way of any obstructions so that we can see the truth. Thus, we recognize our way easily and clearly and our conscious decision-making faculty functions in full knowledge of the nature of the direction it chooses and the implications of that choice.

From this very general outline of the Quranic concept of the human being emerges a number of vital and valuable facts: Firstly, that this concept elevates us to the high position of being responsible for our actions and allows us freedom of choice granted to us by God. Responsibility and freedom of choice, therefore, make us the honored creature of this world, a position worthy of the creature in whom God has blown something of His own spirit and raised above most of His creation

Secondly, it puts our human fate in our own hands and makes us responsible for it. This stimulates caution in us as well as a positive sense of fear of God. This is in itself a great responsibility which demands that one should always be alert.

Thirdly, it reminds us of our permanent need to refer to the criteria fixed by God in order to ensure that our desires do not get the better of us. Thus, we remain near to God, follow His guidance and illuminate our way by divine light. Indeed, the standard of purity we can achieve is limitless.

Links the Human Soul to the Universe

In conclusion, we say the chapter provides a link between the human soul, the basic facts of the universe, its constant and repetitive scenes and God's unfailing law of punishing tyrant transgressors. This He does according to His own wise planning which sets a time for everything and a purpose for every action. He is the Lord of man, the universe and fate.

Summary of Signs 91:1-91:10

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

These signs (91:1-91:10) are directed towards the community. The community is told that our soul is inspired to either act immorally or to develop God-consciousnessness. To act immorally frustrates and corrupts the soul while developing God-consciousness purifies and makes it prosper.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood the concept in these signs of God's solemn oaths.
I understood the concept of the human soul in these signs.

LESSON 27. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views.

They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth.

When giving or being given an interpretation, we learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, we consider competing theories and develop our own theories.

What arguments are the tyrants said to have against the Companions of the Ditch? Do you agree with the conclusion of the tyrants? Is this a case where you want to consider other points of view? Does the Quran give evidence for its conclusion?

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CONSTELLATIONS (AL-BURUJ)
SIGNS 85:1-85:21

Makkah: *By the heaven*
possessing the constellations, (85:1)
by the promised Day, (85:2)
by ones who bear witness and ones who are witnessed, (85:3)
the Companions of the Ditch were slain, (85:4)
possessors of the fuel of the fire (85:5)
above which they were ones who sit, (85:6)
as they were, in what they accomplish
against the ones who believe,
ones who bore witness. (85:7)
And they sought revenge on them only because
they believe in God, The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise, (85:8)
Him to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
And God is Witness over everything. (85:9)
Truly, those who persecuted the males,
ones who believe, and the females,

ones who believe, and again repent not after that,
for them is the punishment of hell
and for them is the punishment of the burning. (85:10)
Truly, those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them will be Gardens beneath which rivers run.
That will be the Great Triumph. (85:11)
Truly, the seizing by force by your Lord is severe. (85:12)
Truly, He causes to begin and He causes to return. (85:13)
And He is The Forgiving, The Loving, (85:14)
the Possessor of the Glorious Throne (85:15)
Achiever of what He wants. (85:16)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Pharaoh (85:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Pharaoh (85:18)
Nay! Those who were ungrateful are belying (85:19)
and God is One Who Encloses them from behind. (85:20)
Nay! It is a glorious Recitation (85:21)
inscribed on the Guarded Tablet.

COMMENTARY°

The immediate theme of the chapter is the ditch incident. It is said to have taken place in Ukhdud, five kilometers south of Najran in Arabia. It occurred around 520 or 523 CE, about fifty years before the birth of the Prophet.

***

When a community of believers who lived before the advent of the Quranic message, said to be unitarian Christians, were faced by ruthless and tyrannical enemies who sought to force them away from their faith. The believers refused. The tyrants then lit a great fire in a ditch they had dug, and threw them into it. The believers were thus burnt to death in front of large crowds that had gathered to witness this ghastly act of extermination. The tyrants sat by, amused by the believers' sufferings: *And they sought revenge on them only because they believe in God, The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise,* (85:8)

The chapter starts with an oath: *By the heaven possessing the constellations, by the promised Day, by ones who bear witness and ones who are witnessed, the Companions of the Ditch were slain,* (85:1-85:4) In this way the chapter links heaven and its magnificent constellations, the promised Day of Judgment and its great events, the multitudes which witness that day and the events they witness

with the ditch incident and God's anger with the aggressors responsible for it. The chapter then proceeds to portray the tragic scene in a few, quick flashes which demonstrate the horror without dwelling on detail.

It includes a reference to the greatness of faith which exalted itself over the tyrants' atrocious cruelty and triumphed over the fire, attaining a level of sublimity which is an honor to all humanity. It also refers to the heinous crime and the evil and injustice it involves in comparison with the sublimity, innocence and purity of the believers: *The Companions of the Ditch were slain, possessors of the fuel of the fire above which they were ones who sit, as they were, in what they accomplish against the ones who believe, ones who bore witness.* (85:4-85:7)

Then follows a series of short signs stating a number of principles which are highly important to the Quranic message, its outlook and advocacy. We have firstly a reference to the fact that all the heavens and earth are part of God's kingdom and to His witnessing of all that takes place in them. He is the Sovereign of the heavens and the earth, who witnesses all.

Secondly, we have a reference to the burning in hell which awaits the tyrants, and a reference to the perfect heavenly bliss which awaits the believers who choose faith over life and exalt themselves despite their persecution. The believers' action is referred to as the great triumph: *Truly, those who persecuted the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe and again repent not after that, for them is the punishment of hell and for them is the punishment of the burning. Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them will be Gardens beneath which rivers run. That will be the Great Triumph.* (85:10-85:11)

A further reference is made to the power with which God smites His enemies and to the fact that He creates and brings back to life after death: *Truly, the seizing by force by your Lord is severe. Truly, He causes to begin and He causes to return.* (85:12-13) This relates directly to the lives blotted out in the pit incident.

The chapter then mentions some of the divine attributes, each of which has a specific relevance to the subject matter of the chapter: *And He is The Forgiving, The Loving,* (85:14) He forgives those who repent regardless of the enormity and horror of their sins. He also loves His servants who choose Him. His love is the soothing balsam which heals whatever injuries they may have suffered: *The Possessor of the Glorious Throne, Achiever of what He wants.* (85:15-16) These attributes portray God's absolute will, dominance and power, all of which are relevant to the event discussed in the chapter.

Finally, the chapter explains the situation of the ungrateful and that God surrounds them though they may be unaware of the fact. *Nay! Those who were ungrateful are belying and God is One Who Encloses them from behind.* (85:19-85:20) It concludes with a statement of the truth of the Quran and its blessed origin: *Nay! It is a glorious Recitation inscribed on the Guarded Tablet.* (85:21)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 85:1-85:21

WHO IS GOD?

Heaven and earth are part of God's Kingdom and His witnessing all that takes place. God strikes down tyrants, the ungrateful with inflated egos, even those who are heavily armed. God causes everything to begin and to return. He is The Forgiving, The Loving, Possessor of the Glorious Throne, Achiever of what He wants. The Quran is a glorious recitation inscribed on the Guarded Tablet. God encloses the tyrants from behind, that is, takes them unaware.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who seek revenge against people only because those believe in God will roast in hell while believers will rest in heavenly bliss. This achievement by the believers is the Great Triumph. Those who persecuted believing males and believing females will be the fuel for the fire.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

Be encouraged to argue back and forth, and modify your positions in light of the strengths of others' positions. You can become better able to evaluate reasoning by familiarizing yourselves with, and practicing:

EVALUATING REASONING BY:•

Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
Evaluating evidence

Exploring implications.

After extended discussion, state your final positions. Be ready to qualify your claims appropriately.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I disagree with the interpretation reached by those who killed the Companions of the Ditch.
I learned the divine attributes mentioned in these signs.

LESSON 28. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. We learn to distinguish between what we observe from the Quranic signs and what we conclude as the commentary shows us the various interpretations of the fig and the olive. We delve into the facts given in the signs so find the implications as well as the concepts. We should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that we interpret every situation in which we find ourselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 95: THE FIG (AL-TIN)
SIGNS 95:1-95:8

Makkah: *By the fig and the olive* (95:1)
and by Mount Sinai (95:2)
and by this trustworthy land, (95:3)
truly, We have created the human being
of the fairer symmetry. (95:4)
Again, We returned him to the lowest of the low. (95:5)
But those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them is compensation, that which is unfailing. (95:6)
What will cause you to deny the Judgment after that? (95:7)
Is not God The Most Just of ones who judge? (95:8)

COMMENTARY°

God swears to the validity of this by the fig, tin, the olive, Mount Sinai, and the secure city of Makkah. The Mount in Sinai is the mountain on which Moses received his divine summons. The secure city is Makkah, which houses the Kabah, God's inviolable house. The relationship between the two on the one hand and religion and faith on the other is obvious. But a similar relationship is not readily clear with regard to the figs and olives. Suggestions as to the significance of these are numerous. It is said that the fig refers to the fig tree in heaven, with the leaves of which Adam and his wife, Eve, tried to cover their private parts. Another suggestion is that it refers to the place where the fig tree appeared on the mountain where Noah's ark landed.

As for the olive, it is suggested that it refers to the Mount in Jerusalem. It is also said that it refers to Jerusalem itself. Another suggestion is that it refers to the olive branch brought back by the

pigeon which Noah released from the ship to examine the state of the foods. When the pigeon brought back an olive branch, he knew that the land had reappeared and that vegetation was growing.

A different opinion posits that the fig and olive mentioned in the chapter are simply those two kinds of food with which we are familiar. Alternatively, it is claimed, they are symbols of growth out of land.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 95:1-95:8

WHO IS GOD?

God created the human being with the fairer symmetry and then returns the human being to the lowest of the low. God compensates those who believe and act in accord with morality with an unfailing compensation. God is the Most Just of ones who judge.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quran asks rhetorical questions (not expecting answers) that may be asked by others of the Prophet: What will cause **you**, Muhammad, to deny the Judgment? Is God not the Most Just of ones who judge?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Each individual is created by God in the fairer symmetry and then returns to the lowest of the low. For those who believe and at in accord with morality they will have an unfailing compensation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Based on my interpretations of this Chapter I was able to answer the questions:

*What will cause **you** to deny the Judgment after that?* (95:7)
Is not God The Most Just of ones who judge? (95:8)

LESSON 29. CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS*

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when teachers and others continually provide the answers, do their thinking for them or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: *do good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good : *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.*(35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34)

It is often reflective in that we have to go back and think about similar problems that we had faced before and re-analyze them. We do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop us from pursuing truths with our insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

Perseverance can be developed by reviewing and discussing the kinds of difficulties that were inherent in previous problems worked on, exploring why it is necessary to struggle with them over an extended period.

We should come to see mental struggle as crucial to Quranic learning by discovering its reward in genuine understanding. We should have some experiences slowly reading difficult Quranic signs or sections. Prove to ourselves that if we are careful and stick to it, examining it one word, phrase, and sentence at a time, we can master it. Such in-depth reading can be done as a class, sentence by sentence, with us interpreting and explaining as we go.

The Quraysh at the time of the Prophet persevered with their commercial trade routs and became successful businessmen. The Quran here is reminding

them that they need to recognize the benefits and blessings that God provided them and worship the One God instead of worshipping idols that they themselves had created.

Perseverance in goodness is to reconize that everything comes from God including our ability to persevere and the good things which we have been provided.

QURANIC CHAPTER 106: THE QURAYSH (AL-QURAYSH) SIGNS 106:1-106:4

Makkah: *For the solidarity of the Quraysh,* (106:1)
their solidarity is the winter and the summer travel. (106:2)
Let them worship the Lord of this House (106:3)
Who fed them against hunger
and secured them against fear. (106:4)

COMMENTARY°

LEST THEY FORGET

The Elephant incident had an added effect in greatly enhancing the sanctity of the Kabah amongst the Arabs all over the Peninsula. It also strengthened the position of the Quraysh, the custodians of the Kabah , in all Arabia. They were thus able to travel far and wide in peace and security. Wherever they went they met with generosity and high esteem. This encouraged them to establish two great routes for their commercial caravans, to the Yemen in the south and to Syria in the north. They organized two enormous trading expeditions; one to the Yemen in winter and the other to Syria in summer.

God reminds them of these graces in order that they may be ashamed of their submission to other beings, while He is the Lord of the Kabah . God says to them in effect: for this tradition of the Quraysh, namely their winter and summer trips, let them submit to the Lord of this Kabah who guaranteed their security and so encouraged them to take such beneficial journeys. (106:3-106:4) As their land was infertile, they would have starved had it not been for the sustenance supplied by God. *And secured them against fear.* Poor as they were, and living in an insecure surroundings, their life would have been one of fear and apprehension. But God granted them security and allayed their fear.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 106:1-106:4

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The entire chapter refers to the Quraysh whereby God reminds them of

the blessings He has given them.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Choose one moral trait—persevering in goodness, empathic altruism, courage, humility and repentance, etc.—to strive for each month, focusing on how you can develop that trait in yourselves. For example, concentrating on humility, begin to notice when we admit you are wrong. Notice when you refuse to admit you are wrong, even in the face of glaring evidence that you are in fact wrong. Notice when you become defensive when another person tries to point out a deficiency in your work, or your thinking. Notice when your arrogance keeps you from learning, for example, when you say to themselves:

I already know everything I need to know about this subject.
Or: I know as much as he does.
Who does he think he is forcing his opinions on me?

By owning their 'ignorance,' they can begin to deal with it.

O those who believed! Pray for help with patience and formal prayer. Truly, God is with the ones who remain steadfast. (2:153)

WRONG-DOING*

The Quran denounces the obstacle to persevering in goodness which is wrong-doing i. e., doing wrong as the Quraysh example shows. The Quran forbids—all shameful and evil deeds and uses a very comprehensive term, *zulm*, to cover them all. The Quran refers to Satanic tendencies in the human being such as ungratefulness (7:10), hastiness (16:37), impatience (70:19-70:21), despair, and unbelief in times of adversity, and pride and conceit in times of prosperity (11:9-11:10); quarrelsomeness (16:4), arrogance (75:31-75:40), greed of ever more and yet more (74:15), miserliness (17:100), transgression of the bounds of propriety and false sense of self sufficiency: *No indeed! The human being is, truly, defiant. He considered himself self-suffi-*

cient. (96:6) These tendencies often lead to different forms of wrong-doing and, therefore, must be counteracted by all right-thinking people.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

LESSON 30. CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC, BEING REASONABLE

The Quranic signs have their own logic. Events do not just happen. Events described in the sacred text make sense within their meanings. Questions should be asked with a method to them. Figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Your answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How you learn to support your answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that you give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When you learn through this method, you are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. You are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how you think or how you chose to live your life.

As a result, you learn to think of the Quranic text as something you simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, you do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into your lives, you do not "own" it. You rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what you have memorized to your own experience nor are you able to critique each by means of the other. You rarely try to test by making it a part of your everyday life. You rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With this method of memorization of the sacred text, very few of us ever think that we need to implement what we are learning in our life nor have we learned how to do so.

> The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*), that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.... (See Introduction) In the case of Chapter 101, a detailed analysis can be done of the description the Quran gives of The Disaster.

DEALING WITH EGOCENTRISM•

While we may have some egocentric thinking, it is referred to in the Quran as thinking exemplified by Iblis and Pharaoh, among others. Pharaoh told Moses that he, Pharaoh, was the Lord to be worshipped.

Then, Pharaoh said: I am your lofty lord. (79:24)

It is found in the disposition in human nature to think with an automatic subconscious bias in favor of oneself. On a daily basis, we can begin to observe our egocentric thinking in action.

Once we identify egocentric thinking in operation, we can then work to replace it with more rational thought through systematic self-reflection.

If we find that we continually conclude that a rational person would behave just as we behaved, we are probably engaging in self-deception.

QURANIC CHAPTER 101: THE DISASTER (AL-QARIAH) SIGNS 101:1-101:11

The chapter refers to Judgment Day when people will be distracted and the landmarks of this world will be lost, but every deed will be weighed in a just balance, and find its real value and setting.

Makkah: *The Disaster!* (101:1)
What is the Disaster? (101:2)
And what will cause you to recognize
what the Disaster is? (101:3)
On a Day humanity will be like dispersed moths (101:4)
and the mountains will be like plucked wool clusters. (101:5)
Then, for him whose balance was heavy will be (101:6)
one whose life is pleasant, well-pleasing. (101:7)
But he whose balance was made light, (101:8)
his abode of rest will be the pit. (101:9)
What will cause you to recognize what it is? (101:10)
It is a hot fire. (101:11)

COMMENTARY°

DETERMINATION OF PEOPLE'S FATES

Al-Qariah, or the Disaster, refers to the resurrection. Elsewhere in the Quran it is given names such as the Overwhelming One, the Deafening Shout, the Stunning Blast and the Enveloper. The term *al-Qariah* also connotes hitting and knocking hard. It knocks peoples' hearts with its engulfing horror.

The chapter as a whole deals with the Disaster, its essence, what takes place in it and what it eventually leads to. Thus the chapter portrays one of the scenes of the Day of Resurrection.

The scene portrayed here is one of horror directly affecting us and mountains. In this scene people look dwarfish in spite of their great number. For they are like scattered moths. They fly here and there having no power or weight, going through the dilemma of moths which rush to destruction, having no aim or purpose. On the other hand, the mountains, which used to be firm and solidly based, seem to be like carded wool carried away by winds, and even by a light breeze. Thus, it is in harmony with this image that the Day of Resurrection is described as the one that strikes or knocks out. The connotations used and the rhythm are in consonance with the effects of the Disaster on both people and mountains. The chapter spreads an air of awe and expectation about the outcome of reckoning.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 101:1-101:11

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is asked two similar questions about the Disaster (which is the name of the chapter): What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the Disaster is? What will cause you to recognize what it is?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The community is told that those whose balance of good deeds is heavy will have a pleasant, well-pleasing life while those whose balance of good deeds is light, will rest in the fire.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what these signs say.

LESSON 31(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Even though many of us may believe in the Day of Resurrection, when our words expressing belief are not consistent with our actions, this is a sign of a contradiction. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what you get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them.

Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views such as being a Muslim, but not believing or practicing his or her faith with an eye to the Day of Resurrection.

When discussing conflicting lines of reasoning, inconsistent versions of the same story, or egocentric reasoning or behavior, Quranic critical thinkers can be encouraged to bring out both views and practice recognizing contradictions as the example to follow shows.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. Discuss your views on the two different versions and if you interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, ***The Study Quran***)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed

you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, ***The Sublime Quran***)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, ***The Study Quran***)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, ***The Sublime Quran***)

After this study in possible contradictions created through interpretation of Quranic signs, we turn to the Quranic chapter for this lesson where we find a contradiction between thought and deed of those who want to act immorally and yet ask: *When is this Day of Resurrection?* The Quran explains what will happen that Day. It says that those who wanted to act immorally will face the contradiction between their words and deeds by asking: *Where is the place to run to?* The Quran says: *There is no refuge from it so follow the Recitation (al_Quran).*

QURANIC CHAPTER 75: THE RESURRECTION (AL-QIYAMAH) SIGNS 75:1-75:31

Makkah: *I swear an oath*
by the Day of Resurrection. (75:1)
And I swear an oath by the reproaching soul. (75:2)
Assumes the human being
that We will never gather his bones? (75:3)
Yea! We are ones who have power
to shape his fingers again. (75:4)
Nay! The human being
wants to act immorally when faced with it. (75:5)
He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? (75:6)
But when their sight will be astonished (75:7)

and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed (75:8)
and the sun and the moon will be gathered, (75:9)
the human being will say on that Day:
Where is a place to run away to? (75:10)
No indeed! There is no refuge. (75:11)
*With **your** Lord on this Day will be **your** recourse.* (75:12)
The human being will be told on that Day what he put forward
and what he postponed. (75:13)
Nay! The human being is clear evidence against himself. (75:14)
And although he would cast his excuses, (75:15)
*impel not **your** tongue to hasten it.* (75:16)
Truly, on Us is his amassing and its Recitation. (75:17)
*But when We recited it, follow **you** its Recitation.* (75:18)
From Us after that is its clear explanation. (75:19)
No indeed! Nay! You love that which hastens away (75:20)
and forsake the world to come. (75:21)
Faces on that Day will be ones that beam, (75:22)
ones that look towards their Lord. (75:23)
And faces on that day will be ones that scowl. (75:24)
***You** will think that against them is wreaked*
a crushing calamity. (75:25)
No indeed! When it reached the collar bones at death (75:26)
and it was said: Where is one who is a wizard to save me? (75:27)
And he thought it to be his parting (75:28)
and one leg was intertwined with the other leg, (75:29)
*that Day he will be driving toward **your** Lord* (75:30)
for He established not the true nor invoked blessings. (75:31)

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

Chapter 75 puts forward such a great number of truths, scenes, images, special effects, tones and touches that no attentive heart can easily handle or escape from them. Furthermore, its distinctive style and musical cadence also combine to enhance its effect and bring it to a level that is again difficult to resist or to shed. It starts with two short signs with distinctive notes about the Day of Resurrection and the self-reproaching soul: *I swear an oath by the Day of Resurrection. And I swear an oath by the reproachful soul.* (75:1-75:2)

OUR SOUL AND THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

The essential difficulty for the ungrateful was that they could not imagine that bones becoming dust and being swallowed by the

earth could then be gathered together again to bring a human being back to life. This is also most probably true of some people today! The chapter responds to this sort of thinking, confirming that putting everyone's bones back together will assuredly take place: *Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again.* (75:4)

It is worth noting here that every expression in the chapter thus far is short and quick: The signs, the endings, the rhythm, the images and the reckoning process. This appears to be a response to our attempt to disregard the whole idea of the Day of Reckoning and to think that it is too far off.

Then come the four signs giving the Prophet special instruction as regards the way he received Quranic revelations: *Impel not your tongue to hasten it. Truly, on Us is his amassing and its Recitation. But when We recited it, follow you its Recitation. From Us after that is its clear explanation.* (75:16-75:19)

The scenes painted so far of the- Day of Judgment and its great upheavals and divergent fates derive their effect from the truth they represent and the Quran's own powerful style, bringing them alive before us. (75:22-75:25)

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What do the different signs say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other?

When arguing opposing views, you should find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What does each sign (4:23 and 2:231) say? Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agreer?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?
The class can explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 75:1-75:31

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath that there will be a Day of Resurrection and that human beings are endowed with a reproaching soul (*nafs al-lawwamah*). God has the power to gather the bones of human beings and to shape their fingers again. On that Day, He will cause the moon to swallow the earth and the sun and moon to be gathered. God amasses this Day what is put forward and the Recitation. God will offer a clear explanation of the Recitation.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Recourse that Day is only with Muhammad's Lord. While there will be those who make excuses, Muhammad should not impel his tongue to hasten its coming. With his Lord is the recourse. He is told to follow the Recitation. He will see the crushing calamity wreaked on the ungrateful as they are driving towards Muhammad's Lord.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

There are those who assume that their bones will never be gathered and their fingers re-shaped again because they do not believe that God has the power to do this. Instead of believing, these ungrateful people want to act immorally when faced with the concept that there will be a Day of Resurrection. There will be those who will make excuses for their deeds.

Such a person asks: When is this Day? Once that Day comes, these people will ask: Where is a place to run away? Then they will know that there is no refuge. To God is what this person amasses. People like this love that which hastens away (the temporary) and forsake the world to come (the permanent). When in the throes of death, when their legs are intertwined together, these people will ask who can save them.

Everyone will be told on that Day what he put forward and what he postponed. Each is clear evidence against himself. There will be faces that beam on that Day as they look towards their Lord and the faces of others will scowl.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found this lesson to be an excellent study in determining contradictions.

It was important for me to understand that God told the Prophet to follow the Recitation (*al-Quran*).

LESSON 31(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how we experience, how we describe, how we categorize, and how we reason about things. We become more careful and discriminating in our use of words and phrases.

Quranic signs often call on us to compare and contrast two or more things—objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. To merely list similarities and differences has little value in itself. Rather than making such lists, these activities should be proposed in a context which narrows the range of pertinent comparisons and requires some use be made of them in pursuit of some specific goal. For example, if comparing and contrasting two social practices (marriage and divorce), we should use our understanding to illuminate the relationship between them. Thus, only those points which shed light on the particular problem need be mentioned, and each point has implications to be drawn out and integrated into a broader picture.

Here are the two examples of different translations of two Quranic signs we studied in the previous lesson in regard to contradictions. Now we look at them in terms fo similarities and differences to compare and discuss in relationship to the Quranic views on marriage and divorce:

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran*)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. Be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

The Quran warns those who do not accept the message from Prophet Muhammad. They are similar in that God created both from a *sperm-drop, a clot,* but unlike the blessed Prophet, they walk *arrogantly* upon the earth and they do not believe that the One who created them and shaped them has Power to give life to the dead.

QURANIC CHAPTER 75: THE RESURRECTION (AL-QIYAMAH) SIGNS 75:32-75:40

Makkah: *And he denied and turned away.* (75:32)
He went to his people again, going arrogantly. (75:33)
Woe to you! And woe to you! (75:34)
Again woe to you! And woe to you! (75:35)
Assumes the human being that he will be left aimless? (75:36)
Was he not a sperm-drop to be emitted in seminal fluid? (75:37)
Again, he had been a clot
and He created him and shaped him. (75:38)
Then, He made of him two pairs, the male and the female. (75:39)
Is not that One Who Has Power over that
able to give life to the dead? (75:40)

COMMENTARY°

ARROGANT REJECTION

By contrast, we have an image of those bent on denying the truth. They do not prepare for the inevitable end by doing something

in obedience of God. Rather, they arrogantly indulge in disobedience and sin: (75:32-75:33)

Woe to you! And woe to you! (75:34) *Again woe to you! And woe to you!* (75:34-75:35) The chapter uses here an idiom, *awla laka fa awla*, which implies a strong threat and repeats it twice. Therefore the translation expresses the implied meaning.

The history of the divine message is full of people who forgot God and His power, of those who feel their own power, relying on tribes, forces and authority, thinking that all these will give them protection. Then such people are taken away like a fly or a mosquito. Remember then, when the time of death comes it cannot be put forward or backward by even a fraction of a second.

As the chapter draws to its conclusion, it presents another truth from this world that carries a clear pointer to God's design of human life as also to the life to come: (75:36-75:40)[5]

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the translations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic? How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What conclusions am I coming to?
Is my inference logical?
Are there other conclusions I should consider?
Does this interpretation make sense?
Does our solution necessarily follow from the facts?
How did you reach that conclusion?
What are you basing your reasoning on?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 75:32-75:40

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS AN INDIVIDUAL?

It has been recorded that these signs (75:32-75:40) in section 2 of Chapter 75 were revealed in regard to Abu Jahl who was continuously ridiculing the Prophet and the believers in his arrogance.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

I was able to get in touch with my emotions.

I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself: What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?

For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?

What other ways could I think about this situation?

For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it? If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

LESSON 32. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability we have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that we use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Many of the wealthy early Muslims such as Khadija or Abu Bakr did not count their wealth over and over again. They reframed how they used their wealth by giving it to the Islamic movement or by freeing slaves.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. We are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did as another example that follows.

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>
> Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. We are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did as another example:
>
> The Prophet would preserve the form, the container of a custom or idea which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.
>
> He was inspired by a particular method that he used in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society that apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: He maintained the container of a social tradition, but changed the contents.
>
> He used this method in reconciling social phenomena. He adopted a process and method that is a model for all problem solving. This method can be applied to two problems or two phenomena that in no way resemble each other. Recognizing how important this method is, we cannot fully explore it here. We can only clarify it by a few examples.
>
> Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.[6]

QURANIC CHAPTER 104: THE SLANDERER (AL-HUMAZAH)
SIGNS 104:1-104:9

Makkah: *Woe to every slandering backbiter* (104:1)
who gathered wealth and counted it over and over! (104:2)
He assumes that his wealth made him immortal. (104:3)
No indeed! He will be cast forth into the Crusher. (104:4)
And what will cause you to recognize
what the Crusher is? (104:5)
It is the fire of God, that which is kindled eternally, (104:6)
that peruses the minds, (104:7)
that which will be closing in on them (104:8)
with its pillars, ones that are outstretched. (104:9)[7]

COMMENTARY°

DESPICABLE CHARACTER

This chapter portrays a real scene from the early days of the Quranic message, yet the same scene is repeated in every environment and society. It shows a vile, mean person who is given wealth and who uses it to tyrannize others. He thinks that wealth is the supreme value in life, before which all other values and standards come toppling down. He feels that since he possesses wealth, he controls other people's destiny without being accountable for his own deeds. He imagines that his money and his wealth is a god, capable of everything without exception, even of resisting death, making him immortal and stopping God's judgment and His retribution.

A wicked vanity is let loose within him driving him to mock other people's positions and dignity, to taunt and slander them. He criticizes others verbally, mocks them with his gestures, either by imitating their movements and voices or by ridiculing their looks and features, by words and mimicry, by taunt and slander.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

Was Prophet Muhammad in a position to know?
What would someone need to be in a position to know?
Could the Prophet have directly seen or heard, or would he have to have reasoned to what he knew?
What do we know about the Prophet's expertise and experience?
What experience would you need to have to be an expert?

What must you have studied?
What does he claim about this issue?
Where did he get his information?
Is there reason to doubt him?
Has he been reliable in the past?
Does he have anything to gain by convincing others?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 104:1-104:9

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

God asks Prophet Muhammad: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the Crusher is?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS AN INDIVIDUAL?

The Quranic message condemns every slandering backbiter who gathers wealth and counts it over and over. This person assumes that his wealth has made him immortal. He should think again because God is going to cast him forth into the Crusher.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand how the Prophet reframed the pilgrimage.
I realized that the Prophet was in a position to know how to reframe the pilgrimage as he had been taught by the Quran.

LESSON 33(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS•

The world is not given to us sliced up into categories with pre-assigned labels on them. There are always many ways to "divide up" and so experience the world. How we do so is "essential to our thinking and behavior."

Uncritical thinkers assume that their perspective on things is the only correct one.

Selfish critical thinkers manipulate the perspectives of others to gain advantage for themselves.

Fair-minded critical thinkers learn to recognize that their own way of thinking and that of all other perspectives are some combination of insight and error. They learn to develop their point of view through a critical analysis of their experience. They learn to question commonly accepted ways of understanding things and avoid uncritically accepting the viewpoints of their peer groups or society. They know what their perspectives are and can talk insightfully about them. To do this, they must create and explore their own beliefs, their own reasoning, and their own theories instead of denying the Quranic message.

Perspective is developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing just as the signs below (77:1-77:40) describe the fate on the Day of Decision of those who deny. The signs extend our thoughts, open our inner world to "discussion" within our self and write the sacred words in order to develop our perspective about the Day of Decision. The signs argue in detail what the consequences are for those who deny that there will be a Day of Decision.

The signs give those of us who are unsure, a time to reflect before we come to conclusions. Those of us who, based on our life experiences, already have definite conclusions about the Day of Decision can, with these signs, consider ideas of other perspectives, that is, the perspective of those who deny. All of us can answer questions about what we think as we reflect on new situations. We can compare what we say we believe with how we act.

QURANIC CHAPTER 77: THE ONES WHO ARE SENT (AL-MURASALAT)
SIGNS 77:1-77:40

Makkah: *By ones who are sent successively,* (77:1)
by the storm and raging tempest, (77:2)
by that which causes vegetation to revive, unfolding (77:3)
by the ones who separate a separating (77:4)
by ones who cast a remembrance (77:5)
as excusing or warning, (77:6)

truly, what you are promised will be that which falls. (77:7)
Then, when the stars will be obliterated (77:8)
and when the heaven will be cleaved asunder (77:9)
and when the mountains will be scattered (77:10)
and when the time will be set for the Messengers, (77:11)
for which Day were these appointed? (77:12)
For the Day of Decision. (77:13)
And what would cause you to recognize
what the Day of Decision is? (77:14)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:15)
Caused We not the ancient ones to perish? (77:16)
Again, We will pursue the later ones. (77:17)
Thus, We accomplish this with the ones who sin. (77:18)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:19)
Create We you not of despicable water? (77:20)
Then, We made it in a secure stopping place (77:21)
for a known measuring? (77:22)
And We measured.
How bountiful are the ones who measure! (77:23)
Woe on that day to the ones who deny! (77:24)
Make We not the earth a place of drawing together (77:25)
the living and the lifeless? (77:26)
We made on it soaring, firm mountains.
We satiated you with water of the sweetest kind. (77:27)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:28)
Set out toward what you had been in it denying. (77:29)
Set out to the shade. It is possessor of three columns, (77:30)
having no shade nor availing you against the flaming! (77:31)
Truly, it will throw up sparks of fire like the palace, (77:32)
as though it was a string of saffron-colored male camels. (77:33)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:34)
This Day they will not speak for themselves (77:35)
nor will they be given permission
so that they make excuses. (77:36)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:37)
This is the Day of Decision;
We gathered you and the ancient ones. (77:38)
So if you had been cunning,
then, try to outwit Me. (77:39)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:40)[8]

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

This chapter bears sharp features, powerful images and strong notes. Indeed, it sounds like a spitting fire. It puts hearts to trial, presenting questions and threats that pierce like sharp arrows. We see a host of images from both this life and the life to come, the universe and the human soul, as well as scenes of the suffering that the ungrateful will endure. After each main scene, the chapter levels a fire-like strike at those hearts who deny the truth, saying: Woe on that day for those who deny the truth. This comment is repeated ten times in this chapter alone, as it is the final note deployed in each of its sections. It is an especially apt comment, given its sharp features and strong beat.

The chapter is composed of sections with short, quick signs. It changes its rhyme with each section, although some rhyming sounds are picked up again after they have been changed. All these sections, rhymes and short signs are sharply felt, one after the other. One hardly recovers after one sharp note when a new one begins. Right from the outset, the general atmosphere is tempestuous, starting with a scene of strong winds, or angels: (77:1-77:6) This opening is perfectly consistent with the ambience of the chapter.

Each of the sections that follow the opening of the chapter represents a special round or a journey into a different world. This gives the chapter great scope for reflection, feeling, ideas and responses. This scope is also much wider than the words and sentences imply.

The first round paints scenes from the day of distinction, showing the great upheaval that will take place in the universe. This is the appointment defined by God's messengers to humanity: (77:8-77:15)

The second round refers to the fates suffered by communities of olden times, highlighting the divine law that applies to those who deny the divine message: (77:16-77:19)

Round three takes us to the origins of the human being and the impression they give of God's overall planning: (77:20-77:24)

In the fourth round we see how the earth, which takes its children, living or dead, to its bosom, has been equipped with the facility of stable life and with water that is necessary for life: (77:25-77:28)

The fifth round speaks of those who reject the divine message and how they are received with strong rebuke, as well as their impending punishment, on the day of distinction: (77:29-77:34)

The next two rounds continue with the ungrateful, adding further rebuke: (77:35-77:40)

The question here: *By ones who are sent successively,* (77:1-7)

is that of the resurrection which the ungrateful found very hard to accept, yet the Quran confirms it time after time, in many chapters and in various ways. It was especially necessary that the Quran take such care in establishing the truth of resurrection, this so that the faith can be properly established in people's minds and hearts and further that their standards and values could then be redefined. Belief in the Day of Judgment is the corner-stone of both the divine faith and human life. It is the pivot around which everything in life turns, and the criterion that judges all values and standards. Therefore, establishing the truth of resurrection and subsequent reckoning and judgment needed such a sustained effort.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 77:1-77:40

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who sends forth the angels and the winds.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message asks Prophet Muhammad: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the Day of Decision is?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs repeat seven times in this section of Chapter 75: Woe to the ones who deny the Day of Decision.

FOR STUDENTS

Raise basic and important questions about what you are learning, discover and discuss underlying principles in your thoughts. Explain how what you have learned has changed your thinking in some way. Explore an idea in depth, and either come to conclusions, or clarify issues and concepts. Ask yourself: What do I believe? How do I see things? What reasons seem most persuasive to me? What things are most important in life? What is the difference between important and trivial? What are people like? What kinds of people are there? What is the difference between right and wrong? What is friendship? During such discussions, raise points made during study, and relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What thing is most important in these signs?
What is the difference between important and trivial?
What are his people like?
What kinds of people are there?
What is the difference between right and wrong?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood when the Quran explained what the Day of Decision is.

The Quran used oaths sworn to various aspect of nature that God created to state just as the oaths are true, so we will receive that which God has promised us.

These signs to which God gives oaths are similar to what the astronomers have found in the universe as well as that which naturalists study.

LESSON 33(2). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT LOVE, EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM* (MERCY, COMPASSION)

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Signs (77:41-77:50) first speak to those who do good, that is, those who try to achieve a selfless concern for the welfare of others (*ihsan*). Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*).

Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. It is those who will be given recompense as the doers of good (77:44). Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Emphatic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Recognize your egocentric tendency to identify truth with your immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than your own. This trait also requires that you remember occasions when you were wrong, despite an intense conviction that you were right, and consider that you might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Its disvalue is exemplified by those who *sin, deny* and show hatred, harshness and unkindness to them. The Quran asks: *What is the hadith (discourse) that they will believe after this discourse* (*hadith*)?

QURANIC CHAPTER 77: THE ONES WHO ARE SENT (AL-MURASALAT)
SIGNS 77:41-77:50

Makkah: *Truly, the ones who are Godfearing*
will be amidst shade and springs (77:41)
and sweet fruit for which they lust:(77:42)
Eat and drink wholesomely for what you had been doing.(77:43)
Truly, We, thus, give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good.(77:44)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:45)
Eat, take joy for a little. You are ones who sin.(77:46)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny!(77:47)
Madinah (77:48)

Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:49)
Then, in which discourse after this will they believe? (77:50)

COMMENTARY°

THE OTHER GROUP

Round eight speaks of the Godfearing and the blessings prepared for them: (77:41-77:45)

The last two rounds provide quick glimpses of the people who are bent on denying Gods message. The first reproaches them and the second shows them in obstinate rejection: (77:46-77:47; 77:49)

These rounds, their images and sharp notes conclude with a single sign asking: (77:50)

LESSON 33(2). SUMMARY OF SIGNS 77:41-77:50

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs here (77:41-77:50) in section 2 of Chapter 75 tell of the fate of those who are Godfearing. They will be in the Garden, Paradise, with all they want to eat and drink.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 34(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

WORTHINESS• (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT)

Worthiness indicates significance. Here (50:1-50:15) the signs indicate how worthy God alone is to be worshipped.

The Messenger recites this chapter when he delivers a sermon on (the day of the Festivals (*id*) and before Friday formal prayer, making it the theme and the content of his speech for large audiences. A commentator° says:

> They (the ungrateful) think it strange that someone from among themselves should warn them when this is, indeed, the very thing that human nature easily accepts. It is most natural that God should have chosen one of them to deliver His message for he was someone who could readily share their feelings, speak their language, take part in their activities, be amongst them through their lives, appreciate their motives as also recognize their abilities and limits. Such a person is the best one to warn them against what may happen should they persist in their erring ways, to teach them how to change course, and to outline the duties that they have to fulfil. He would be the first to discharge these duties.
>
> They felt it strange, however, to have such a message delivered in the first place, and were particularly amazed that this Messenger should speak to them about their being raised from the dead.
>
> Those people in Makkah, however, did not look at the question in this light at all. They were too naive to understand the true nature of life and death, or to visualize God's power.
>
> Thus, to them, it was a question of improbability of life after death when people's bodies have decomposed and turned to dust. Yet, since life takes place in the first place, why is it improbable for it to occur again. Moreover, this miracle of life occurs before their very eyes at every moment. It is there around them throughout the universe. It is to this that the Quran draws their attention in this chapter.

QURANIC CHAPTER 50: QAF (QAF)

SIGNS 50:1-50:11

Makkah: *Qaf. By the glorious Quran!* (50:1)
Nay! They marveled that there drew near them
one who warns from among themselves.
So the ones who are ungrateful said:
This is a strange thing. (50:2)

When we died and had been earth dust,
that is a far-fetched returning! (50:3)
Surely, We knew what the earth reduces from them.
And with Us is a guardian Book. (50:4)
Nay! They denied The Truth when it drew near them,
so they are in a confused state of affairs. (50:5)
Look they not on the heaven above them,
how We built it and made it appear pleasing?
And there are not any gaps in it. (50:6)
And the earth, We stretched it out and cast on it firm mountains
and caused in it to develop every lovely, diverse pair (50:7)
for contemplation and as a reminder to every servant,
one who turns in repentance. (50:8)
And We sent down blessed water from heaven.
Then, We caused gardens to develop from it
and reaped grains of wheat (50:9)
and high-reaching date palm trees with ranged spathes (50:10)
as provision for My servants.
And We gave life by them to a lifeless land.
Thus, will be the going forth. (50:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah(50:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the
People of Aad; Book 26: Lot (50:13)
Makkah: Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian,
Companions of the Woods (50:14)
Makkah: *Were We wearied by the first creation?*
Nay! They are perplexed about a new creation. (50:15)

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

It is certainly a momentous chapter, outlining fundamental facts, using a strong rhythm, powerful expressions, clearly-delineated images, highlighted connotations and emphatic sign endings. It addresses our hearts and minds from all angles putting before us the truth that we are always under God's watchful eye, from birth to death, and then to the time of resurrection, gathering and reckoning. This is an ever-present watch of human beings at all times, losing nothing and overlooking nothing. Every breath, fleeting thought and feeling is known. Every uttered word is recorded. Every move is monitored. This complete watch accounts for thoughts and actions alike. Nothing escapes it. Nothing is hidden from it. It monitors secret whispers in the same way as it records what is done in broad daylight.

All these are well-known facts. However, the chapter outlines them here in a way that shows them to be totally new, with surprising effects that combine apprehension with wonder. It shakes us powerfully alerting us to a momentous event, about which we have thus far been oblivious. It uses images of life, death, decay and subsequent resurrection.

Lesson 34(1). Summary of Signs 50:1-50:15

Who is God?

God protects the guardian book, created the heavens, the earth, firm mountains and blessed water from heaven. He caused gardens to develop from it and reaped grains of wheat, high-reaching date palm trees and ranged spathes as provision for His servants. Creation was not a one-time event by God, but there are continuous new creations.

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

The ungrateful marvel that one from among them is one who warns.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

The signs are directed towards the ungrateful who deny the resurrection even after all that God has created. They denied the truth when it drew near them and ended up in a confused state of affairs.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Why were the believers rewarded with victory?
What is the central idea in these signs?
Which of the facts in these signs are most important?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain this to someone.
I understood a new concept, that there are continuous new creations.
I know that if I cannot explain these signs to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 34(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Those who understand the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that they are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science. Quranic thinkers: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.

Sign 50:25 that follows speaks of those who are stubborn in their ingratitude. This would include those who show ingratitude for the goodness of increasing their knowledge. Recall the sign: *O Lord, increase me in knowledge.* (20:114).

50:26 refers to three examples of the stubborn ingrates: (50:25) who delays good, exceeds the limits, is immersed in grave doubt. *Khayr* here means that he did not only withhold himself from the path of goodness but forbade other also to follow it. He had become a hindrance for the people in the way o goodness and exerted his utmost to see that goodness did not spread.

That is, he transgressed the bounds of morality in everything he did. He was ever ready to do anything and everything for the sake of his interests, his desires and his lusts. He amassed wealth by unlawful means and spent it in unlawful ways. He usurped the people's rights, had neither control over his tongue nor over his hands, and committed every injustice and excess. He did not rest content with creating hindrances in the way of goodness but harassed those who adopted goodness and persecuted those who worked for it.

The word *murib* as used in the original has two meanings: a doubter and the one who puts others in doubt, and both are implied here. It means that he was not only himself involved in doubt but also created doubts in the hearts of others. He held as doubtful God and the Hereafter and the angels and the Prophethood and revelation and every other truth of religion. Anything that was presented by the Prophets as a truth was held as unbelievable by him, and the same disease he spread to other people. Whomsoever he came in contact with, he would create one or the other doubt, one or the other evil thought in his mind.

EXAMPLES OF INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from

in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as *you differ in what you say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on us to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose our own.

QURANIC CHAPTER 50: QAF (QAF)
SIGNS 50:16-50:29

Makkah: *And, certainly,*
We created the human being.
We know what evil his soul whispers to him.
We are nearer to him than the jugular vein. (50:16)
When the two receivers are ones who receive,
seated on the right and on the left, (50:17)
he utters not a saying but that there is one ready,
watching over near him (50:18)
when the agony of death drew near with The Truth.
*That is what **you** had been shunning.* (50:19)
And the trumpet will be blown.
That is the Day of The Threat. (50:20)
And every person will draw near with an angel,
one who drives, and an angel witness. (50:21)
*Certainly, **you** had been heedless of this so*
*We removed **your** screen from **you***
*so that **your** sight this Day will be sharp.* (50:22)
And his comrade angel would say:
This is what is ready near me of his record: (50:23)
Cast into hell every stubborn ingrate (50:24)
who delays the good, one who exceeds the limits,
one who is in grave doubt, (50:25)
he who made another god with God!
Then, cast him into the severe punishment! (50:26)
His comrade Satan would say:
Our Lord! I made him not overbold,

but he had been going far astray. (50:27)
He would say: Strive not against one another
in My presence, for, surely,
I will put forward The Threat to you. (50:28)
The statement is not substituted in My presence
and I am not unjust to the servants. (50:29)[9]

COMMENTARY[o]

EVERY LITTLE SECRET

The human being is made by God's hand, and God knows every little detail about him. (50:16) Thus the human being realizes that his inner thoughts are laid open. Nothing is hidden. Even the whispers of his soul, secret as these may be, are known to God, in preparation for the Day of Reckoning, which people often deny. (50:16)

The chapter makes the control even stricter, showing the human being throughout his life as being under the ever-present watch of two angels, on his right and left, who record every move he makes, every word he says and every thought he entertains: (50:17-50:18)

It is noteworthy that truth itself is mentioned here: (50:19) This suggests that a human being sees the whole truth as he is about to die. (50:20)

It is the soul, every single one, that is held to account, and it is the one who receives the outcome. (50:21) It comes with two assigned to it: one driving it on and the other to bear witness.

In this extremely difficult situation, the person is told: (50:22) There is nothing to blur your eyesight now. (50:23)

The chapter says nothing about examining the record. Instead, it states the divine verdict as it is given to the two angels: the one leading the person and the witness. (50:24-50:26)

This scares his companion who, thinking that his long association with the condemned person may reflect on him, hastens to dissociate himself from his doings: (50:27)

A final order is now issued to stop all argument: (50:28-50:29) The occasion is not one for contention. Warnings were issued earlier, stating the nature of requital for every action. No one is unjustly dealt with, for the one who looks into peoples cases and determines their fate is the faultless arbiter.

Such was the method adopted by people who benefited by the Quran and by the Prophets directives concerning the facts it speaks of. They took to heart what it said and acted on its basis.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 50:16-59:29

WHO IS GOD?

God is closer to us than our jugular vein. God knows what evil our soul whispers to us. God is not unjust.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

He had previously been unaware of the Day of The Threat so God removed his screen from him so that his sight this Day will be sharp.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God knows of what evil their soul whispers to them. Those who are stubborn and ungrateful will be cast into hell along with those who delay or prevent the good, those who are aggressors (ones who exceed the limits), those who are in grave doubt and make another god with God. They will receive a severe punishment. Satan will try to deny that he had anything to do with their deeds, but God will not accept any striving in His presence and He is not unjust to his servants.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

Are the above signs evocative? To the point?

How does it illustrate or enhance the point made?

Evaluate the psychological, sociological, or historical accuracy of the sign.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand the examples of interdisciplinary connections based on the Quranic signs.

I now know which sign in the Quran says that God is nearer to us than our jugular vein.

LESSON 34(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Who are the wise? (50:32-50:35) Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

Suggest a classroom discussion on the importance of attaining consistency of thought and action which can result in wisdom (*hikmah*). What is wisdom?

Wisdom[10] as a human ideal stands for the human being's search for knowledge or truth. It is something which is distinguished from conjecture or imperfect knowledge: *There is no knowledge with them about it but they are pursuing an opinion.* (4:157)

Different stories are related in the Quran, several similitudes and signs pointing to reality are detailed and explained, so that people may reflect and ponder over things. It is the characteristic of the God-conscious that they not only celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, but also contemplate and ponder over the different phenomena of nature. *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:190-3:191) The people are, therefore, advised repeatedly to look at and observe the phenomena of nature, pondering over everything in creation to arrive at the truth.

None can grasp the message of revelation except people of understanding and those firmly grounded in knowledge. *And none recollects, but those imbued with intuition.* (3:7) Lack of true knowledge leads people to revile the true God: *And offend not those who call to other than God so that they not offend God out of spite without knowledge.* (6:108) invent lies against Him, and worship other gods besides Him. The only safety lies in following the revelation which is replete with the knowledge of God: *Know that it was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God.* (11:14)

Whosoever has been given knowledge has indeed been given abundant good: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269) Those who dispute wrongly about God are the ones who are without knowledge, without guidance, and without a book of enlightenment. Only those people will be promoted to suitable ranks and degrees who have faith and are possessed of

knowledge, and only those who have knowledge really fear God and tread the path of God-consciousness.

The Quran advises the Prophet to pray for advance in knowledge. *And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge!* (20:114) The mysterious teacher of Moses who tried to help him have a glimpse of the working of the unseen had knowledge proceeding from God, i.e., *ilm al-ladunni. Then, they found a servant among Our servants to whom We gave mercy from Us and We taught him knowledge which proceeds from Our Presence* (ilm al-ladunni). (18:65) Saul (Jalut) was appointed king of the Jacobites because he was gifted by God abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess. Noah, David, and Solomon possessed knowledge and judgment. Jacob had a lot of knowledge and experience; Joseph possessed abundant power and knowledge, and so also was Moses given wisdom and knowledge. It was through knowledge and reflection on the phenomena of nature, the heaven and the earth, that Abraham was able to arrive at the ultimate truth. It was through his personal experience and knowledge—his ideals being consistent with his actions—that Joseph refused to follow the path of the unbelievers and adopted the path of Abraham.

Signs 50:30-50:45 to follow contrast and compare the ideal addressed in the Quranic signs with actual practice in order to attain that ideal—a heart that turns in repentance. The Quran is a reminder of this to whomever has a heart, who has the ability "to hear" and actually listens—this person becomes a witness to the Quranic ideals through their practices.

QURANIC CHAPTER 50: QAF (QAF)
SIGNS 50:30-50:45

On a Day when We will say to hell:
Are you full?
And it will say: Are there any additions? (50:30)
And the Garden was brought close
to the ones who are Godfearing, not far off. (50:31)
This is what is promised you,
for every penitent and guardian (50:32)
who dreaded The Merciful in the unseen
and drew near with a heart
of one who turns in repentance: (50:33)
Enter you there in peace. That is the Day of Eternity! (50:34)
They will have what they will in it
and with Us there is yet an addition. (50:35)
And how many We caused to perish before them of generations
who were stronger than they in courage
so that they searched about on the land.

Was there any asylum? (50:36)
Truly, in that is a reminder for him,
for whoever had a heart or,
having the ability to hear, gave listen.
He is a witness. (50:37)
Madinah (50:38)
*So have **you** patience with whatever they say*
*and glorify with the praise of **your** Lord*
before the coming up of the sun and before sunset. (50:39)
And in the night glorify Him
and at the end part of the prostrations. (50:40)
*And listen **you** on a Day when one who calls out*
will cry out from a near place. (50:41)
On a Day when they will hear the Cry with The Truth.
That will be the Day of going forth. (50:42)
Truly, it is We who give life and cause to die
and to Us is the Homecoming (50:43)
on a Day when the earth will be split open swiftly.
That will be an easy assembling for Us. (50:44)
We are greater in knowledge as to what they say.
*And **you** are not haughty over them so remind by the Quran*
whoever fears My threat. (50:45)

COMMENTARY°

Thus the fearsome scene of reckoning, with all its hardship, is thus ended, but the overall scene continues, with the chapter revealing a more fearful aspect of it: Thus, the fearsome scene of reckoning, with all its hardship, is thus ended, but the overall scene continues, with the chapter revealing a more fearful aspect of it: (50:30) The whole scene is one of dialogue. Therefore, hell is portrayed here in the same way, with a question put to it and an answer given. This reveals something that is both amazing and awesome. We see every hardened ungrateful, everyone who hindered good, who was a sinful aggressor, a fomenter of doubt being thrown into hell where they pile up in great numbers. Then hell is asked whether it has had its full. Its reply is that of an unsatiated glutton: *Are you full?* How frightening!

A contrasting image is drawn on the other side: It is pleasant, calm and friendly. Heaven is shown drawing near to the God-conscious such that they can see it for themselves. An honorable welcome awaits them: (50:31-50:35) The final part of the chapter sounds like the final beat of a tune, as it repeats its strongest notes to an even faster time. It includes a glimpse of history and the fate of the earlier ungrateful, an image from the open book of the universe and a new

scene from the Day of Judgment, all coupled with a serious and inspiring directive: (50:36-50:45)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 50:31-50:45

WHO IS GOD?

One day God will address hell and ask: Are you full? It is God who gives life and causes to die and to God is the Homecoming on a Day when the earth will be split open swiftly. God caused to perish many generations before who were stronger in courage than whoever denies the Quranic message.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message confirms that Prophet Muhammad is not haughty over the people. It addresses him saying: So have you, Muhammad, patience with whatever the ungrateful say to him and glorify with the praise of **your** Lord before the coming up of the sun and before sunset. And in the night glorify Him and at the end part of the prostrations. And listen **you**, Muhammad, on a Day when one who calls out will cry out form a near place. Prophet Muhammad should remind by the Quran whoever fears God's threat.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Godfearing will have the Garden (Paradise) brought close to them. This will be for every penitent and guardian who dreaded The Merciful in the unseen and drew near with a heart of one who turns in repentance. These are the people who are invited to enter in peace on the Day of Eternity.

The Quran is a reminder for whoever has a heart and having the ability to hear, gives listen. He is a witness.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand the importance of self-development and working on myself.
I love observing nature showing the signs of God.

LESSON 35. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING:
USING CRITICAL VOCABULARY

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (90:5, 90:7, 90:10, 90:12). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of 'Say" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to seek wisdom. (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! **You** had not created this in vain. Glory be to **You**! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to **you**, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Barriers or Obstacles to Quranic Thinking

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): (9:73-9:74)[11]

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

When participating in discussions, explain the role of your remarks in the discussion:

Supporting a point
Raising an objection
Answering an objection
Distinguishing concepts or issues
Questioning relevance, etc:
    Why were you raising that point here?
    Are you supporting your classmates's point or ... ?

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of God's signs in the universe functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 90: THE LAND (AL-BALAD) SIGNS 90:1-90:20

Makkah: *I swear an oath by this land* (90:1)
you are a lodger in this land (90:2)
and by ones who are your parents and what is procreated, (90:3)
truly, We created the human being in trouble. (90:4)
Assumes he that none has power over him? (90:5)
He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. (90:6)
Assumes he that none sees him? (90:7)
Make we not two eyes for him (90:8)
and a tongue and two lips (90:9)
and guided him to the two open highways? (90:10)
Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. (90:11)
What will cause you to recognize
what the steep ascent is? (90:12)
It is the liberating of a bondsperson (90:13)
or feeding on a day possessing famine (90:14)
an orphan, possessor of kinship, (90:15)
or a needy, possessor of misery. (90:16)
Again, it had been among those who believed
and counseled one another to having patience
and counseled one another to clemency. (90:17)
Those will be the Companions of the Right. (90:18)
But they who were ungrateful for Our signs
they will be the Companions of the Left (90:19)
and over them will be fire, that which is closing in. (90:20)

COMMENTARY°

This short chapter touches on a great many facts which are of central importance to human life. Its style is characterized by powerful allusions. Numerous facts of this nature are not easily combined in any form of concise writing except that of the Quran, with its unique ability to hit the right chords with such swift and penetrating strokes.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 90:1-90:20

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath by the land. God created the human being in trouble. God created two eyes, a tongue and two lips for human beings. He guided them to the open highways, yet none rushed onto the steep ascent.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells him: you, Muhammad, are a lodger in this

land. It asks him: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the steep ascent is?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic message asks: Do human beings who have been created in trouble assume that none has power over them? Do they assume that none sees them? They do not rush onto the steep ascent. What is the steep ascent? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding the hungry on a day of famine, an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor misery. Those who do will be the Companions of the Right who believe and counsel one another to patience and counsel one another to clemency. However, those who are ungrateful will be among the Companions of the Left and over them will be the fire which is closing in on them.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

The following questions may help the in utilizing concepts, theories, definitions, axioms, laws, principles, models and/or vocabulary.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 36. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PRESUPPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINION)

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for you to be aware of them.

When we study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him?* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, we often experience the world in such a way as to assume that we are observing things just as we are, as though we were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People we disagree with, of course, we recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as human being, we always think within a perspective, that we virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection, therefore, between thinking so as to be aware of our assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback we receive from others on our ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the*

human being that We will never gather his bones? (75:3-75:10)

In understanding our own assumptions as we try to exercise Quranic thinking, we begin to realize that we can't figure out everything simultaneously. We have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to answer a question or solve a problem. It must take something for granted. We know that we can always question assumptions as we move forward in our thought process. At the same time, we should think about the assumptions that we are making. We should try to make them with some awareness by asking ourselves: Do they make sense?

We are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. We base both our reasoning and our behavior on beliefs we take for granted. We are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that we can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, we have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. We realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. We are willing to question, and have others question, even our own most cherished assumptions. We consider alternative assumptions. We base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on our rational scrutiny of them. We hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. As developing independent thinkers, we evaluate assumptions for ourselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone we know. *Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

Those who refuse God's message are ones who follow assumptions, conjecture and opinion without examining or evaluating them. The assumption that is questioned here is the accusation made by those ungrateful for God's blessings, the same accusation made by Satan when he refused to bow down to Adam, namely, that it is the fault of God's Will that they ascribed partners with God (or, as in the case of Satan, it was God Who willed that Satan not bow down to Adam). The Quran asks the ungrateful: *Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to Us*? (6:148)

God's revelation clearly states not to associate partners with God, but the ungrateful refuse to believe and prefer, instead to make excuses for their behavior rather than admit to their error. This sign teaches critical thinkers to question and distinguish between that which is conjecture and opinion and that which is the truth.

Analyze group influences on your life: Closely analyze the behavior that is encouraged, and discouraged, in the groups to which you belong. For any given group, what are they 'forbidden' to do? Every group enforces some level

of conformity. Most people live much too much within the view of themselves projected by others. Discover what pressure we are bowing to and think explicitly about whether or not to reject that pressure.

Next consider how we could integrate analyzing group influences on our life into our practice. One of the main things that groups do is control us by controlling the definitions we are allowed to operate with. When a group defines some things as 'cool' and some as 'dumb', the members of the group try to appear 'cool' and not appear 'dumb'. When the boss of a business says: 'That makes a lot of sense,' his subordinates know they are not to say: 'No, it is ridiculous.' They know this because defining someone as the 'boss' gives him/her special privileges to define situations and relationships.

Recall 86:15-86:16 below. *They are strategizing a strategy and I am strategizing a strategy.*

QURANIC CHAPTER 86: THE NIGHT VISITOR (AL-TARIQ) SIGNS 86:1-86:17

Makkah: *By the heaven and the night visitor,* (86:1)
*what will cause **you** to recognize*
what the night visitor is? (86:2)
It is the piercing star. (86:3)
Truly, every soul has one who guards it. (86:4)
So let the human being look on of what he was created. (86:5)
He was created of water, that which gushes forth, (86:6)
going forth from between the loins and the breast bone. (86:7)
Truly, He, in returning him,
certainly is One Who Has Power. (86:8)
On a Day all secret thoughts will be tried, (86:9)
then, there will not be for him any strength
nor one who helps. (86:10)
By the heaven possessing the returning (86:11)
and by the earth splitting with verdure, (86:12)
truly, the Quran is a decisive saying (86:13)
and it is not for mirth. (86:14)
Truly, they are strategizing a strategy. (86:15)
And I am strategizing a strategy. (86:16)
So respite the ones who are ungrateful!
*Grant **you** them a delay for awhile.* (86:17)[12]

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

The signs here are like a persistent and strong knocking on a

door. The knocks and the shouts come one after the other: Wake up! Look around you! Think! Reflect! There is a God! There is planning, trial, liability, reckoning, reward, severe punishment and lasting bliss.

The present chapter has a sharp tone. The scenes portrayed, the rhythm chosen, the sounds of the individual words and their meanings—all contribute to this sharpness of tone. The scenes include the night visitor, the star piercing with brightness, the gushing water, the returning rain and the splitting earth. The meanings include watching over souls: For every soul there is a guardian who watches over it; the lack of strength and help: On the day when consciences are tried, the human being shall be helpless, with no supporter; the complete seriousness: This is surely a decisive word; it is no idle talk. The same characteristics apply to the warnings given in this chapter.

There is complete harmony between the scenes of the universe portrayed in the chapter and the facts it states. This harmony becomes abundantly clear when the chapter is carefully considered.

Summary of Signs 86:1-86:17

Who is God?

God swears an oath by the night visitor. God strategizes and the ungrateful are strategizing.

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

The Quranic messages asks Prophet Muhammad: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the night visitor is? Grant, **you**, Muhammad, the ungrateful a delay for awhile.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

The night visitor is a piercing star. Every soul has one that guards it. Look, people, of what you were created—of water that gushes forth from between the loins and the breast bone. To Him who is One Who Has the Power, you will be returned. On that Day, all your secret thoughts will be tried, exhausting you and there will be no one who helps. Know that truly the Quran is a decisive saying and it was not for mirth or amusement.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.

Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?

The following questions may further help in making assumptions, presuppositions, taking for granted.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are....?
What you are taking for granted.
What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning?
What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?
What are you assuming?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 37(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

BEING FAIR AND JUST* (RIGHT-MINDED)

JUSTICE

Justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as an intellectual standard. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29)*; truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you.* (42:15) and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) for He loves those who judge equitably.

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in justice as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold justice.* (57:25)

The intellectual standard of being fair and just is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in justice as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17), who faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfil all obligations.

Developing into a fair and just person requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish.

They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

This is to attain *far-reaching wisdom* and to remember that the Quran was made to be *easy as a Remembrance.* Will you be *one who recalls*?

QURANIC CHAPTER 54: THE MOON (AL-QAMAR)
SIGNS 54:1-54:22

Makkah: *The Hour neared*
and the moon was split. (54:1) [13]
And if they see a sign,
they turn aside and say: Incessant sorcery! (54:2)
And they denied and followed their own desires.
And every affair is that which is settled. (54:3)
And, certainly, the tidings drew near them
wherein was that which is to deter (54:4)
—namely, that which is far reaching wisdom—
yet warnings avail not. (54:5)
So turn you away from them on a Day
when One Who Calls will call to a horrible thing. (54:6)
Their sight will be that which is humbled
and they will go forth from the tombs
as if they had been dispersed locusts, (54:7)
ones who run forward with their eyes fixed in horror
towards The One Who Calls.
The ones who are ungrateful will say:
This is a difficult Day! (54:8)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:9)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:10)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:15)
So how had been My punishment and My warning? (54:16)
And, certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance.
Then, is there one who recalls? (54:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Aad (54:18)
Makkah: Book 25: Aad (54:19)
Makkah: Book 25: Aad (54:20)

Makkah: Book 25: Aad (54:21)

And, certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance. Then, is there one who recalls? (54:22)

COMMENTARY°

From start to finish, this chapter represents an awesome onslaught against those who deny the warnings, but gives at the same time confident reassurance to the believers. It is divided into a series of scenes, each showing a different type of suffering inflicted on a community of the ungrateful who denied God's messages. Each culminates with a violent shaking of the human heart, as it asks: (54:16) It then lets go, saying: (54:17)

Is there anyone who will receive admonition which occurs six times at the end of each reference to a past story of sin and rejection of warnings and in the appeal to the simplicity of the Quran: *So how had been My punishment and My warning?* There is an invitation to listen to the message and turn to truth and God-consciousness. The Hour of Judgment is nigh, but people forget or reject the Message. Is there any that will receive admonition?

Yet close as the dreaded Hour is, and despite the exciting and great event they have just witnessed and the numerous signs around them, the ungrateful continued to stubbornly reject the message, insisting on their erring ways. Not only did they ignore the warnings, they also did not properly reflect on the pointers to the great truth that should have brought them to faith.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 54:1-54:22

WHO IS GOD??

It is God who made the Quran easy as a Remembrance and the punishment and warning something to be recall.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says directly to Prophet Muhammad: So turn you, Muhammad, away from [the ungrateful] on a Day when One Who Calls will call to a horrible thing.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Referring to the ungrateful, the Quranic message says that when they see a sign, they turn aside and call it incessant sorcery. They deny it and follow their own desires. Warnings avail them not. On that Day, their sight will be humbled and they will go forth from their tombs as if they were dispersed locusts, running forward, their eyes fixed in horror. They will say: This is a dif-

ficult Day, yet it did not have to be. God made the Quran easy as a Remembrance. Is there one who recalls? the Quranic message asks.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND•

Be clear! Can you state what you mean? Can you give examples?
Be accurate! Are you sure it's true?
Be relevant! Is it related to what we are thinking about?
Be logical! Does it all fit together?
Be fair! Am I considering how my behavior might make others feel?
Be reasonable! Have we thought through this problem thoroughly and with an open mind?
Be relevant: Something is relevant when it relates directly to:
the problem you are trying to solve.
the question you are trying to answer.
whatever you are talking about or writing about.
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is relevant:
How does what you say relate to the problem?
How does this information relate to the question we are asking?
What will help us solve the problem?
How does what you say relate to what we are talking about?
How does this relate to our purpose?
Be logical: Make Sure Everything Fits Together
Thinking is logical when everything fits together, when everything makes sense together.
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is logical:
This doesn't make sense to me .
Can you show me how it all fits together?
The sentences in this paragraph don't seem to belong together.
How can I rewrite this paragraph so that the sentences all fit together?
What you are saying doesn't sound logical.
How did you come to your conclusions?
Explain why this makes sense to you.
The messages I am getting from this TV show don't seem sensible.
Should I follow along with these ideas, or should I reject them?

THINK ABOUT PURPOSE

Your purpose is what you are trying to achieve or make happen.

Questions you can ask to target purpose:

What is our purpose in doing what we are doing?
What is my purpose in doing what I am doing?
What is your purpose?
What is the purpose of this assignment?
What is the purpose of the main character in this story?
What is my teacher trying to accomplish?
What is my friend's purpose?
What is the purpose of this textbook?
Should we change our purpose?
Is my purpose fair to everyone?

INJUSTICE*

Opposed to the value of justice is the disvalue of injustice and violation of the principle of the mean such as those among the ungrateful who say on the Day of Resurrection: *This is a difficult Day*!

It is forbidden by the Quran to be influenced by people's vain desires and to deviate from the truth while judging between them. It is also forbidden to distort justice or decline to do justice: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor, then God is Closer to both than you are. So follow not your desires that you become unbalanced. And if you distort or turn aside, then, truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:135) or to withhold justice from people merely because they are your enemies. It would be perfectly unjust to oneself and to others to pile up wealth, to bury gold and silver, and not to spend them in the cause of God and God-consciousness.

The Quran equally forbids as violation of the principle of justice the squandering of wealth like a spendthrift and recommends the middle way of prudence which is neither extravagance nor miserliness. It advises one neither to make one's hand tied to one's neck nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach so that one becomes blameworthy and destitute. One should eat and drink but not waste by excess for that would be violating the principle of justice. Excess in any form is forbidden whether in food or in religion: *O those who believed! Forbid not what is good that God permitted to you and exceed not the limits. Truly, God loves not the ones who exceed the limits.* (5:87) Usury is forbidden, for it means devouring other people's substance wrongfully and involves injustice on both sides: *God eliminates usury, and He causes charity to increase. And God loves not any sinful ingrate.* (2:279)

THE SELFISH CRITICAL THINKER•

Selfish critical thinkers are unjust and unfair, egocentric people who use their thinking to get what they want, without considering how their actions might affect other people. They are good at thinking, and they know it. But they are also very selfish. They may be greedy and unkind as well.

Here is the voice of the selfish critical thinker: I think a lot! It helps me get what I want. I believe whatever I want to believe as long as it gets me what I want. I question anyone who asks me to do what I don't want to do.I figure out how to get other people to do what I want them to do. I even figure out how to avoid thinking if I want. Sometimes I say 'I can't!' when I know I could but don't want to. You can get what you want from people if you know how to manipulate them. Just the other night, I talked my parents into buying me a really expensive new computer gadget I knew they couldn't really afford. But hey, they work don't they? They can always make more money. I'm their kid so they should give me what I want. It helps to tell people what they want to hear. Of course, sometimes what they want to hear isn't true, but that doesn't matter because you only get into trouble when you tell people what they don't want to hear. You can always trick people if you know how. Guess what, you can even trick yourself if you know how."

DEVELOP QUESTIONS ABOUT THE QUESTION•

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.
Question: How does the Quran teach us to think critically?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 37(2). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC, TO BE FAIR)

Having a sense fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah)*. It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. It is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. As 54:49 below tells us: *We created all things in measure*. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness, described as wisdom in the Quranic perspective, is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairnesss when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that they knew the truth only to find that they were wrong. They also learn not to judge any ideas until they are familiar with them and they have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand us and what we are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

Realizing that our classmate may see things differently then we do, teachers may ask:

What is your classmate angry about?
Why does that make him/her mad?
So-and-so, is that right?

Consider the reasons for positions that you disagree with, for example, that of their parents or siblings.

Why doesn't your mother want you to such-and-such?
Why does she think it's bad for you (wrong, etc.)?
What does she think will happen?

Teachers can ask those who have not yet expressed themselves:

What makes sense about what each side said?
What seems wrong?
What aren't you sure about?

QURANIC CHAPTER 54: THE MOON (AL-QAMAR) SIGNS 54:23-54:40

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:23)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:26)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:27)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:28)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:29)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:30)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:31)
Makkah: *Certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance. Then, is there one who recalls?* (54:32)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:33)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:34)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:35)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:36)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:37)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:38)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:39)
Makkah: *Certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance. Then, is there one who recalls?* (54:40)[4]

QURANIC CHAPTER 54: THE MOON (AL-QAMAR) SIGNS 54:41-54:55

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the People of Pharaoh (54:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the People of Pharaoh (54:42)
Are ones who are ungrateful better than those (the people of Pharaoh)*? Or have you an immunity in the ancient scrolls?* (54:43)
Or say they: We are aided altogether. (54:44)
Their multitude will be put to flight and they will turn their backs. (54:45)
Nay! The Hour is what is promised them and the Hour will be more calamitous and more distasteful. (54:46)

Truly, ones who sin are going astray and insane. (54:47)
On a Day they will be dragged into the fire on their faces:
Experience the touch of Saqar! (54:48)
Truly, We created all things in measure (54:49)
and Our command is not but
one as the twinkling of the eye. (54:50)
And, certainly, We caused to perish their partisans.
Is there, then, one who recalls? (54:51)
And everything they accomplished
is in the ancient scrolls. (54:52)
And every small and great thing is that which is written. (54:53)
Truly, the ones who are Godfearing
will be in Gardens and rivers, (54:54)
in positions of sincerity
near an Omnipotent King. (55:55)

COMMENTARY°

A NEW AND POWERFUL WARNING

The chapter makes a general address, wondering at their attitude, particularly when they inspect their forces and feel themselves very powerful. They claim that they cannot be defeated: (54:44) At this point, a clear and decisive statement is loudly echoed: (54:45) Neither large forces to them is none other than God Almighty. It came true at the time and it will always be true.

The chapter leaves it aside to speak about the one that is to follow: (54:46) It is far more bitter and terrible than any suffering they could ever experience in this life on earth. It is more calamitous than any scene of punishment drawn for their understanding: worse than the floods, the howling, cold wind, the blast, the stone-bearing wind and Pharaoh and his host's drowning.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 54:41-54:55

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

God took the people of Pharaoh who denied the signs. God created all things in measure and His command is not but as the twinkling of the eye.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful will be punished. It is they who are going astray and insane. while the Godfearing will be in Gardens and rivers in positions of sincerity near an Omnipotent King.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

Do I have any vested interest in judging this issue?
Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.
I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 38(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE)

Implications follow from our thoughts. Consequences follow from our actions. Our ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

The ungrateful referred to in these signs (38:1-38:14) do not consider the long term implications of their thoughts and words because of their pride. The Quran tells them what the consequences will be for them: (38:14).

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?
Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?
Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly
and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated
by the validity of those implications?
Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

An example is the dream of Abraham and the implications it had for Abraham and his son and the consequences:

So We gave [Abraham] *the good tidings of a forbearing boy. When he reached maturity endeavoring with him,* [Abraham] *said: O my son! Truly, I see while slumbering that I am sacrificing you. So what do you think?*

[His son] *said: O my father! Accomplish whatever you are commanded. You will find me, if God willed, of the ones who remain steadfast.*

Then, when they both submitted themselves to God and he flung him on his brow, We cried out to him: O Abraham! Surely, you established the dream as true! Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. Truly, that was, certainly, the clear trial. Then, We redeemed [Abraham] *with a sublime slaughter and We left for him a good name with the later ones: Peace be on Abraham! Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. Truly, he is one of Our believing servants.*(37:101-37:111)

QURANIC CHAPTER 38: SAAD (SAAD)
SIGNS 38:1-38:14

Makkah: *Saad. By the Quran,*
Possessor of the Remembrance. (38:1)
Nay! Those who were ungrateful
are in vainglory and breach. (38:2)

How many before them
have We caused to perish of generations!
And they cried out but there was no time
for escape for awhile. (38:3)
And they marveled that drew near them
one who warns from among themselves.
And the ones who are ungrateful said:
This is one who is a sorcerer, a liar. (38:4)
Made He all gods One God?
Truly, this is an astounding thing! (38:5)
And the Council set out from them, saying:
Be gone! And have patience with your gods.
Truly, this is a thing to be wanted! (38:6)
We heard not the like of this in the later creed.
This is only made up tales! (38:7)
Was the Remembrance only caused to descend
to him from among us?
Nay! They are in uncertainty about My Remembrance.
Nay! They experience not My punishment! (38:8)
Or are they owners of the treasures of mercy of your Lord,
The Almighty, The Giver? (38:9)
Or is theirs the dominion of the heavens and the earth
and what is between them?
Let them climb up with cords! (38:10)
Their horde is one that is put to flight
among the confederates. (38:11)
Makkah: Book 25: People of Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Book 27: Moses and the Pharaoh (38:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud; Book 26: The People of Lot; Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian, the Companions of the Woods (38:13)
All of them denied the Messengers
so My repayment was realized. (38:14)[15]

COMMENTARY°

Revealed in Makkah, this chapter addresses three issues: God's Oneness, revelation, and the reckoning on the Day of Judgment. These three issues are discussed in its first section. Here the Makkan elders' amazement at the Prophet's call on them to believe in God's Oneness and that he was chosen by God to be His Messenger is described: (38:4-38:8)

Basically, they found it impossible to believe that God would choose one of their own number to deliver His message and more-

over that this person should be Muhammad ibn Abd Allah who had not held a position of authority among them. Therefore, in reply to their question about His choice, God too questions them: (38:9-38:10) This tells them that when God wishes to open the gates of His mercy to anyone, nothing can withhold it. They are further told that human beings own nothing in the heavens and earth; it is a matter of God's sustenance and mercy, which He bestows on whomever He wishes. It is He who chooses those He knows to deserve His bounty and bestows on them whatever He will, without limit or restriction.

The chapter also includes a special touch that is meant to alert hearts to the truth reflected in the creation of the heavens and earth. This is the truth that God wants to establish on earth through the messengers He sends. The two are interrelated: (38:27)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

If Abraham decides to act on the implications of his dream, what would happen?

If Abraham decides not to act on the implications of his dream, what would happen?

What is Abraham implying from his words to his son?

What is likely to happen if Abraham does this as opposed to not doing it?

Is Abraham's dream implying that he should sacrifice his son?

How significant are the implications of Abraham's decision?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 38:1-38:14

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

God swears an oath by the Quran which possesses the Remembrance. The ungrateful are in uncertainty about God's Remembrance.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message asks Prophet Muhammad directly: Are the ungrateful owners of the treasures of mercy of **your** Lord, Muhammad? Are they the sovereigns of the heavens and the earth and what is between them? Let them climb up with ropes. Their horde is one that will be put to flight.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful are steeped in conceit and arrogance. They forget how many generations were caused to perish because of this kind of attitude. They marvel that someone from among themselves is bringing them this warning. They call him a sorcerer, a liar because he calls for all gods to be One God. Their leader tells them to be patient and maintain their gods because they

never heard such things from previous creeds. They are only made up tales that Muhammad speaks of.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities.

I learned that implications come from my thoughts.
I learned that consequences follow from my actions.

LESSON 38(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other as the Quran does in 38:28: *Or will We make those who have believed....*

The solution? *Reflect on the signs* (38:29) Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. Quranic critical thinkers are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found.

As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once you become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, you develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers you are fair-minded. You take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. You are realistic in your approach not seeking a solution that you want, but finding the best solution possible.

When presenting question-answer lessons or activities, the Quranic text tends to provide lists of steps that do not limit the process. For example, it encourages you to consider how the Quranic message answered the same or a similar question.

The best way to develop insight into this is to ask questions. If the first attempt fails or causes other issues, you should consider why and try again. Thus, you can learn the practical difficulties involved in discovering and implementing a workable answer.

It is recommended that the you first state the question. If that has not been done, you should explore the causes at length, exploring and evaluating multiple perspectives. Integrate the strong points within each view. As the process of exploring answers proceeds, you may find it useful to reformulate the description of the question.

You can evaluate the Quranic text's statement of the question and its causes, evaluate the answer tried, and propose and evaluate alternatives. You should be encouraged to explore the beliefs underlying various choices of answers you give to questions such as 38:27 and 38:28 to follows.•

QURANIC CHAPTER 38: SAAD (SAAD)
SIGNS 38:15-38:26

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud; Book 26: The People of Lot; Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian, the Companions of the Woods (38:15)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud; Book 26: The People of Lot; Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian, the Companions of the Woods (38:16)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:17)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:18)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:19)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:20)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:21)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:22)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:23)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:24)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:25)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:26)

QURANIC CHAPTER 38: SAAD (SAAD)
SIGNS 38:27-38:40

And We created not the heaven and the earth
and whatever is between the two in falsehood.
That is the opinion of those who are ungrateful.
And woe to those who are ungrateful in the fire! (38:27)
Or will We make those who have believed
and the ones who have acted in accord with morality
like the ones who make corruption in and on the earth?
Or will We make the ones who are Godfearing
as the ones who act immorally? (38:28)
It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you
so that they may meditate on its signs
and those imbued with intuition may recollect. (38:29)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:30)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:31)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:32)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:33)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:34)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:35)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:36)

Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:37)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:38)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:39)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:40)

COMMENTARY

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye.

The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.[95]

Having stated the main principle in conducting the position of vicegerent on earth and in judging people's disputes, the context of the truth on which the whole system that sustains the universe is based is then stated. Broader as it is than our whole world and role, this basic truth deals with the very existence of the universe and with the life to come. Furthermore, the last divine message to humanity is based on this truth. Indeed, the Quran is the book that explains this great truth: (38:27-38:29)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 38:27-38:40

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

God did not create the heaven and earth and whatever is between without a purpose. God did not make those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality like the ones who make corruption in and on the earth. God did not make the ones who are Godfearing to be ones who act immorally.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says directly to Prophet Muhammad: It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to **you**, Muhammad, so that they may meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition may recollect.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God did not create the heaven and earth and whatever is between without purpose as the ungrateful think. The message tells the believers: God did not make those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality like the ones who make corruption in and on the earth. God did not make the ones who are Godfearing to be ones who act immorally.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Rather than simply asking if a given solution is good, be prepared for an extended discussion of such questions as:

What solution does these signs offer?
What are the effects?
Who is affected?
Did it have the desired effects?
Undesirable effects?
What should be done differently?
What should we do now to rectify the problems that action caused?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I learned about generating solutions to problems from the questions the Quran asks:

Or will We make those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality like the ones who make corruption in and on the earth?
Or will We make the ones who are Godfearing as the ones who act immorally? (38:28)

Lesson 38(3). Critical Thinking Strategy
Exploring Implications and Consequences

Quranic thinkers learn to recognize the implications of Quranic signs that are made and what follows from them. In this way they develop a more complete understanding of the meaning of a sign. Quranic thinkers recognize that if they are to accept the statement in a Quranic sign, they also have to accept its implications. Statement: *This is a Remembrance....* (38:49); implications: *for ones who are Godfearing, it will result in a good destination.* There is no limit to the extent of this process. When taking beliefs into consideration, beliefs that relate to actions or behavior, they consider the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

Quranic Chapter 38: Saad (Saad)
Signs 38:41-38:64

Makkah: Book 26: Job (38:41)
Makkah: Book 26: Job (38:42)
Makkah: Book 26: Job (38:43)
Makkah: Book 26: Job and His Wife (38:44)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (38:45)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (38:46)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael; Book 28: Elijah (Elisha), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (38:47)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael; Book 28: Elijah (Elisha), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra(38:48)
Makkah: *This is a Remembrance.*
And, truly, for ones who are Godfearing this is,
certainly, a goodly destination, (38:49)
the Gardens of Eden, the doors,
ones that are opened up for them. (38:50)
Ones who are reclining in them.
They will call for many sweet fruits and drink in it. (38:51)
And with them will be ones who are restraining their (f) glance,
persons of the same age. (38:52)
This is what you are promised for the Day of Reckoning. (38:53)
Truly, this is Our provision.
For it, there is no coming to an end. (38:54)
This is so.
And, truly, for ones who are defiant,
there will be a worse destination, (38:55)
hell, where they will roast.
And miserable will be the cradling! (38:56)

This is so!
Then, let them experience this—scalding water and filth (38:57)
and other torment of a like kind in pairs. (38:58)
This is a unit, one that rushes in with you.
There is no welcome for them!
Truly, they are ones who roast in the fire. (38:59)
They said: Nay! You! There is no welcome for you.
It is you who put this forward on us.
Miserable will be the stopping place! (38:60)
They said: Our Lord!
Whoever put this forward for us,
increase him with a double punishment in the fire. (38:61)
And they said: What is the matter with us
that we see not men whom we had been
numbering among the worst? (38:62)
Took We them to ourselves as a laughing-stock
or swerved our sight from them? (38:63)
Truly, this is true of the disagreement
of the people of the fire. (38:64)

COMMENTARY°

The Godfearing will be in gardens of perpetual bliss, with gates wide open, where every comfort is available and they are well seated, enjoying all the food and drink they desire, as also female companions of the same age: (38:49-38:58)

The arrogant Makkan chiefs will realize this when they see their fate and compare it with that of the weak elements on whom they poured their derision, claiming that God's mercy would never he shown to those so weak. The scene so described provides contrasting images: (38:49-38:52)

On the other hand: (38:55-38:58) They will argue, quarrel and curse one another in hell, and they will remember how they used to ridicule the believers: (38:62-38:63) They cannot find such people in hell, because they are the ones who belong to heaven. This then is the answer to both their hastening of God's punishment and their ridicule of the believers. This scene forms the third part of the chapter.

Now they are depicted as going straight to hell, one lot after another, with some referring to others and saying: (38:59) What answer do they receive? It is an angry and rash one: (38:59) Would those who heard this insult take it in silence? Not they! Their response comes quickly: (38:60) This is a direct accusation, blaming them for bringing about such a fate. They follow this accusation with a prayer

that reveals how angry they are, wishing to wreak revenge on the others: (38:61)

What happens next? They look around searching for the believers whom they treated with arrogance in their first life, thinking ill of them and ridiculing their claims. They do not see them rushing into the fire alongside them. Therefore, they ask: Where are they? Where have they gone?

Or could it he that they are here but our vision is impaired so we do not see them: (38:62-38:63) Yet those who are missed by the dwellers of hell are enjoying their abode in heaven.

The scene concludes with a statement about the actual situation of the people of hell: (38:64) There is a wide gulf between their fate and that of the believers whom they ridiculed and refused to believe would be God's chosen ones. How miserable is their own lot which they were once keen to hasten: (38:16)

LESSON 38(3). SUMMARY OF SIGNS 38:41-38:64

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

God promises the Gardens of Eden to the ones who are Godfearing and the defiant will face a miserable cradling in hell.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Godfearing shall have a goodly destination while the ones who are defiant will roast in hell.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does this imply? mean? If this is true, what else must be true?
What were, or would be, the consequences of this action?
How do you know? Why wouldn't this happen instead?
Are the consequences desirable? Why or why not?

Explore the implications and consequences of your own beliefs. During dialogical exchanges, you can compare the implications of ideas from different perspectives and the consequences of accepting each perspective:

How would someone who believes this act?
What result would that have?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

How would you evaluate yourself at this point? I am at:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)
Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking
Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice
Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice
Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice
Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of an author using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)
O = occasion: What is going on at the time?
A = audience: To whom is it addressed?
P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?
S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

LESSON 38(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

CLARITY• (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR)

The word "clarification" or to be clear (*bayan*) occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarification in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error.

Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities as the Prophet is told to say clearly: *I ask for no compensation for this nor am I one who invents what is revealed to me.* (38:86) Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because you may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

In order to help us clarify our thinking, we should try to figure out the meaning of what the Quranic message here is saying. Explain your understanding of an issue mentioned in the following Quranic section (*ruku*) to someone else to help clarify it in your own mind.

Practice summarizing in your own words what the Quranic section or sign(s) is saying. Then ask:

Did I understand the sign(s) correctly?
Did I agree or disagree with what my classmate said before I clearly understood what the Quranic text is saying?
Did I feel that I was thinking clearly?
Did I feel my thinking was vague, muddled, deceptive or misleading?

Summarize in your own words what you think the Quran said.
Give one point at a time, explain it and elaborate on what you mean.
Mention a life experience that illustrates the point in hand.
Use metaphors or analogies to help connect their ideas to things you have already understood.

Being clear about what you think when you read a sign(s) of the Quran, helps you understand what the analytic, evaluative and creative process is.

Quranic Chapter 38: Saad (Saad)
Signs 38:65-38:88

Makkah: *Say: I am only one who warns.*
And there is no god but God,
The One, The Omniscient, (38:65)
the Lord of the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them,
The Almighty, The Forgiver. (38:66)
Say: It is a serious tiding (38:67)
from which you are ones who turn aside. (38:68)
I had been without knowledge of the lofty Council
when they are striving against one another. (38:69)
It is revealed to me only that I am a warner,
one who makes clear. (38:70)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:71)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:72)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:73)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:74)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:75)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:76)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:77)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:78)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:79)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:80)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:81)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:82)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:83)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:84)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:85)
Makkah: *Say: I ask of you not for any compensation for this nor*
am I among the ones who take things upon themselves. (38:86)
It is nothing other than a Remembrance for the worlds (38:87)
and you will, certainly, know its tidings after awhile. (38:88)

Commentary°

The chapter concludes by reconfirming the fact of revelation, and the great issue behind it. Needless to say, the ungrateful remain oblivious to these facts. (38:65-38:66)

The Prophet is given instructions as to what to say to the idolaters who were surprised and amazed at what he preached, wondering: (38:5) He is to say to them that this is the plain truth: There is

no god but God, the One who conquers all. He is to further inform them that he himself has no say in all this, apart from giving warnings and leaving people to their Lord to judge. He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between. He has no partners. No one can find shelter against His will whether it be in the heavens and the earth, or in between them. For He is the Almighty, the All-Forgiving. He has all power and He forgives anyone seeking forgiveness and who turns back to Him in repentance.

The Prophet's instructions make it clear that what he has brought people is far greater than what they think, and that it is a prelude to something they choose to remain oblivious of: (38:67-38:68) It is indeed far greater than it appears at first sight. It is part of God's will that applies to the entire universe and its system. It cannot be separated from the creation of the heavens and the earth, or from the distant past and the far away future.

This message is addressed to people far beyond the Quraysh in Makkah, the Arabs in their Peninsula and the generation that witnessed its revelation. It transcends the boundaries of place and time to address humanity across all generations, shaping its destiny, from the time of its revelation until God inherits the earth and all those living on it. It came at its appropriate time to fulfil its mission in the time set for it by God.

Humanity's course has been changed with this great message: It is now set on a path demarcated by God. This is true both with regard to those who accept it or reject it, fight for or against it, and in its then current generation or subsequent ones. Nothing and no event in the history of humanity has had greater influence on the human being than this message. It laid down concepts, rules and systems and set values that apply to the whole earth, for all times.

The Arabs of old thought that the matter concerned them and Muhammad, not least the fact that it was he who was chosen to receive revelations. All their worry focused on this question. Therefore, the Quran tells them that the matter is far greater than this issue. It is greater than them and Muhammad who is no more than a messenger delivering what was entrusted to him. He did not invent it, and he could not have learnt what lies beyond it until God had taught him. He was not present with those on high when it all began. It was God who told him of it: (38:69-38:70)

This last part of the chapter concludes with a clear statement from the Prophet: (38:86-38:88)

The chapter takes us on a round in which we see what lies in store beyond the Day of Judgment, giving us images of happiness and bliss on the one hand, and torment on the other.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 38:65-38:70

WHO IS GOD?

The Quranic message makes it very clear that there is no god but God, The One, The Omniscient, the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, The Almighty, The Forgiver.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad to say to the unbelievers: The Quranic message is a serious tiding from which they turn away, that he did not know about the lofty Council striving against one another, but that it has been revealed to him that he is only a warner, one who makes God's message clear.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS THAT FOCUS ON CLARITY IN THINKING INCLUDE•

Let me state in my own words what I think you just said.
Am I clear about your meaning?
I hear you saying "____."
Am I hearing you correctly, or have I misunderstood you?
What is the main point of this Quranic section?
Can you explain further its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
Can you give an example of its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
To give you an analogy...(give an illustration of tyrants who kill believers because they say that they believe in God)
To give you an analogy ... (give an illustration of Muslim tyrants who kill other Muslims because they have determined that these people are not Muslim. They are not Muslim because the only Muslims are the ones who follow their ideology.)
Does such a view go against the Quranic sign? Explain.

TO CLARIFY STUDENTS' THINKING, CONSIDER ASKING THE FOLLOWING•

Can you restate the points of the Quranic sign in your own words?
I didn't understand you.
Can you give an example?
Let me tell you what I understand you to be saying.
Did I understand you correctly?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words),
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.
4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant. In other words, I frequently **stated, elaborated, illustrated** and **exemplified** my points.

APPENDIX 1: LIFE OF THE PROPHET IN YEAR 3 OF THE REVELATION

Lesson 31(2). It is reported that signs (75:32-75:40) refer to a particular person, Abu Jahl Amr ibn Hisham, who used to visit the Prophet sometimes and listen to the Quran. He would then go away, refusing to believe. In fact, he was neither polite nor fearful of God. He would continue to hurt the Prophet by what he said, and would try to turn people away from the Quranic message. He would also take pride in such actions, treating his evil deeds as something to be proud of. The Quran derides his attitude. In its description of his arrogant movements, it invites the listeners scorn.

On one occasion, the Prophet held Abu Jahl by the scruff of his neck and used this expression as it occurs in the chapter: *Woe to you! And woe to you! Again woe to you! And woe to you!* (75:34-75:35) Abu Jahl said: Are you threatening me, Muhammad? By God, neither you nor your Lord can do anything to me. I am the most powerful man ever to walk in between these hills.

Before him, Pharaoh said to the chiefs of his people: *O Council! I know not of any god for you other than me.* (28:38) He also said: *O my folk! Is not the dominion of Egypt for me and these rivers running beneath me?* (43:51) Yet God smote him down, drowned him.

Lesson 32. Whenever Umayya ibn Khalf ibn Wahb ibn Hudayifa ibn Jumah saw the Messenger, he slandered and reviled him so God sent down (104:1-104:9) concerning him.

Lesson 33(1). Abu Hurayrah says that: *By ones who are sent successively,* (77:1) is a reference to the angels. The same is reported to have been said by Masruq, Abu al-Duha, Mujahid (in one report), al-Suddi, al-Rabr ibn Anas and Abu Salih. Thus, the sign means an oath by the angels that are sent forth in successive waves, like running horses. Abu Salih says that the next four signs also refer to the angels.

Ibn Masud is reported to have said that: *By ones who are sent successively* refers to the wind, which means that winds are sent in succession like horses running. He is reported to have said that those storming on and scattering far and wide [mentioned in the next two signs] also refer to the wind. This view is shared by Ibn Abbas, Mujahid (in a second report), Qatadah and in another report by Abu Salih.

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari is uncertain whether *By ones who are sent successively,* mentioned in the first sign, refers to the angels or to the wind, but he is certain that the stormers and scatterers are the winds.

He explains that the winds scatter the clouds in the sky.

Ibn Masud says that: *The ones who separate a separating by ones who cast a remembrance as excusing or warning* (77:4-77:6) refer to the angels. This is also stated by Ibn Abbas, Masruq, Mujahid, Qatadah, al-Rabr ibn Anas, al-Suddl and al-Thawri. It is the angels that come down carrying Gods orders to His messengers, separating right from wrong, and giving revelations to those messengers that contain justification and a warning to humanity.

Lesson 34(2). In a hadith reported by Alqamah on the authority of Bilal ibn al-Harith, the Prophet is quoted as saying: A person may say a word that is pleasing to God, without a thought of how far it can reach. God will credit him with His pleasure for it until the Day when he meets Him. Another person may say a word that is displeasing to God, without a thought of how far it can reach. God will record against him His displeasure for it until the Day when he meets Him.

The Prophet is quoted as saying: How can I feel happy when I know that the one assigned to blow the Trumpet has lifted it to his mouth, lowering his forehead and awaiting permission. The people listening asked him: What should we say, Messenger of God? He replied: Say: We seek none other than God; He is the best protector. They all said it. [Related by al-Tirmidhl.]

Lesson 36. According to Tustari, these signs (86:1-86:3) were revealed about Abu Talib. He once went to visit the Prophet and the latter offered him bread and milk. As Abu Talib was sitting and eating, a meteor fell, filling everything with fire. Abu Talib was scared. He asked: What on earth can this be? The Prophet, God bless him and give him peace, said: This is a meteor that was thrown and it is one of the signs of God. Abu Talib was amazed, and so God, exalted is He, revealed these signs.

Lesson 37(1). Anas ibn Malik reports: The people of Makkah asked the Prophet to show them a miracle, and the moon was split in Makkah twice. He recited: *The Hour neared and the moon was split.* (54:1)

The same report by Anas is given in another version stating the people's request for a miracle, then saying: He showed them the moon split in two halves, and they could see Mount Hira in between.[77]

Jubayr ibn Mutim reports: The moon was split during the Prophet's lifetime and it was seen in two halves, one over each mountain. People said: Muhammad has cast a magic spell on us. Then they said: If he could cast a spell on us, he cannot do that to all people.[78]

Ibn Abbas is quoted by various transmitters as having said: The moon was once split during the Prophet;'s lifetime.[79] Other versions

add: This took place before the Prophet's migration to Madinah. They could see its two halves. Yet another version related by al-Tabarani with a different chain of transmitters quotes Ibn Abbas as saying: The moon was eclipsed during the Prophet's time. The ungrateful said: A spell is cast on the moon. A Quranic revelation was bestowed from on high stating: *The Hour neared and the moon was split.*

Abd Allah ibn Umar said: The moon was split in two halves during the Prophet's time in Makkah, with one half seen at the near side of the mountain and the other at the far side. The Prophet said: My Lord! Be my witness.[80]

Abd Allah ibn Masud reports: During the Prophet's time, the moon was split in two and people could see it. The Prophet said: Look at it and be witnesses.[81]

Al-Bukhari adds another version of this report with a different chain of transmitters quoting Ibn Masud: When the moon was split, the Quraysh said. Wait until some travelers arrive, for Muhammad cannot cast his spell on all people. When travelers came they confirmed the splitting of the moon.

This is a highly inspiring opening, speaking of a momentous event in the wide universe that heralds an immeasurably greater event: *The Hour neared and the moon was split.* (54:1) What a piece of news! They saw the first event with their own eyes, and they can only anticipate the greater one. The splitting of the moon, witnessed by the Arabs, is confirmed in numerous reports; all agree that this took place, though they differ in their general and detailed descriptions of how it occurred.

One version of a report states: This took place before the Prophet's migration to Madinah. They could see its two halves. Yet another version related by al-Tabarani with a different chain of transmitters quotes Ibn Abbas as saying: The moon was eclipsed during the Prophet's time. The ungrateful said: A spell is cast on the moon.

A Quranic revelation was bestowed from on high stating: *The Hour neared and the moon was split.*

Having given a full picture of their stubborn rejection, the chapter directs the Prophet to turn away from them, leaving them to face their fate on the day to the approach of which they pay little heed, despite seeing a sign like the splitting of the moon heralding it: *So turn you away from them on a Day when One Who Calls will call to a horrible thing. Their sight will be that which is humbled and they will go forth from the tombs as if they had been dispersed locusts, ones who run forward with their eyes fixed in horror towards The One Who Calls. The ones who are ungrateful will say: This is a difficult Day!* (54:6-54:8) These signs paint a scene of that day which

is fierce and grim, consistent with the ambience of the chapter. They also warn of the closeness of the Last Hour, highlighted by the splitting of the moon in two. All of this fits perfectly with the rhythm maintained throughout the chapter.

Such, then, is the day which draws near; still they continue to deny it. Therefore, the Prophet is to turn away from them when that day arrives. He is to leave them to face their miserable destiny.

Wahidi says: The moon was split at the time of the Messenger of God so the Quraysh said: This is an act of sorcery from the son of Abu Kabshah; he has cast a spell on you. Ask, therefore, the travelers whether they saw the moon split. They asked some travelers and they confirmed it. God, exalted is He, then revealed 54:1-2.[82]

The Quran clearly stated this event to the ungrateful at the time, but there is no report to suggest that they ever denied it. It must, then, have happened in a way that makes denial practically impossible. Had there been a way to deny it, they would have done so, if only for the sake of meaningless argument. All that has been reported of their reactions are their statements that the Prophet had cast a magic spell on them. Yet they too directly witnessed the event and so knew for themselves that this was no magic. Had the Prophet been able to cast a spell on them, he could not have done the same to the travelers in the desert. Such travelers, let us recall, confirmed that they had witnessed this extraordinary event.

Lesson 37(2). The Quraysh came to dispute the question of Destiny. (54:47-54:49) God, therefore revealed: (54:49-54:50) (Abul-Qasim Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Sarraj informed us (by dictation)> Abu Muhammad Abd God ibn Muhammad ibn Musa al-Kabi> Hamdan ibn Salih al-Ashajj> Abdullah ibn Abd al-Aziz ibn Abi Rawwad> Sufyan al-Thawri> Ziyad ibn Ismail al-Makhzumi> Muhammad ibn Abbad ibn Jafar> Abu Hurayrah said. Also, this was narrated by Muslim from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah> Waki'> Sufyan.)

By God, I bear witness that I heard the Messenger of God say: This sign was revealed about the deniers of Destiny (*al-Qadariyyah*): (Signs 54:49-54:50). (By God, I bear witness that Abul-Harith Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahim al-Hafiz informed us in Jurjan; he said: By God, I bear witness that Abu Nuaym Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Bazzaz informed us; he said: By God, I bear witness that I heard Ali ibn Jandal saying: By God, I bear witness that I heard Abul Hasan Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Ubayy in Khurasan say: By God, I bear witness that I heard Abdullah ibn al-Saqr al-Hafiz say: By God, I bear witness that I heard Ufayr ibn Madan say: By God, I bear witness that I heard Salim ibn Amir say: By God, I bear

witness that I heard Abu Umamah al-Bahili say.)

The bishop of Najran came to the Messenger of God and said: O Muhammad, you claim that sins are created by measure and that the seas and heaven are also created by measure. If it is true that the seas and heaven are created by measure, sins nevertheless cannot be?

The Messenger of God said: You are God's adversary.

And then God, exalted is He, revealed Signs: (54:49-54:50). (Abu Bakr ibn al-Harith related to us> Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Asfahani> Jarir ibn Harun> Ali al-Tanafisi> Ubayd Allah ibn Musa> Bahr al-Saqa> A Shaykh from Quraysh> Ata said.)

These signs (54:49-54:50) were revealed about some future people from amongst this community who will deny the Destiny of God. (Abu Bakr informed us> Abd Allah> Amr ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan> Ahmad ibn al-Khalil> Abdullah ibn Raja al-Azdi> Amr ibn Ala, the brother of Abu Amr ibn al-Ala> Khalid ibn Salamah al-Qurayshi> Said ibn Amr ibn Jadah al-Makhzumi> Ibn Abi Zurarah al-Ansari> his father who related that the Messenger of God recited this sign.)

I was with Muhammad ibn Kab when he said: If you ever see me talk about Destiny, then tie me up for I am then a madman. By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, these signs have not been revealed except about madmen. Then he recited Signs (54:49-54:50). (. Ahmad ibn al-Hasan al-Hiri informed us> Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Maqili> Abu Utbah Ahmad ibn al-Faraj> Baqiyyah> Ibn Thawban> Bakir ibn Usayd> his father said.)

Lesson 38(1). Ibn Abbas says regarding 38:6: Utbah and Shaybah, the sons of Rabiah, Ubayy Ibn Khalaf al- Jumahi and Abu Jahl Ibn Hisham (go about, exhorting) Abu Jahl said to them: (Go) to your deities (and be staunch to your gods) and persevere in the worship of your deities! (Lo! This) meaning Muhammad (is a thing designed) to perish; it is also said that this means: that which Muhammad is saying is designed to spread to all people of the earth. (38:6)

Conversion of the Various Clans

The Prophet continued to receive new converts throughout this year.

The Abd al-Dar Clan Converts

Abu al-Rum ibn Umayr: Brother of Musab ibn Umayr.[16]

Firas ibn al-Nadr ibn al-Harith: Brother of Musab ibn Umayr.[17]

Jahm ibn Qays ibn Abd ibn Shurahbil: Brother of Musab ibn Umayr.[18]

Abd ibn Qusayy Convert

Tulayb ibn Umayr ibn Wahb (son of paternal aunt, Arwah bint Abd al-Muttalib, of the Prophet).[19]

Abd al-Shams Clan Converts

Sahlah bint Suhayl ibn Amr: Her husband was Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah ibn Rabiah. She bore witness early and migrated with her husband to Abyssinia.[20]

Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah ibn Rabiah: He was the brother of the wife of Abu Sufyan, Hind bint Utbah. (d. 633).

Abd al-Shams Confederate

Abd Allah ibn Jahsh ibn Riab: (d. 625) He was Muhammad's cousin on his mother's side, Umayma bint Abd al-Muttalib. Abd Allah ibn Jahsh gave his allegiance to Muhammad. He was the brother of Zaynab bint Jahsh.

Abu Ahmad ibn Jahsh ibn Riab: He was Muhammad's cousin on his mother's side, Umayma bint Abd al-Muttalib. Abu Ahmad ibn Jahsh gave his allegiance to Muhammad. He was the brother of Zaynab bint Jahsh.

Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh: He was Muhammad's cousin through his mother, Umayma bint Abd al-Muttalib. He was from the Dudan clan of the Quraysh. The clan was a confederate of Harb and Abu Sufyan. Abd Allah, brother of Ubayd Allah. Abu Ahmad, brother of Ubayd Allah. He was married to Ramlah bint Abu Sufyan (Umm Habiba). Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh and his entire clan bore witness to the truth of Muhammad and his message.

The wife of Musab ibn Umayr: Her husband was a great grandson of Hashim. She was a sister of Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh.

Fatima, the wife of Said: She was a cousin of the same family and her brother Zayd ibn Khattab. Zayd ibn Khattab was the older brother of Umar.

Waqidi, a confederate of the Khattab family

Amir ibn Rabia, the freed man and adopted son of Umar ibn Khattab's father, Khattab.

Umayyah sub-clan of Abd Shams

Ramlah bint Abu Sufyan or Umm Habiba (b. 589/d.666 CE):

She was the daughter of Safiyyah bint Abi al-As and Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, the leader of Quraysh and the most powerful opponent of Muhammad for most of his life. She bore witness early and immigrated with her husband, Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh to Abyssinia. Muhammad is later to marry her when her husband dies so she becomes an Umm al-Muminin. Ramlah was related to Uthman ibn Affan. They were first cousins on their mother's side and second cousins on her father's side. Her first husband, Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh, was among the first people to bear witness. Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh was the brother of Zaynab bint Jahsh.[21]

Uthman ibn Affan[22]

Khalid ibn Said ibn al-As ibn Umayyah

Amr ibn Said

THE ADIYY CLAN CONVERTS

Urwah ibn Abi Uthathah: Full brother of Amr ibn al-As.[23]

Adiyy ibn Nadlah[24]

Mamar ibn Abd Allah ibn Nadlah[25]

Numan ibn Adiyy ibn Nadlah[26]

Zayd ibn al-Khattab: Brother of Umar.[27]

Saied ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl (b. 593-4/d. 673): He was not yet twenty years old when he bore witness to the truth of Muhammad's message becoming one of the early Muslims. Said ibn Zayd was the son of Zayd bin Amr. Khattab bin Nufayl, the father of Said's wife and of Umar al-Khattab, he was Said's father-in-law. Before the Quranic message, Said's father, Zayd ibn Amr, had been a monotheist (*hanif*), and, therefore, never worshiped idols nor ate meat that had been slaughtered in the name of the idols. He was constantly harassed by the Quraysh. His uncle, Khattab bin Nufayl, was his main persecutor. Said ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl was a great man and is also the one of the best role models of the Quranic message. Said eventually married Fatima bint al-Khattab. Both of them became Muslims and hid their faith from Fatima's brother, Umar. Early on Saied would write down the signs of the Quran that were revealed. He was a pious man and followed the teachings of Muhammad throughout his life.

Fatima bint al-Khattab ibn Nufayl: Ibn Sad states that she became Muslim before her brother, Umar, did and gave her allegiance to the Messenger before he went to the house of Arqam.

Layla bint Hathma ibn Hudhayfa: According to Ibn Sad, she was a slave who gave birth to the child of her master. She was or became the wife of Amir ibn Rabiah, an ally of Khattab ibn Nufayl.

Amir ibn Rabiah: Amir was a freed man, the adopted son of Umar's father, Khattab.

Nuaym ibn Abd Allah al-Nahham

Adiyy or Makhzum Clan Confederate Slave

Waqid ibn Abd Allah

Abu Salmah of the Makhzum Clan.[28]

THE AL-MUTTALIB CLAN CONVERTS

Ubaydah ibn al-Harith ibn al-Muttalib: He was the son of Muhammad's uncle and ten years older than Muhammad.[29]

AL-MUTTALIB CLAN CONFEDERATE

Urwa bint Abd al-Muttalib, daughter of Abd al-Muttalib and sister of Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib.[30]

THE AMIR IBN LUAYY CLAN CONVERTS

Abd Allah ibn Suhayl ibn Amr: Brother of Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr and Abu Jandal.[31]

Abu Jandal ibn Suhayl ibn Amr: Brother of Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr and Abu Jandal.[32]

Abu Sabrah ibn Abi Ruhm: Son of paternal aunt of Muhammad, Barrah bint Abd al-Muttalib.[33]

Amrah bint al-Sadi: Wife of Malik ibn Zamah.[34]

Malik ibn Zamah: Sawdah bint Zamah's brother. Wife was Amrah bint al-Sadi.[35]

Sakran ibn Amr: Brother of Suhayl ibn Amr and Hatib ibn Amr and first husband of Sawdah bint Zamah.[36]

Sawdah bint Zamah[37]

Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr: She was the wife of son of Muhammad's paternal aunt and daughter of prominent the Quraysh noble and chief Suhayl ibn Amr.[38]

Yaqazah bint Alqamah: Wife of Salit ibn Amr, brother of Suhayl ibn Amr.[39]

Abd Allah ibn Suhayl ibn Amr: Brother of Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr and Abu Jandal.[40]

Abu Jandal ibn Suhayl ibn Amr: Brother of Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr and Abu Jandal.[41]

Ibn Umm Maktum (Amr ibn Umm Maktum): Abd Allah Ibn Umm Maktum was the son of Qays Ibn Sayd and Aatikah Bint Abd Allah. He was blind from birth and so his mother was called Umm Maktum (mother of the concealed one). Ibn Umm Maktum was a maternal cousin of Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. Abd Allah Ibn Umm Maktum was among the first converts who bore witness. Muhammad was later to send he and Musab ibn Umayr to Madinah to teach the Quran to the people before the Hijra took place. He and Bilal Ibn Rabah were chosen as muezzins in Madinah by Muhammad. When Muhammad would later leave Madinah to participate in battles, Umm Maktum was given the responsibility of leading the prayers.[42]

Hatib ibn Amr ibn Abd Shams[43]

Salit ibn Amr Ala ibn Hadrami

THE ASAD CLAN CONVERTS

Fatima bint Asad: Fatima, the wife of Abu Talib and mother of Aqil, Jafar and Ali ibn Abi Talib, being one of the first to swear allegiance to Muhammad and the concept of the Oneness of God, bore witness when Muhammad first began teaching. Ibn Saad says: The Prophet had grown up in her home. He had lived with she and her family from the age of eight until he married Khadija when he was twenty-five. She was the daughter of the uncle of Zayda ibn al-Asamm, the grandfather of Khadija on her mother's side. Muhammad often spent midday resting in her home. He loved her very much as she was the only mother he really knew. Fatima bint Asad was very close to Muhammad both in worldly and spiritual relations. He remembered in his later life that she would go hungry to feed him. He respected her so highly that whenever she visited him he would stand up and receive her with great love, addressing her as mother.[44]

Zubayr ibn al-Awwan[45]

THE ASAD IBN ABD AL-UZZA CLAN CONVERTS

Amr ibn Umayyah ibn al-Harith ibn Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza[46]

Aswad ibn Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid ibn Asad: Khadija's nephew and Waraqa ibn Nawfal ibn Asad's cousin (paternal uncle). His father, Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid, persecuted Muhammad's followers.[47]

Khalid ibn Hizam: Khadija's nephew and Hakim ibn Hizam's brother.[35] According to one report, 4:100 was revealed about him.

Yazid ibn Zamah ibn al-Aswad[48]

THE FIHR IBN MALIK CLAN CONVERTS

Amr ibn al-Harith ibn Zuhayr[49]

Sad ibn Abd Qays[50]

Suhayl ibn Bayda[51]

Uthman ibn Abd Ghanm ibn Zuhayr: Son of paternal aunt of Abdul Rahman ibn Awf.[52]

Iyad ibn Abi Zuhayr

Lubaba bint al-Harith (Umm Fadl): Umm al-Fadl claimed to be the second woman to bear witness, the same day as her close friend, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, the first wife of Muhammad. Umm al-Fadl's traditions of the Prophet appear in all canonical collections of hadith.

Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah: By 611 CE, Muhammad was preaching the Oneness of God to the people of Makkah. He began by inviting his closest companions and relatives in secret to the way of the truth. Abu Ubaydah gave his allegiance to Muhammad just a day after Abu Bakr in the year 611 CE. Abu Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah.[53]

Rabiah ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib
Abd Allah ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib

THE HASHIM CLAN CONTINUE TO CONVERT

Members of the Prophet's household listed below had converted in Year 1and are listed in *Book Year 1*. They are listed here to give more information about each one.

Zaynab bint Muhammad: Ibn Sad states: She was the oldest daughter of Muhammad said to have been born in 597 CE when the Prophet was twenty-seven years old. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does. The Prophet married her to his cousin, Abul As ibn al-Rabi, before the revelation began. His mother was Halah bint Khuwaylid, Zaynab's maternal aunt. She was living with her husband at the time of the revelation who did not give his allegiance to Muhammad until much later.[54]

Ruqiyyah bint Muhammad: Ruqayya, said to be born three years after her sister, Zaynab, in 600 CE. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does.[55]

Umm Khulthum bint Muhammad: Umm Khulthum is born a year after her sister, Ruqayya. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does.[56]

Fatima bint Muhammad: The youngest daughter of the Messenger of God, Fatima is born some say five years before the Messenger began his mission and some say five years after the mission began. Whichever one it is, it has been recorded that her early years are spent bearing the suffering and difficulties of her father with a very special sympathy. She accepts the Quranic message at the same time as her mother and sisters.[57]

Ali ibn Abi Talib: Ali is born in 599 CE. When he is six years old in 605 CE, he moves to the home of Muhammad and Khadija where he grows up. He is placed in the care of Muhammad and Khadija because a of a famine in Makkah. Shortly after the rebuilding of the Kabah, Muhammad comforts himself for the loss of his infant son Qasim by adopting Ali, his first cousin, the child of his uncle, Abu Talib. As it happened, there was a season of severe scarcity in Makkah and Abu Talib, still poor, was put to shifts for the support of his numerous family. His difficulties were perceived by Muhammad, who, prompted by his usual kindness and consideration, repaired to his rich uncle Abbas, and said: O Abbas! Your brother, Abu Talib, has a burdensome family, and you see what straits men are brought to. Let us go to him and relieve him somewhat of the care of his children. I will take one son, if you will take another. And we shall support them. Abbas consenting, they proposed the thing to Abu Talib. He replied: Leave me Akil and Talib and do you with the

others as it pleases you. So Muhammad took Ali, and Abbas took Jafar. Ali remained ever after with Muhammad.[58]

Aqil ibn Abi Talib (b. 590 CE): Aqil was the second son of Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib.

Jafar ibn Abi Talib: He was married to Asma bint Umays ibn Numan ibn Kab ibn Malik ibn Quhafa.

Safiyyah bint Abd al-Muttalib: Ibn Sad states: She was the paternal aunt of Muhammad. She was the wife of Harith ibn Harb ibn Umayyah, and, later, the wife of Awwam ibn Khuwaylid.

Asma bint Umays ibn Numan ibn Kab ibn Malik: She was married to Jafar ibn Abi Talib. Ibn Sad: She was a beautiful Muslim woman.

Hashim Confederate

Abu Marthad al-Ghanawi

Marthad ibn Abi Marthad

Hashim Freed

Abu Kabshah

Salih Suqran Habashi

THE JUMAH CLAN CONVERTS

Jabir ibn Sufyan (Jabir ibn Hasanah al-Kindi).[59]

Junadah ibn Sufyan (Junadah ibn Hasanah al-Kindi).[60]

Nubayh ibn Uthman ibn Rabiah ibn Wahb.[61]

Sufyan ibn Mamar ibn Habib. He was married to Hasanah (Umm Shurahbil).[62]

Abd Allah ibn Mazun ibn Habib ibn Wahb: Abd Allah ibn Mazun is the brother of Uthman ibn Mazun.

Fatima bint al-Mujallil ibn Abdullah ibn Abu Qays (Umm Jamil bint al-Mujallil): Ibn Sad states: She married Hatib ibn al-Harith.

Hatib ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar ibn Habib: His wife was

Fatima bint al-Mujallil (Umm Jamil): Wife of Hatib ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar ibn Habib

Hattab ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar ibn Habib: His wife was Fukayha bint Yasar, the sister of Baraka. Abu Fukayha's (Yasar) daughter, Fukayha, was married to Hattab, a convert, who migrated to Abyssinia.[63]

Fukayha bint Yasar, sister of Baraka

Mamar ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar ibn Habib

Qudama ibn Mazun ibn Habib ibn Wahb: Qudama ibn Mazun was another brother of Uthman ibn Mazun.

Saib ibn Uthman ibn Mazun

Uthman ibn Mazun ibn Habib ibn Wahb: Both he and his wife, Khawlah bint Hakim, were among the early companions who

gave their allegiance to Muhammad. Uthman ibn Mazun of the Jumah tribe had to be persuaded by Muhammad to abandon his ascetic life.[64]

The Jumah ibn Amr Clan Converts

Jabir ibn Sufyan (Jabir ibn Hasanah al-Kindi)

Junadah ibn Sufyan (Junadah ibn Hasanah al-Kindi)

Hasanah (Umm Shurahbil)

Shurahbil ibn Hasanah al-Kindi

Sufyan ibn Mamar ibn Habib

Nubayh ib Uthman ibn Rabiah ibn Wahb

The Makhzum ibn Yaqaza Clan Converts

Abdullah ibn Sufyan ibn Abd al-Asad[65]

Habbar ibn Sufyan ibn Abd al-Asad[66]

Hisham (or Hashim) ibn Abu Hudhayfah ibn al-Mughirah[67]

Abu Salamah ibn Hisham ibn al-Mughirah: Brother of Abu Jahl; paternal cousin of Khalid ibn al-Walid. On return from Abyssinia relatives tortured him, imprisoned him and prevented him from his migration to Madinah.[68]

Ayyash ibn Abu Rabiah ibn al-Mughira

Asma bint Salamah wife of Ayyash ibn Abi Rabiah

Salamah ibn Hisham ibn al-Mughirah: Brother of Abu Jahl. Paternal cousin of Khalid ibn al-Walid.[69]

Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad ibn Hilal: He was married to Umm Salama Hind bint Abi Umayyah.

Umm Salama Hind bint Abi Umayyah ibn al-Mughirah: She was married to Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad ibn Hilal and along with her husband gave their allegiance to Muhammad.

Arqam ibn Abd Manaf ibn Asad: Ibn Saad says that he is one of the early Muslims.

The Sahm ibn Amr Clan Converts

Abd Allah ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abu Qays, Hajjaj and Saib.[70]

Abd Allah ibn Hudhayfah ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abu Qays, Hajjaj and Saib.[71]

Abu Qays ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abd Allah ibn al-Harith, Hajjaj, Saib).[72]

Bishr ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy[73]

Hajjaj ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abu Qays, Abd Allah, Hajjaj.[74]

Hisham ibn al-As ibn Wail: Younger brother of Amr ibn al-As.[75]

Qays ibn Hudhayfah: Brother of Abd Allah ibn Hudhayfah ibn Qays Younger brother of Amr ibn al-As.[76]

Said ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abu Qays, Abd Allah, Hajjaj.[77]

Khunays ibn Hudhayfah ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: (3 AH/625-6 CE) He was married to Hafsa, the daughter of Umar ibn al-Khattab.[78]

Sahm Clan Confederate

Mahmiyyah ibn Jazu: Full brother of Umm al-Fadl, wife of Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib.[79]

Umayr ibn Riab[80]

Ramlah bint Abi Awf: Wife of al-Muttalib ibn Azhar and of the Bani Sahm.

Mabad ibn al-Harith (or Mamar)

The Taym Clan Converts

Abu Bakr[81]

Umm Ruman bint Amir ibn Umaymir: (d. 6AH/628 CE) She was the wife of Abu Bakr and mother of Asma bint Abu Bakr and Ayisha bint Abu Bakr. She bore witness early on.

al-Harith ibn Khalid ibn Sakhr ibn Amir: He bore witness early and migrated to Abyssinia with his wife.

Talhah ibn Ubayd Allah[82]

The Zuhrah Clan Converts

Abd Allah ibn Shihab: Maternal grandfather of Imam al-Zuhri.

Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf

Saad ibn Abi Waqqas[83]

Umayr ibn Abi Waqqas

al-Muttalib ibn Azhar: A cousin of Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf.

The Zuhrah Clan Confederate Converts

Miqdad ibn Amr al-Kindi[84]

Shurahbil ibn Hasanah al-Kindi[85]

Masud ibn Rabi ibn al-Qari

al-Muttalib ibn Azhar ibn Abd Awf

Amir ibn Abi Waqqas

Tulayb ibn Azhar

Umayr ibn Abi Waqqas

Utbah ibn Masud

The Zuhrah Clan Confederate or Taym Confederate Convert

Umm Ubays[86]

The Quraysh: Clan Unknown Converts

Amina (wife of Khalid)

Ramlah bint Abu Auf ibn Subayra: She was the wife of Muttalib ibn Azhar. She gave her allegiance to Muhammad before he moved to the House of Arqam.[87]

Fatima bint al-Mujallil (Umm Habib bint al-As): She was the

wife of Hatib ibn al-Harith. She was also called Umm Jamil bint al-Mujallil.[88]

Fukayha bint Yasar: Ibn Sad states: She was the sister of Baraka and wife of Hattab ibn al-Harith.[89]

Humayna bint Khalaf ibn Asad: An early convert, she was married to Khalif ibn Said ibn al-As.[90]

Umm Khulthum bint Uqba ibn Abi Muayt: Ibn Sad states: She was the sister of Uthman ibn Affan. She married Zayd ibn Harith al-Kalbi; Zubayr ibn al-Awwam; Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf; and Amr ibn al-As.

THE NON-QURAYSH CONVERTS

Masud ibn al-Rabi

Utbah ibn Masud

Hun tribe ibn Khuzaymah

Masud ibn Rabiah ibn Amr: He was the son of Rabiah ibn Amr ibn Sad.[91]

Rabiah ibn Amr: Father of Masud ibn Rabiah ibn Amr.

Khazraj

Hasanah (Umm Shurahbil)[92]

Muammil tribe

Mihjan ibn al-Adra al-Aslami[93]

Khazraj Tribe Malik ibn al-Najjar Clan

Tamima bint Wahb

Khuzaah Tribe

Humayna bint Khalaf ibn Asad

Umayman bint Khalaf, wife of Khalid ibn Said ibn al-As ibn Umayyah

Kinanah Tribe Ghiffar Clan

Abu Dharr Ghiffari (d. 652 CE): An ascetic and monotheist, he gave his allegiance to Muhammad.

Umm Dharr Ghiffari: She was married to Abu Dharr and early on gave her allegiance to Muhammad.

Sulaym Tribe

Khawla bint Hakim ibn Umayyah: Ibn Saad states: She was the wife of Uthman ibn Mazun ibn Habib ibn Wahb.

Tamim Tribe

Asma bint Salama: She was the wife of Ayyash ibn Abu Rabiah. Ibn Sad states that she gave her allegiance to Muhammad early in Makkah.

Khalil ibn al-Harith ibn Tamim, Zuhrah Ally

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are: The Makhzum Clan Confederate Converts

Abdullah ibn Yasir: Another son of Yasir who died under torture.[94]

Ammar ibn Yasir: Born in 570 CE, the Year of the Elephant, he was a friend of Muhammad's before the revelation. He was an intermediary in Muhammad's marriage to Khadijah.

Sumayyah: Wife of Yasir, she died under the torture of Abu Jahl and is the first martyr among Muhammad's followers.

Yasir: Father of Ammar ibn Yasir and confederate of Abu Hudhayfah ibn al-Mughirah.[95]

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are The Jumah Clan Confederate Convert

Bilal: He was the prisoner-of-war of Umayyah ibn Khalaf. He was severely tortured as he publicly announced his allegiance to Muhammad. Others who did this and were tortured include Shuayb, Ammar, Khabbab and Sumayyah.[96] Among the slaves freed by Abu Bakr after suffering severe persecution for their accepting Muhammad's message as the truth, was Bilal, a confederate of the Jumah Clan, the son of an Abyssinian slave girl. Muhammad honored and distinguished him as the first fruits of Abyssinia.[97]

Hamamah: She was the mother of Bilal.[98]

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are: The Taym Clan Confederate Converts

Suhayb ibn Sinan al-Rumi (b. c. 582 CE): Also known as Suhayb al-Rumi, was a former prisoner-of-war in the Byzantine Empire who became an early member of the early community. He was born in the same village as that of Prophet Solomon. At the age of seven he was on a ship in the Mediterranean when the Romans raided the ship and took him as a prisoner to Rome. He lived there for eighteen years before he met some Arab sailors who helped him to escape to Arabia. Suhayb ibn Sinan was an important Greek convert. His family said that he fled from Constantinople to Makkah and voluntarily placed himself under the guardianship of Abd Allah.[93] He was to gain a considerable amount of wealth while in Makkah. After he bore witness, Abd Allah died and he was without a patron. He was persecuted by the Quraysh. Perhaps 16:103 and 44:4 and 25:4 were revealed about him.

Amir ibn Fukayra: Amir ibn Fukayra (son by a former owner of Umm Ruman, Abu Bakr's wife and mother of Ayisha), after being released from severe trial, was employed by Abu Bakr in tending his flocks.[99]

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are: The Zuhrah Clan Confederate Convert

Abd Allah ibn Masud: He was part of the early community and remained one of the closest companions to Muhammad throughout his life. As a young shepherd, he had worked for Uqba ibn Abu Muayt. Abd Allah Ibn Masud was from the Hothail tribe, an Adnaite tribe in western Arabia. Hothail had been the grandson of Elijah (Ilyas) and was also the sworn ally of Zuhrah clan. Abd Allah ibn Masud from the Tamim clan.

Nicknamed Ibn Umm al-Abd ('son of the mother of a slave') and best known in history as Ibn Masud, he began his youth as a shepherd, tending the herd of Uqba ibn Muayt. He spent his time in the hills around Makkah far from the city and its idolatrous influence. One evening when he returned to Makkah with his flock, he heard the news of a Messenger who had come and who talked of the One God. It had no special impact on him as he was out of the city from early dawn until nightfall tending to the flocks.

Then one day as he was tending Uqba's flock, he saw two people approaching him from a distance who appeared to be in a hurry. He was surprised to find anyone in this wilderness and two people in a hurry, at that. Who could they be? What could they want? As they came close, he saw that they were tired and thirsty. They greeted him and asked him to milk one of the animals so that they might have something to drink to quench their thirst. Their lips were parched and they spoke with difficulty.

Ibn Masud, the young shepherd, replied to the two men, Muhammad and Abu Bakr, although he knew not who they were: I cannot do that because I do not own these sheep. I am only their caretaker.

The two men seeking the retreat of the mountains for a day away from the idol worshipping Quraysh were pleased with his response, so pleased that they did not pursue it although they were thirsty. Ibn Masud was impressed by the fact that they did not insist although he could see their great need. It was not long after that that he bore witness.

He was the first Companion to recite the Quran publically.

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are: The Non-Quraysh Convert

Khabbab ibn al-Aratt (d. 37 or 39 AH): Khabbab, a blacksmith, also converted at this period. The slaves of Makkah were peculiarly accessible to the solicitations of the Prophet. Khabbab was from the Najd.

Khabbab is recorded as one of the "weak ones" in Makkah.

Lacking any protection, he was exposed to persecution and cruel torture. The Quraysh and leaders of tribes used to mock [Muhammad] when they saw him in the company of Khabbab and other poor men. It is said that Khabbab was attached to Muhammad and heard some chapters of the Quran from his mouth.[100]

Khabbab, an Arab sold into slavery as a result of a raid against his clan of the Tamim tribe, was among the early companions of God's Messenger. He suffered great torture at the hands of his owner, Umm Anmar. A blacksmith by trade, Khabbab had seen Muhammad being insulted, conspired against, threatened, and ridiculed in an attempt by the aristocratic, ungrateful Quraysh to try to silence him, make him 'not speak,' and yet he spoke.

Khabbab was among those who suffered torture in order to preserve their faith in God. His master, Umm Anmar (or Umm Siba), taught him to be a blacksmith in order to make use of his talents. Before the call to prophethood, Muhammad used to sit in front of Khabbab's workshop as he had grown very fond of him. Khabbab then bore witness once the invitation was given to him by Muhammad. When Umm Anmar heard of his bearing witness, she took a hot iron and branded him on his head. Khabbab complained of her actions to Muhammad. Muhammad prayed for him, saying: Oh Lord, help Khabbab. Umm Anmar developed a very painful illness from which she died.

It is related that when Khabbab claimed a debt from al-As ibn Wail, al-As ibn Wail, who denied the resurrection, said that he would pay back what he owed to Khabbab on the Day of Judgment.

And they said: What is the matter with us that we see not men whom we had been numbering among the worst? (38:62) *Took We them to ourselves as a laughing-stock or swerved our sight from them? Truly, this is true of the disagreement of the people of the fire.* Such men were the poor among the Muslims, like Ammar ibn Yasir, Bilal al-Habashi, Suhayb al-Rumi and Salman al-Farsi. (38:62-38:64)[97]

Assuredly that is true: such a scene will necessarily take place, which is, the wrangling of the inhabitants of the Fire. (38:64)

AMONG THE LIST OF POW/SLAVES ARE: THE NON-QURAYSH CONVERTS

Al-Nahdiah (Nadia, an-Nahdiyah or al-Nahdiah) was a convert. She had a daughter named **Umm Ubays**, and both of them were the slaves of a woman of Abd al-Dar Clan.98 When Nahdiah and her daughter became Muslims, they were both tortured because they refused to refute their belief. Among those who tortured them were her mistress and Umar, before he also became a Muslim. Abu Bakr, an

early Muslim, complained to their mistress about the treatment, whereupon she answered: You have corrupted them. You may free them if you are so sympathetic to them. Abu Bakr paid the price asked for, and liberated the women.[101]

Abu Fukayha: He was a slave of the Abd al-Dar.[100] Abu Fukayha was also known as Yasar. He is frequently mentioned as one of the converts who suffered most severely in the early persecutions.[102]

Zannirah al-Rumiyyah: A confederate slave of either the Adiyy or Makhzum Clan, she was persecuted.[103]

Lubaynah or Lubaybah: A slave of the Muammil tribe, she was persecuted by Umar.[104s]

Other Freed POW/Slaves Who Converted

Umm Ayman Barakah bint Thalabah: One of the earliest converts, a member of the Prophet's household, she was freed by Muhammad.

Zayd ibn Haritha: One of the earliest converts, a member of the Prophet's household, he was freed by Muhammad and later adopted as his son.

Umm Ubays: Slave maid to the Zuhrah or Taym Clan

Mihjan ibn al-Adra al-Aslami

Masud ibn Rabiah ibn Amr: A member of the al-Hun Khuzaymah Tribe.

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
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79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.2lstcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT AND APPENDIX 1

1. Ibn Abbas: His real name is Abdullah Ibn Shurayh. Umm Maktum was his father's mother.

2. See Preface.

3. Commentator.

4. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Musahifi informed us that > Abu Amr Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Hamdan> Abu Yala> ibn Yahya ibn Said> his father> Hisham ibn Urwah> Ayisha said.

5. See Appendix 1: Lesson 31(2)

6. Ali Shariat, *Fatima is Fatima*, p. 82.

7. See Appendix 1: Lesson 32

8. See Appendix 1: Lesson 33(1)

9. See Appendix 1: Lesson (34(2)

10. B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," http://www.al-islam.org/history-muslim-philosophy-volume-1-book-2/chapter-8-ethical-teachings-quran.

11. Osman Bakar, "Reflections on Islamic Environmentalism," http://www.cilecenter.org/en/videos/dr-osman-bakar-reflections-on-islamic-environmentalism/

12. See Appendix 1: Lesson 36

13. See Appendix 1: Lesson 37(1)

14. See Appendix 1: Lesson 37(2)

15. See Appendix 1: Lesson 38(2)

16. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, p 194.

17. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, p 177.

18. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, I, p 311-312.

19. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, p 65; *al-Isabah II, p 233, no. 4288.*

20. *Al-Isabah*, IV, pp 336-337, no. 595; *Kitab al-nisa.*

21. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, pp 573-574.

22. He converted in the Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*

23. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, pp 402-403.

24. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, p 398.

25. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, IV, p 400.

26. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, p 398.

27. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, II, pp 238-239.

28. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 225.

29. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*

30. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 225.

31. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 202 1/2).

32. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* III, p 181.

33. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V p 160.

34. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 207.

35. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 510.

36. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, IV, p 280.

37. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, II, pp 324-325.

38. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V p 485.

39. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 613.

40. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V p 485.

41. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba* III, p 181.
42. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba* V p 160.
43. *Al-Isabah*, II, pp 523-524, no 5764 and Wikipedia.
32. Hatib ibn Amr was from the Amr ibn Luayy tribe. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 260.
33. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* IV, p 85.
34. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* I pp 87-88.
35. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 78.
36. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 110.
37. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* IV, p 95).
38. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 312.
39. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 370.
40. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* III, p 375.
41. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 261.
42. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, I, p 253.
43. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, I, p 299. Hatib and Mumir are mentioned by Ibn Hisham as sons of Harith of the Jumah clan. Waqidi passings his genealogy to Mumir (p 259 ½) but makes Hatib and Hattab sons of the Amr clan of the Amir ibn Luaay. (p. 260.
44. She was one of the early converts.
45. He converted in the Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*
44. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, V, p 15.
45. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, II, pp 321-322.
46. *Al-Isabah*, II, p 319 no 4721.
47. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V pp 54.
48. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V pp 60-61
49. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 341.
50. *Usd al-ghabah*, II, p 341.
51. *al-Isabah*, II, p 292 no. 4605.
52. *al-Isabah*, II, p 292 no. 4605.
53. He converted in Year 2. *See Book Year 2.*
54. She converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1.*
55. She converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1.*
56. She converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1.*
57. She converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1* depending on when she was born.
58. He converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1.*
59. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, pp 279-280.
60. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* I, pp 184-185.
61. *Al-Isabah*, II, p 311no. 1615.
62. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, V pp 63-64.
63. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, IV p 211.
64.. *Al-Isabah*, II, p 8-9 no. 3058 or II, p 44, no. 3251. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*
65. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 257.
66. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, IV p 334.
67. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, IV p 143.

68. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* I, pp 335-336.
69. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, 583.
70. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* III, p 184.
71. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* IV, pp 409-411.
72. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 391.
73. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 601.
74. Ibn Sad, *Kitab al-tabiqat al-kubra*, VIII.
75. Ibn Sad, *Kitab al-tabiqat al-kubra*, VIII.
76. Ibn Sad, *Kitab al-tabiqat al-kubra*, VIII.
77. Ibn Sad, *Kitab al-tabiqat al-kubra*, VIII.
78. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* IV, p 357.
79. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 425.
80. *Sunan of Abu-Dawud* Hadith (Hadith 372). (*Al-Isabah*, III, pp 366-367, no. 7738.
81. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*
82.. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.* Related by al-Bukharl and Muslim.
83. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*Related by Ahmad, and also by al-Tabari and al-Bayhaqi with different chains of transmission.
84. Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.
85. Related by Muslim and al-Tirmidhi.
86. Related by Ahmad, al-Bukhari and Muslim.
87. Abu Hakim Aqil ibn Muhammad al-Jurjani informed us (through verbal authorization)> Abul-Faraj al-Qadi> Muhammad ibn Jarir> al-Husayn ibn Abi Yahya al-Maqdisi> Yahya ibn Hammad> Abu Awanah> al-Mughirah> Abul-Duha> Masruq> Abdullah said.
88. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 98.
89. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 98.
90. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, I, pp 206-209.
91. *Kitab al-Waqidi,* p 224.
92. *Al-Isabah*, IV, p 1813, no 3301.
93. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 222.
94. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 223.
95. Kamali, *Reading the Signs*, p 21.
96. Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, Cairo 1355/1936, i, 271, 368-370, 383; ii 337; Ibn Sad, *Tabaqat*, Beirut 1377/1957, iii, 164-7; v 245; al-Waqidi, *al-Maghazi*, ed. M. Jones, London 1966, i, 100, 155.
97. Commentator
98. Ibn Hisham, pp 318-319.
99. SUNY Press, *History of al-Tabari* Vol. 39.
100. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, p 273.
101. Ibn Hisham, p 318; *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, 462.
102. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 223.
103. Ibn Hisham, 319.

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 4

Laleh Bakhtiar

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THE YEAR 4 OF THE REVELATION

MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 30, 10 BH/ CA. NOVEMBER 1, 612 CE- OCTOBER 21, 613 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 4 is from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 10 BH/ ca. November 1, 612 CE-October 21, 613 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully

learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27

and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic

speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes

how we think. It is a 3-step process: I: Quranic critical thinkers apply the Nine **Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts**, ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)

2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above

points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and*

within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior

to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This

is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiv-

ing the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw*

them on gradually from where they will not know. (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Phi-*

losophy of History, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own

desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when*

he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah.*

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad.* Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad.* Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh.*

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad.* Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed

about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 4*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think, which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 4* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic chapter. Here, in *Book Year 4*, we begin with a Prelude based on 26:214 when the Prophet is commanded to *stand up and warn* his nearest of kin. A dinner is organized for them. The lessons themselves begin with Lesson 39, that is, Quran Chapter 7 is the 39th Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 72, 36 and, finally, Chapter 25, the 42nd Chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary, an analysis of the signs that answer three questions: Who is God?, How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad? and How are the signs directed towards the Community? Following these questions, there is a section called Example of How Critical Thinking works. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons while the information related to the chapters (*ayat*) and sections (*ruku*) can be found in Appendix 1. Here the list of Muhammad's early Companions appear, the names of some who do not appear in Ibn Ishaq or Ibn Hisham but have been recorded by other early scholars. We will hear of some of them who played significant roles in the future development of the community (*ummah*). Appendix 2 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

PRELUDE: THE DINNER

With the revelation of Chapter 26 verse 214, Muhammad has been commanded to *stand up and warn* his nearest of kin. He has to first invite his kin because internal reform precedes all other reform. Also, if he succeeds in his invitation to his kinsmen, the call to strangers will be easier. As a result, the faith of his kinsmen can become a line of defense against the insults of the enemies. It will also have the advantage that if they accept faith in complete sincerity, they will, at least, because of kinship, defend him and protect his life from his enemies.

Who are the near of kin to the Messenger? There is his uncle Abbas and his cousin Hamza, a young, fearless man of great strength. The eldest of them all is Abu Talib, the Messenger's guardian, the most respected man among the Quraysh and head of the Hashim Clan. He is a kind and honorable man and has a special affection for Muhammad who had grown up in his home. Abu Talib continues to protect him against the Quraysh. Then there is Abu Lahab, who, together with his wife, the sister of Abu Sufyan, is the most vicious enemies of the Messenger.

The Messenger must begin his invitation with them. He invites some forty or forty-five people from the Hashim Clan to his home. He begins to speak to familiarize them with the Quranic message, but in the midst of his words, Abu Lahab interrupts him, crying out: Muhammad is a madman!

He does not allow the Messenger to continue. The Messenger decides the moment is not right. Once again he invites his family, except Abu Lahab, to dinner. After dinner, the Messenger explains that a guide never lies to his kin, that there is no god but God, that he is the Messenger of God to individuals there and the general public, as well, and says: O my kin, you will die like those who sleep, and, like them, will be awakened and become alive. Every person will be rewarded or punished according to his own deeds. This is God's eternal paradise for those who do good deeds and eternal hell is for those who do evil deeds. No one has ever brought anything better than what I am offering you. I bring you good news. My God commands me to invite all of you towards Him. Whosoever from among you helps me in this invitation and movement and supports me will be my brother and successor among you.

No one among his kin who had not as yet accepted the Quranic message to join him at this meeting.

> Ibn Ishaq: People begin to accept the Quranic message, both men and women, in large numbers until the fame of it spreads throughout Makkah, and it begins to be talked about. Then God commands Muhammad to declare the truth of what he has received and to make known His commands to the people and to call them to Him. It is about three years from the time of the beginning of the revelation until God commands the Messenger to publish his religion to the

public, according to information that has reached me. Then God says: *And warn your nearest kin, the kinspeople.* (26:214)

When this sign is revealed to the Messenger, he called me (Ali ibn Abi Talib) and said: God has ordered me to warn my family, my nearest relations and the task is beyond my strength. I know that when I make this message known to them, I will meet with great unpleasantness so I have remained silent until Gabriel has come to me with the sign.

So prepare some food with a leg of mutton and fill a pitcher with milk. Then gather together the sons of Abd al-Muttalib so that I can address them and tell them what I have been commanded to say.

I do what he ordered and summoned them. There are at that time forty men more or less including his uncles Abu Talib, Hamza, al-Abbas and Abu Lahab. When they had assembled he told me to bring in the food that I had prepared for them. When I produced it, the Messenger said to his relatives: Take it in the name of God.

The men ate until they could eat no more. All I could see (in the dish) was the place where their fingers had been. And as sure as I live if there had been only one man, he could have eaten what I put before the lot of them.

Then he said: Give the people to drink. I brought them the cup and they drank until they were all satisfied, and as sure as I live if there had been, only one man he could have drunk that amount.

When the Messenger wanted to address them, Abu Lahab got up first and said: Your host has bewitched you.

They dispersed before the Messenger could address them.

On the morrow he said to me: This man spoke before I could, and the people dispersed before I could address them, so do exactly as you did yesterday.

Everything went as before and then the Messenger said: O Clans of Abd al-Muttalib, I know of no Arab who has come to his people with a nobler message than mine. I have brought you the best of this world and the next. God has ordered me to call you to Him. So which of you will co-operate with me in this matter, my brother, my executor, and my successor being among you?

The men remained silent and I, though the youngest, said: O Messenger of God, I will be your helper in this matter.

He laid his hand on the back of my neck and said: This is my brother, my executor, and my successor among you. Hearken to him and obey him.

The men got up laughing and saying to Abu Talib: He has ordered you to listen to your son and obey him![1]

LESSON 39(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same.

It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how you experience, how you describe, how you categorize, and how you reason about things. You become more careful and discriminating in your use of words and phrases. You recognize the purposes of the comparisons you make. You recognize that purposes govern the act of comparing and determine its scope and limits.

We all have actions or deeds by which we will be judged. In this we are similar. Our difference lies in the weight of our deeds. Those whose scale weighs heavy with good deeds on the Day of Judgment will prosper. Those whose scale weighs light with good deeds will have *lost their souls.* (7:9)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:1-7:10

Makkah: *Alif Lam Mim Saad.* (7:1)
*It is a Book that was caused to descend to **you**.*
*So let there be no impediment in **your** breast about it*
*so that **you** will warn with it*
and as a reminder to the ones who believe. (7:2)
Follow what was caused to descend to you from your Lord
and follow not protectors other than He.
Little you recollect! (7:3)
And how many towns We caused to perish!
And Our might drew near them at night
or when they were ones who sleep at noon! (7:4)
Then, there had been no calling out
when Our might drew near to them,
but that they said:
Truly, we had been ones who are unjust. (7:5)
Then, We will, certainly, ask those
to whom were sent Messengers to them
and We will, certainly, ask the ones who are sent. (7:6)
Then, We will relate to them with knowledge
for We had never been of ones who are absent. (7:7)

The weighing of deeds on that Day will be The Truth.
So ones whose balance was heavy from good deeds,
then, those, they are the ones who prosper. (7:8)
And ones whose balance was made light from bad deeds
those are those who have lost their souls because
they had been doing wrong with Our signs. (7:9)
And, certainly, We established you firmly on the earth
and We made for you in it a livelihood.
But little you give thanks! (7:10)[2]

COMMENTARY°

THE JOURNEY

The journey we take, representing our life on earth, is thus portrayed in a quick image. When those of us who suffered God's punishment in this life are brought in front of God for questioning, their confession made at the time when they were destroyed in this world is not sufficient. They have to face a new line of questioning which makes their wrongdoing known to all generations of humanity who are gathered together on that great day: *Then, We will, certainly, ask those to whom were sent Messengers to them and We will, certainly, ask the ones who are sent. Then, We will relate to them with knowledge for We had never been of ones who are absent.* (7:6-7:7)

The Prophet, the one who was to deliver the Quranic message for the first time, receives the directive to confront the state of ignorance, or tribal honor, prevailing in Arabia. *It is a Book that was caused to descend to* ***you****. So let there be no impediment in your breast about it so that you will warn with it and as a reminder to the ones who believe.* (7:2) It should be noted here that when the Prophet was addressed in person, the book is described as having been sent down to him personally and the second person singular is used as indicated by **you, your**. (7:2)

At the same time, when all humanity is addressed, the book is described as having been sent down to them from their Lord: *Follow what was caused to descend to you from your Lord and follow not protectors other than He. Little you recollect!* and the second person plural is used as indicated by "you." (7:3) In the case of the Prophet, the message is revealed to him so that he believes in it and warns people and reminds them with its message. In the case of other human beings, the message is revealed for them so that they believe in it and follow it to the exclusion of any other source.

The task is great. It aims to bring about a total change in human communities, encompassing their concepts, ideals, values, moral

standards, traditions, social systems, economic set-ups as well as their relationships with God, the universe and other human beings. Therefore, the section seeks to strongly shake people's consciences so that they wake up to the task and start examining their situation. This is achieved by portraying the destinies of past communities who denied the divine message, how they were destroyed in this life and the sort of destiny awaiting them in the life to come. *The weighing of deeds on that Day will be The Truth. So ones whose balance was heavy from good deeds, then, those, they are the ones who prosper. And ones whose balance was made light from bad deeds those are those who have lost their souls because they had been doing wrong with Our signs.* (7:8-7:9)

Numerous have been those communities which were destroyed because of their rejection of the message of the truth. Invariably, they were taken unawares, either in the dead of the night or at midday when people relax and sleep, feeling a sense of security: *And how many towns We caused to perish! And Our might drew near them at night or when they were ones who sleep at noon!* (7:4).

What happened then? Those people who were taken unaware could do nothing other than to own up to their situation and confess to the attitude they had taken: *Then, there had been no calling out when Our might drew near to them, but that they said: Truly, we had been ones who are unjust.* (7:5)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:1-7:10

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who caused the Book to descend to Prophet Muhammad so that he may warn with it. God has caused many towns to perish. On the Day of Judgment, God will ask the Messengers who were sent to the various communities about their communities. God established the community firmly on the earth and made a livelihood for it.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says that the Quran was caused to descend to "**you**," Muhammad so that there be no impediment in **your** breast about it and so that **you** warn with it. It is a *reminder to the ones who believe.*

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Here in the 39th Chapter to be revealed is the first mention of *the ones who believe*. They, that is, the community of believers are reprimanded with *little you recollect!* in following what was caused to descend them from their Lord. For those who are ungrateful, when God's might grows near to them,

they will say: *We had been ones who are unjust.* Deeds and actions will be weighed on that Day. The ones who will prosper are the ones whose balance is heavy from good deeds. The ones who balance is light are the ones who have lost their souls because they did wrong with God's signs. Then, again, God reprimands the community saying: *Little do you give thanks*, reminding it of the importance of gratitude.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message is revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Why was the Quran caused to descend to Prophet Muhammad? The Prophet will warn and remind. The Prophet did not make-up the Quran himself. It was revealed by God to him. God is always present. One needs to make sure one's scale on the Day of Judgment weighs heavy with good deeds.The Prophet will reveal to others exactly what was revealed to him.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.

LESSON 39(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES AND MODELS

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

FIVE STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING TO UTILIZE CONCEPTS, ETC.

The following are five strategies specific to this element of reasoning. The five strategies are:

Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframe Insights to New Contexts
Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments
Making Interdisciplinary Connections
Comparing and Contrasting Ideals with Actual Practice
Thinking Precisely About Thinking: Using Critical Vocabulary

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:11-7:25

Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:15)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:16)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:18)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:19)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:20)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:21)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:22)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:23)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:25)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:26-7:31

O Children of Adam! Surely, We caused to descend to you
garments to cover up your intimate parts and finery,
but the garment of God-consciousness, that is better.
That is of the signs of God
so that perhaps they will recollect! (7:26)
O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you
as he drove your parents out of the Garden,
tearing off their garments from both of them
to cause them to see their intimate parts.
Truly, he and his type sees you whereas you see them not.
Truly, We made he and the satans protectors
of those who believe not. (7:27)
And when they committed an indecency, they said:
We found our fathers on it and God commanded us in it.
Say: Truly, God commands not depravities.
Say you about God what you know not? (7:28)
Say: My Lord commanded me to justice.
And set your faces at every place of prostration
and call to Him ones who are sincere and devoted
in the way of life to Him.
As He began you, you will revert to Him. (7:29)
He guided a group of people
and a group of people realized their fallacy.
Truly, they took satans to themselves as protectors instead of God
and they assume that they are ones who are truly guided. (7:30)
O Children of Adam! Take your adornment
at every place of prostration.
And eat and drink, but exceed not all bounds.
Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive.(7:31)

Commentary°

This passage provides a pause for comment. It is a long pause after the first scene in the great story of humanity. A similar pause is made at the end of every stage, as if we are told: let us stop here to reflect on the lessons of the previous epoch before we go further on our unique journey. This pause comes at the beginning of the battle which is about to rage between Satan and the human being. It is meant as a warning against Satan's schemes and exposes the numer-

ous ways and fashions his scheming may take. But the Quran does not issue any directive unless it is needed to face a practical situation, and does not relate a story unless it is relevant to the day-to-day life of the Islamic movement. It does not relate a story for the sake of literary enjoyment, and does not state a fact only to place it in a theoretical context. The Quran is serious and practical, and its statements and directives are meant only to deal with realities which the Islamic movement may have to face.

This comment on the story of the fall of human beings from heaven is given here by way of facing up to the Arabian *jahiliyyah* when, prior to the advent of Islam, the Quraysh leaders from the major tribe in Arabia, had claimed for itself certain rights against the unbelievers of the rest of Arabia who went to Makkah for pilgrimage and paid homage to the idols which were placed in the Kabah. The Quraysh based its claims on concepts which it alleged to be part of the divine faith.

It formulated these in laws, claiming them to be part of the divine law. How else could the Quraysh have won acceptance to its claim by the rest of Arabia? It had to resort to the same tactics followed by priests, chiefs and leaders in every ignorant community. The Quraysh gave itself a special name, al-Hums, and claimed for itself special privileges, some of which relate to the ritual of *tawaf* which takes the form of circumambulating or walking round the Kabah, the first house ever to be dedicated for worshipping God.

They claimed that al-Hums, or the Qurayshis, were the only people to have the privilege of doing *tawaf* wearing ordinary clothes. The rest of the Arabs could not do *tawaf* wearing clothes that had previously been worn. Instead, they had to borrow clothes from al-Hums people, or wear brand new clothing. Otherwise, they had to do *tawaf* in the nude, even though they had their women with them. In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir states:

The Arabs, other than the Quraysh, did not do *tawaf* around the Kabah wearing clothes that they had already used. Their argument was that they could not do *tawaf* wearing clothes that they had worn when committing disobedience to God. The Quraysh, who called themselves al-Hums, were the only ones to wear their ordinary garments when they did *tawaf*. If anyone was able to borrow a garment from a Qurayshi man, he could use it for *tawaf*. Anyone who had a brand new garment could also use it in *tawaf*, provided that he threw it away on finishing his ritual and that no one else used it afterwards. Otherwise, he had to do *tawaf* naked. Even women were naked when they did *tawaf*, but they could partially cover their private parts. However, women mostly did *tawaf* at night.[3]

This was something they invented, following the footsteps of their fathers, and believing that what their fathers did was based on divine orders. God reproached them for that, saying: *When they committed an indecency, they said: We found our fathers on it.* (7:28) In reply God tells His Messenger, Muhammad, to answer their claims by saying: *Say: Truly, God commands not depravities.* (7:28) Thus, their practice is condemned in the Quran as unacceptable indecency. God would never enjoin anything like that: *Say you about God what you do not know?* Would you allege that God has said something when you do not know it to be correct?

God also instructs His Messenger to tell his people that He only orders justice, the maintaining of the right path and sincere devotion: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice. And set your faces at every place of prostration and call to Him ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life* (religion) *to Him.* (7:29) That is to say that wherever you wish to worship God, you have to be sincere in your worship, following in the footsteps of messengers to whom God gave miracles to endorse what they gave you. Moreover, you have to be truly sincere in your worship, because God does not accept any action unless it combines these two essentials: that it is in line with His way of life and dedicated purely to Him alone.

To deal with this practical state of ignorance and its manifestations in the shape of regulations for worship, *tawaf* and dress, as well as similar traditions concerning food, and all that is claimed to be part of God's law, the Quran gives these comments on the first stage in the life of humanity. This stage involves the permission to eat of the fruit of the garden of heaven, except for what God has forbidden, and mentions a person's need to have clothes.

O Children of Adam! Surely We caused to descend to you garments to cover up your intimate parts and finery, but the garment of God-consciousness, that is better. That is of the signs of God so that perhaps they will recollect! (7:26) This address contrasts with the scene of exposed nakedness and the patching up of leaves from the garden to cover that nakedness. That exposure came as a result of disobeying an express order given by God and eating something He had forbidden.

This is what God has enjoined. (7:29) It runs opposite to their practices in which they follow their fathers. In the end they come back to their different destinations: *He guided a group of people and a group of people realized their fallacy. Truly, they took satans to themselves as protectors instead of God and they assume that they are ones who are truly guided.* (7:30)

Thus, any Arab who did not have a friend in Makkah to lend

him a garment, or did not have the money to hire such a garment, faced the choice of either doing *tawaf* naked or wearing his own clothes which he must throw away after he completed his *tawaf*. No one else was allowed to touch those clothes after they had been thrown away. Such clothes were considered as discarded clothes.

In his commentary, al-Qurturbi, a famous scholar, says: It has been reported that in pre-Islamic days, the Arabs used not to eat any rich food during their pilgrimage, limiting themselves only to eating very little, and they used to do *tawaf* naked. The Quran tells them: Dress well when you attend any place of worship. *Eat and drink, but exceed not all bounds. Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive.* (7:31)

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 7:26-7:31

WHO IS GOD?

God caused materials for garments to be made and worn to cover over intimate parts. God made Satan the protector of those who believe not. God commends the Prophet to be fair and just.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Say: Truly, God commands not depravities. Say you about God what you know not? (7:28) *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice.*

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you as he drove your parents out of the Garden, tearing off their garments from both of them to cause them to see their intimate parts. Truly, he and his type sees you whereas you see them not. Truly, We made he and the satans protectors of those who believe not. (7:27) *And when they committed an indecency, they said: We found our fathers on it and God commanded us in it. And set your faces at every place of prostration and call to Him ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. As He began you, you will revert to Him.* (7:29) *He guided a group of people and a group of people realized their fallacy. Truly, they took satans to themselves as protectors instead of God and they assume that they are ones who are truly guided.* (7:30) *O Children of Adam! Take your adornment at every place of prostration. And eat and drink, but exceed not all bounds. Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive.*(7:31)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that God does not love the ones who are excessive. What does it mean "to be excessive?" There are those who exceed all bounds or limits in what they eat or drink. The result is that according to the Quran, they are among "the excessive" who are unjust to themselves whereas the Prophet was commanded to justice. Excessiveness includes our over-eating, drinking and in the very clothes we choose to wear. It may be that this leads us to excessive behavior and we would lose God's love.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.

LESSON 39(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAME INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind. The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked as we learned in the previous lesson.

The Traditions of the Prophet (*ahadith*), so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. An important part of these is a particular method called "reframing" as the following examples show.

> The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.
>
> He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.
>
> He used this method in reconciling social phenomena. He adopted a process and method which is a model for all problem solving. This method can be applied to two problems or two phenomena which in no way resemble each other.
>
> Before Islam, the pilgrimage was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. Islam kept the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, believing that Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah as a place to worship the One God, but which, after a period of decline, had been filled with idols.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: to protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By

doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.[4]

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:32-7:39

Say: Who forbade the adornment of God
which He brought out for His servants?
And what is the good of His provision?
Say: They are exclusively (for them) *on the Day of Resurrection*
for those who believed during this present life .
Thus, We explain distinctly
the signs for a folk who know. (7:32)[5]
Say: My Lord forbade not but indecencies—
what was manifest or what was inward—
and sins and unrightful insolence,
to ascribe partners with God
when He sends not down for it any authority
and that you say about God
what you know not. (7:33)
And for every community there is a term.
And when their term drew near,
they will not delay it by an hour,
nor press it forward. (7:34)
O Children of Adam! If Messengers
from among you approach
relating My signs to you,
then, whoever was God-conscious
and made things right,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (7:35)
But those who denied Our signs
and grew arrogant against them,
those are the Companions of the Fire;
they are ones who will dwell in it forever. (7:36)
Then, who does greater wrong
than he who devised a lie against God
or denied His signs?
Those, they will attain their share from the Book.
Until Our Messengers drew near

to gather them to themselves,
they will say:
Where are who you had been calling on other than God?
They will say: They went astray from us.
And they bore witness against themselves
that, truly, they had been ones who are ungrateful. (7:37)
He will say: Enter among the communities
that passed away before you of jinn
and humankind into the fire.
Every time a community entered,
it would curse its sister community
until when they will come successively in it altogether.
The last of them would say to the first of them:
Our Lord! These caused us to go astray
so give them a double punishment of the fire.
He will say: For everyone it is double
except you know not. (7:38)
And the first of them would say to the last of them:
You have had no superiority over us
so experience the punishment
for what you had been earning. (7:39)

COMMENTARY°

Thus, the idolatrous leaders assume for themselves the authority to pronounce certain types of dress and food as lawful or forbidden. (7:32) When all their claims have been refuted, the section reiterates what God has actually forbidden: *Say: My Lord forbade not but indecencies—what was manifest or what was inward—and sins and unrightful insolence, to ascribe partners with God when He sends not down for it any authority and that you say about God what you know not.* (7:33)

Humanity must follow the messengers who bring them revelations from their Lord. It is on the basis of their response to those messengers that accountability and reward on the Day of Judgment will be determined. *O Children of Adam! If Messengers from among you approach relating My signs to you, then, whoever was God-conscious and made things right, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse. But those who denied Our signs and grew arrogant against them, those are the Companions of the Fire; they are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (7:35-7:36).

God-consciousness helps us steer away from sin and indecency. Indeed, the most wicked aspect of gross indecency is to associate partners with God and to claim for oneself God's authority. God-con-

sciousness also helps us maintain the path of obedience and to do only what is right. Thus, it brings a sense of security which is totally free from worry about one's eventual destiny: *But those who denied Our signs and grew arrogant against them, those are the Companions of the Fire; they are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (7:36)

The section moves on to portray the scene of approaching death: *And for every community there is a term. And when their term drew near, they will not delay it by an hour, nor press it forward.* (7:34)

The section does not stop at calling on people to dress well when they attend to any act of worship or to enjoy wholesome food and elegant dress. It disapproves of the prohibitions of such adornment which God has provided for His servants as well as the prohibition of wholesome provisions. The authority to prohibit anything belongs only to God who has given us the details of what He has forbidden and what He has made lawful He has enacted for human life. *Say: Who forbade the adornment of God which He brought out for His servants. And what is the good of His provision? Say: They are for those who believed in this present life and, exclusively* (for them) *on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* (7:32)

This clear disapproval is followed by a statement making clear that such adornment and means of sustenance are for the enjoyment of believers on account of their belief in God, their Lord, who has produced them for the believers. If such matters are also made available in this life to the ungrateful, they will be reserved exclusively for believers on the Day of Resurrection. The ungrateful will have no share in them. (7:32).

God has certainly forbidden neither what is reasonable of adornment and clothing nor wholesome food and drink. What He has truly forbidden is what those ungrateful used to practice: (7:33)

A most amazing example of the reaction of the ungrateful who were the first to be addressed by these signs, considering the denunciation of their false prohibitions, is given by al-Kalbi, a renowned scholar in the early generations: When Muslims circumambulated the Kabah wearing their clothes, the ungrateful criticized their action and ridiculed them. This sign was then revealed to answer their ridicules.

The question that arises here concerns the link between such nakedness, twisted logic, overweening arrogance by associating partners with God and accepting laws from deities other than God.

Those pagan Arabs received their notions concerning their nakedness from false lords who were able to fool them and manipulate their ignorance to ensure their supremacy in Arabia remained

unchallenged. Other ancient tribal honor societies followed the same pattern and received their notions from their priests and chiefs. The same applies to the ungrateful of today who cannot challenge the concepts that false lords are keen to establish.

This: *Then, who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs? Those, they will attain their share from the Book. Until Our Messengers drew near to gather them to themselves, they will say: Where are who you had been calling on other than God? They will say: They went astray from us. And they bore witness against themselves that, truly, they had been ones who are ungrateful* (7:37) is the same attitude described earlier in the section showing their reaction at the time when God's might overwhelms them in this life. Their reply then was a clear acknowledgement of being in the wrong: *Then, there had been no calling out when Our might drew near to them, but that they said: Truly, we had been ones who are unjust.* (7:5).

[God] will say: *Enter among the communities that passed away before you of jinn and humankind into the fire. Every time a community entered, it would curse its sister community until when they will come successively in it altogether. The last of them would say to the first of them: Our Lord! These caused us to go astray so give them a double punishment of the fire. He will say: For everyone it is double except you know not. And the first of them would say to the last of them: You have had no superiority over us so experience the punishment for what you had been earning.* (7:38-39)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:32-7:39

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is told to say: Who forbade the adornment of God that He revealed for His servants and what is good of His provision? Say: That which is good and the provisions are for those who believed in the present life and, exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection. Say: My Lord forbade indecencies—outer or inner—and sins and show unrightful insolence by ascribing partners with God when He has not sent down any authority for that and that you say about God what you know not. Tell them that for every community there is a term and when their term drew near, they will not delay it by an hour nor press it forward.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God has sent Messengers who relate His signs to the community. For those who are God-conscious and made things right, there they will have neither fear nor remorse. As for the ungrateful, the Quranic message asks: Who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs?

When the angels gather them to themselves, the angels will ask: *Where are who you had been calling on other than God*? The ungrateful will reply: They left us. In this way, the ungrateful will bear witness against themselves.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

One of the Quranic messages here is to follow these signs showing that which God forbids. What is it that God forbids in these signs? There are those who forbade adornment and provision that God did not forbid. What God does forbid are indecency, inner or outer, sins and the insolence of ascribing partners with God. One should only avoid doing what God enjoins that it not be done. Do not forbid what God has not forbidden. These are what God has forbidden and not those who say things about God who know not. We take for granted that there are those who say things about God for which God has not sent down any authority.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.

LESSON 39(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

HOW DO I CREATE OR EXPLORE ARGUMENTS BY DEVELOPING MY PERSPECTIVE?

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the people around Prophet Abraham tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers like Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

WHAT EXAMPLE CAN YOU GIVE OF A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AN EXPERIENCE OF YOURS?

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully, try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic as Prophet Abraham did. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they have exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions. You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:40-7:47

Makkah: *Truly, those who denied Our signs*
and grew arrogant among them,
the doors of heaven will not be opened up to them
nor will they enter the Garden
until a he-camel penetrates through the eye of the needle.
And, thus, We give recompense to the ones who sin. (7:40)
For them hell will be their cradling
and above them, the overwhelming event.
Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are unjust. (7:41)
But for those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
We place no burden on any soul beyond its capacity.
Those will be the Companions of the Garden.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (7:42)
And We will draw out what was in their breasts of grudges.
And rivers will run beneath them.
And they will say: The Praise belongs to God
Who truly guided us to this!
And we would not have been guided if God guided us not.
Certainly, the Messengers of our Lord
drew near us with The Truth.
And it was proclaimed to them that this,
the Garden, was given to you as inheritance
for what you had been doing. (7:43)
And the Companions of the Garden would cry out
to the Companions of the Fire:
Surely, we found what our Lord promised us to be true.
Found you not what your Lord promised to be true?
They would say: Yes.
Then, it will be announced
by one who announces among them:
May the curse of God be on the ones who are unjust, (7:44)
those who bar the way of God and who desire it to be crooked.
And in the world to come
they will be ones who are ungrateful. (7:45)
And between them both is a partition.
And on the Elevated Places will be men
who recognize everyone by their mark.
And they will cry out to the Companions of the Garden that:

Peace be on you.
They enter it not and they are desirous of it. (7:46)
And when their sight would be turned away of its own accord
to the Companions of the Fire,
they will say: Our Lord assign You us not with the folk,
ones who are unjust! (7:47)

COMMENTARY°

The fire is then described: *For them hell will be their cradling and above them, the overwhelming event. Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are unjust.* (7:41). The fire actually engulfs them from above and from beneath. Thus, they have beneath them a raging fire which is sarcastically described as a resting place or a cradle, when it bears nothing of such characteristics. Moreover, from above they have sheets of fire drawn over them. This last description means the criminals and also refers to the ungrateful who deny God's revelations and invent falsehood against God. All these descriptions are synonymous in Quranic usage. (7:42-7:43)

In contrast to the scene of mutual hatred surfacing among the evildoers in hell, even against their former close and intimate friends, we see the believers demonstrating their perfect love for one another in heaven. They are brethren who harbor no ill-feeling to anyone. They enjoy perfect peace and bliss: (7:43)

The contrast between the two groups is total, but the section moves on to raise before our eyes a scene that comes later than the one we have just witnessed. Now we see the people of heaven having settled down comfortably in their dwelling place, while the people of hell are now certain of their doom. The former group calls out to the latter asking them about God's promise: (7:44-7:45)

They greet the people of heaven with the greeting of peace, clearly entertaining hope that God will bestow His mercy on them and admit them to heaven as well. When their eyes fall on the people of the fire, whom they are deliberately made to see, they plead to be spared their destiny. (7:46-7:47)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:40-7:47

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who deny the signs and are ungrateful for their blessings will be among the Companions of the Fire.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describes the fate of those who deny the signs and those who believe in them from the Quranic message. What is the fate of those who deny the Quranic signs? Heaven will not be opened to them nor will they enter the Garden until a he-camel passes through the eye of a needle. Hell will be their cradling and, above them, the overwhelming event because they had been arrogant and unjust. In order to have heaven opened to one and to have a place in the Garden, one needs to have believed and acted in accord with morality. There is a heaven and there is a hell. Whoever wants heaven and the Garden must believe in the signs and act in accord with morality. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the meaning of the Quranic message.

LESSON 39(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science. Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control your thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. Make use of insights into one subject to inform your understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of *the varying opinions as you differ in what (they) say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Theology: God's Power is directed by His Will which is determined by His Knowledge.

Psychology: Reason (our cognitive system) is the control center for thoughts and it is used to help us regulate our animal soul (*nafs-i ammarah*), that is, our emotions and behavior, by keeping them in a state of equilibrium or moderation in terms of the Straight Path.

Critical thinkers who make interdisciplinary connections consider the created order to be the means through which God manifests multiplicity as so many reflections of Unity. The Quran says: *Nothing is there but its measures are with Us and We send it not down but in a known measure.* (15:21)

This sign refers to every existing thing, that is, that there is nothing that God cannot bring into existence. *His measures* symbolize God's Power and the treasures within them symbolize what is contained within His Power, all of which can be brought into existence by Him easily.

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF) SIGNS 7:48-7:53

Makkah: *The Companions of the Elevated Places*
would cry out to men
whom they would recognize by their mark.
They would say: Your amassing availed you not,
nor that you had been growing arrogant. (7:48)
Are these, those about whom you swore an oath
that God would never impart mercy?
Enter the Garden.
There will be neither fear in you
nor will you feel remorse. (7:49)
And the Companions of the Fire would cry out
to the Companions of the Garden:
Pour some water on us,
or some of what God provided you.
They would say: Truly, God forbade them both
to the ones who are ungrateful,(7:50)
those who took their way of life to themselves
as a diversion and as a pastime.
This present life deluded them.
So today We will forget them
as they forgot the meeting of this their Day
and because they had been negating Our signs.(7:51)
And, surely, We brought about a Book to them
in which We explained distinctly, with knowledge,
a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe. (7:52)
Did they look on for nothing but its interpretation?
The Day its interpretation approaches,
those who forgot it before will say:
Surely, Messengers of our Lord
drew near us with The Truth.
Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us?
Or will we be returned so we do other than what
we had been doing before?

Surely, they lost themselves.
Went astray from them
what they had been devising.(7:53)

COMMENTARY°

The Companions of the Elevated Places then see some leading figures among the wrongdoing people and they recognize them by their features. They rebuke them for what they have been doing: *They would say: Your amassing availed you not, nor that you had been growing arrogant.* (7:48)

You see now that you are in hell, where your armies and great multitude are of no use to you, nor indeed are your arrogance and vain pride. They remind them of what they used to say about the believers in this life, accusing them of being in error and that they would never be granted God's mercy: *Are these, those about whom you swore an oath that God would never impart mercy? Enter the Garden. There will be neither fear in you nor will you feel remorse.* (7:49) Then from the direction of the fire we hear a voice, begging, imploring: *And the Companions of the Fire would cry out to the Companions of the Garden: Pour some water on us, or some of what God provided you. They would say: Truly, God forbade them both to the ones who are ungrateful,* (7:50).

From the other side comes a reproachful reminder in reply: ... *those who took their way of life to themselves as a diversion and as a pastime. This present life deluded them. So today We will forget them as they forgot the meeting of this their Day and because they had been negating Our signs.* (7:51)

All human voices then die down and the Almighty, the Lord of the universe whose rule is final, gives His judgment: *And, surely, We brought about a Book to them in which We explained distinctly, with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe. Did they look on for nothing but its interpretation? The Day its interpretation approaches, those who forgot it before will say: Surely, Messengers of our Lord drew near us with The Truth. Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us? Or will we be returned so we do other than what we had been doing before? Surely, they lost themselves. Went astray from them what they had been devising.* (7:51-7:53)

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 7:48-7:53

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

To not take life as a diversion and as a pastime. Take it seriously because there are consequences for what each person does.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message informs those who take their way of life as a diversion and a pastime, those who were deluded by the present life that they will be among the Companions of the Fire. The Quranic message here asks: Are these, those about whom you swore an oath that God would never impart mercy? Did they, the ungrateful, look on for nothing but its interpretation? The ungrateful themselves will ask: Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us? Or will we be returned so we do other than what he had been doing before? The ungrateful lost their way and went astray. The great regret the ungrateful will have when they face the Judgment. Your wealth will not help you nor an attitude of arrogance. There will be a Day of Judgment.

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT LEARNING AND STUDYING TECHNIQUES

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing.

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once.

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts.
Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?
Active learning

Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging.

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations.

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the guidelines below:

Do your homework!
Read critically; form your own opinions.
Review your notes from the previous lecture and reading for the day.
Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems.

Lesson 39(6). Critical Thinking Strategy
Comparing and Contrasting Ideals with Actual Practice

How do I compare and contrast ideals with actual practice in utilizing Quranic concepts?

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

After the Messenger had been commanded to warn his kin (see Prelude) and as the revelations continued, the time arrives for the Messenger to begin his actual public invitation, the Messenger makes his invitation known in various ways.

It is the custom in Makkah that whenever there is important news for the people, a herald will go through the streets of Makkah calling: *Sabaha*! inviting the people to gather at some point to hear the news. The following day, while he seems pleased with the command to invite his kinsmen to the Quranic message, he leaves his home and climbs the Safa hill. He calls people to hear something important.

The Messenger stands on the Safa hill and calls to the people, saying: O Quraysh! O Quraysh. News passes through the city that the Messenger is standing on the Safa hill and calling to the people. People flock to hear what he has to say. They ask each other: What has happened?

He says: If I were to tell you that an enemy is waiting in ambush behind this mountain would you believe me?

They respond: Yea. We would believe you. No one has ever been able to claim that you lied and you have never lied to us.

Then children of Abu Talib, children of Abdu Manaf! O Zahrah Clan! O Taym Clan! O Makhzum Clan! O Asad Clan, Muhammad calls out, I give you news that a great punishment awaits you. God has appointed me to invite my kin to God-consciousness. I want nothing from you except that you say: There is no god but God.

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:54-7:58

Makkah: *Truly, your Lord is God, He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.*

Again, He turned His attention to the Throne.
He covers the nighttime with the daytime
that seeks it out urgently.
And the sun and the moon and the stars
are ones caused to be subservient to His command.
Truly, His is not but the creation and the command.
Blessed be God, Lord of the worlds. (7:54)
Call to your Lord humbly and inwardly.
Truly, He loves not the ones who exceed the limits. (7:55)[6]
Make not corruption in the earth
after things were made right
and call to Him with fear and hope.
Truly, the mercy of God is Near
to the ones who are doers of good. (7:56)
And it is He Who sends the winds,
ones that are bearers of good news
before His mercy until when they were charged
with heavy clouds.
We will drive it to a dead land.
Then, We caused water to descend from the cloud and with it
We bring out by water all kinds of fruits.
Thus, We bring out the dead
so that perhaps you will recollect. (7:57)
As for the good land, its plants go forth
with permission of its Lord.
While, as for what was bad, it goes forth not but scantily.
Thus, We diversify the signs for a folk who give thanks. (7:58)

COMMENTARY°

This section calls on human beings to attend to their duties: *Call to your Lord humbly and inwardly. Truly, He loves not the ones who exceed the limits. Make not corruption in the earth after things were made right and call to Him with fear and hope. Truly, the mercy of God is Near to the ones who are doers of good.* (7:55-7:56)

The Quran uses the expression *yawm*, which means 'day', as it speaks of the span of time in which God created the heavens and the earth. (7:54) Their creation was over six such *yawm*. Again, this belongs to the realm that lies beyond the reach of human perception.

Whatever is said about these six days is not based on any certain knowledge. They may be six stages of creation or six epochs, or six of God's days which cannot be measured by our time which is the result of the movement of certain planets and stars. Before these were created, time, as we know it, did not exist. Still, the six days to which

the Quranic sign refers may be something totally different. Therefore, no one may claim that he or she has certain knowledge of what this figure truly means.

Call to Him with fear and hope. (7:56), fearing to incur His anger and punishment, and hoping to earn His pleasure and reward: *Truly, the mercy of God is Near to the ones who are doers of good.* (7:56), who worship God as though they actually see Him. If they do not see him, they are fully aware that He sees them. This is the attitude defined by the Prophet as belonging to the God-conscious.

The idea that we have just discussed speaks of God's grace, and the new scene provides an example of God's grace in action. We see and feel it in the rain that pours down, the growing vegetation and the life that quickens: *And it is He Who sends the winds, ones that are bearers of good news before His mercy until when they were charged with heavy clouds. We will drive it to a dead land. Then, We caused water to descend from the cloud and with it We bring out by water all kinds of fruits. Thus, We bring out the dead so that perhaps you will recollect.* (7:57)

At the end of this journey that encompasses the whole universe and touches on the secrets of existence, the section gives an example of good and evil hearts. But the analogy relies heavily on the scene that has just been portrayed in order to maintain harmony between what we see and what is outlined of different natures: *As for the good land, its plants go forth with permission of its Lord. While, as for what was bad, it goes forth not but scantily. Thus, We diversify the signs for a folk who give thanks.* (7:58)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:54-7:58

WHO IS GOD?

God is our Lord who created the heavens and the earth in six days. Then He turned His attention to the Throne. He covers the nighttime with the daytime and the sun and moon and stars are subservient to His command. His is the creation and the command. Blessed by God, Lord of the worlds. The mercy of God is Near for those who do good. It is God who sends the winds and causes water to descend from the clouds bringing out all kinds of fruit so that the human being will recollect. God diversifies the sings for a community that gives thanks.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The community is told: Call to your Lord humbly and inwardly. He loves not the ones who exceed the limits. Do not make corruption in the earth. Call to Him with fear and hope. The mercy of God is Near for those who do good.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The mercy of God is Near the doers of good. Who are the doers of good? Those who call to their Lord humbly and inwardly, who do not exceed the limits and who do not make corruption in the earth after things were made right and who call to Him with fear and hope. In order to have the mercy of God Near, one needs to follow what the Quranic message says. The mercy of God. By doing as the Quranic message states, one brings the mercy of God Near. We take for granted that God is merciful.

QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis I am using in my reasoning?
Am I using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should I draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked.
Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

LESSON 39(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

HOW DO I LEARN TO THINK PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING USING THE QURANIC CRITICAL VOCABULARY?

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking.

Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "Say" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various sections is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that *We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were un-*

grateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)[7]

What are the obstacles to being Quranic Critical Thinkers?

Since most language is acquired by hearing words used in context, try to make critical terms part of your working vocabulary.

When you are reasoning or discussing the reasoning of others, you can use critical vocabulary. New words are most easily learned and remembered when they are clearly useful.

When introducing a term, speak in pairs of sentences: first, using the critical vocabulary, then, rephrasing the sentence without the new term, e.g.:

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must I consider in deciding this issue?
What information do I need?

You can also rephrase your statements to incorporate the vocabulary.

Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?

When conducting discussions, explain the role of your remarks in the discussion: supporting a point, raising an objection, answering an objection, distinguishing concepts or issues, questioning relevance, etc.

Why were you raising that point here?
Are you supporting so-and-so's point or ?

Look up and discuss sets of related critical vocabulary words, and discuss relationships among them, when each can be used, and for what purposes.

Quranic Challenges

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (tadabbur) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe

Thinking Itself

As the revelations continue and new converts come,[8] it becomes necessary to find a place to meet. It is probably sometime between 612 and 613 CE that Arqam, ibn Abd Manaf ibn Asad, who had previously converted, offers his home to Muhammad. It is situated a short distance from his own dwelling upon the gentle rise of the Safa. Fronting the Kabah to the east, it is in a frequented position and pilgrims, in the prescribed course, must often pass by it. Anyone who showed a leaning towards the Quranic message was conducted to this home. There Muhammad would recite signs from the Quran to them and explain what the believe in the One God meant. Thus it has been recorded about many of the believers that they accepted the message in the house of Arqam. So famous is it as the birthplace of believers, that it was in after times styled the House of Islam.

Arqam later makes it into a trust: In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: This is what Arqam has determined regarding the house that borders upon Safa, that it is devoted as a part of the sacred place. It shall not be sold neither shall it be inherited. Witnessed by Hisham ibn al-As and his freeman.[9]

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:59-7:64

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:59)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:60)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:61)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:62)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:63)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:64)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:65-7:72

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:65)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:66)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:67)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:68)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:69)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:70)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:71)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:72)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:73-7:84

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:73)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:74)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:75)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:76)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:77)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:78)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:79)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:80)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:81)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:82)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:83)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:84)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:85-7:93

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:85)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:86)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:87)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:88)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:89)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:90)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:91)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:92)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:93)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:94-7:99

Makkah: *And We sent not any Messenger to a town,*
but We took its people
with tribulation and desolation
so that perhaps they will lower themselves. (7:94)
Again, We substituted in place of evil deeds, benevolence,
until they exceeded in number and they said:
Surely, our fathers were touched
by tribulation and gladness.

Then, We took them suddenly
while they are not aware. (7:95)
And if the people of the towns believed
and were God-conscious,
We would have opened blessings for them
from the heaven and the earth,
except they denied.
So We took them for what they had been earning. (7:96)
Were, then, the people of the towns safe
when Our might
approaches them at night
while they are ones who sleep? (7:97)
Or were the people of the towns safe
when Our might approaches them
in the forenoon while they play?(7:98)
Were they safe from the planning of God?
No one deems himself safe from the planning of God
but the folk, the ones who are losers! (7:99)

COMMENTARY°

And We sent not any Messenger to a town, but We took its people with tribulation and desolation so that perhaps they will lower themselves. (7:94) Far be it from God to punish His servants physically or cause them to go through adversity that affects their persons or their property for idle play. Such trials could never be motivated by hatred or the desire for revenge, as pagan legends make out. God tries with tribulations and adversity those who deny His message.

But then God may decide to change the type of trial: *Again, We substituted in place of evil deeds, benevolence, until they exceeded in number and they said: Surely, our fathers were touched by tribulation and gladness. Then, We took them suddenly while they are not aware.* (7:95) Thus, every aspect of difficulty is replaced by an aspect of comfort and happiness. People begin to enjoy affluence, ease, blessings, good health, fertility, numerical strength and security after they had experienced poverty, hardship, depression, poor health, sterility, numerical weakness and fear. But the change of fortunes is no more than a new trial.

This statement, (7:95), indicates that they had increased in numbers and enjoyed an easy life, tasting every pleasure, to the extent that they no longer hesitated to do anything they desired, nor did they feel embarrassed by any action.

This: *And if the people of the towns believed and were God-conscious, We would have opened blessings for them from the heaven*

and the earth, except they denied. So We took them for what they had been earning. (7:96) is the other part of the natural law God has set in operation. Had the people of those cities believed instead of denying God's messages, and had they been God-consciousness instead of being careless, God would have opened up for them blessings from heaven and earth.

This section has thus established the fact that God's law is set in operation and will never fail, as confirmed by the history of former communities. Now that feelings are high about the doom that befell those who rejected the faith and overlooked the purpose of their test, the section addresses those who have so far overlooked these facts of life: *Were, then, the people of the towns safe when Our might approaches them at night while they are ones who sleep? Or were the people of the towns safe when Our might approaches them in the forenoon while they play? Were they safe from the planning of God? No one deems himself safe from the planning of God but the folk, the ones who are losers!* (7:97-7:99)

It tries to awaken in them a sense of expectation, alerting them to the fact that God's might may strike them at any time of day or night, when they are asleep, at work or having fun: (7:97-7:99)

Were they safe from the planning of God? (7:99) Can they have any immunity against what God plans for human beings when He does not reveal those plans to them so that they can guard against them? If they feel so secure, then the fact is that: *No one deems himself safe from the planning of God but the folk, the ones who are losers!* (7:99)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:94-7:99

WHO IS GOD?

God sends Messengers.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Messengers are sent to a town whom God takes with great suffering and misery because they would not lower themselves to God. If they had not denied, God would have opened blessing for them, but they denied. The Quranic message then asks: Were the people of the towns safe from Our might when it comes to them at night? Or when it comes to them in the forenoon while they play? It then asks a rhetorical question: Were they safe from the planning of God? And it answers: Only the losers think that they will be safe from the might of God.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describe what happened to the people in towns in the past who denied.What happened to people in towns in the past who denied? God took them with great suffering and misery because of their arrogance in denying God's signs. What one's relationship to God should be. God will send blessings to those who are not arrogant and who do not deny His signs. There are consequences to being arrogant. There were towns in the past, the people of which were arrogant and denied God's signs.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do the following:
Support a point
Raise an objection
Answer an objection
Distinguish concepts or issues
Question relevance, etc.

LESSON 39(8). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

HOW IS AN ASSUMPTION DEFINED?

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery.*

Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency. (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How do I learn to make assumptions?

Make assumptions explicit as often as possible—assumptions made from what you read or hear and assumptions you make. Ask questions that elicit the implicit elements of your claims. Although it is valuable practice to make good assumptions explicit, it is especially important when assumptions are questionable.

Those who refuse God's message are ones who follow assumptions, conjecture and opinion without examining or evaluating them. The assumption that is questioned here is the accusation made by those ungrateful for God's blessings, the same accusation made by Satan when he refused to bow down to Adam, namely, that it is the fault of God's Will that they ascribed partners with God (or, as in the case of Satan, it was God Who willed that Satan not bow down to Adam). The Quran asks the ungrateful: *Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to Us?* (6:148)

God's revelation clearly states not to associate partners with God, but the ungrateful refuse to believe and prefer, instead to make excuses for their behavior rather than admit to their error. This sign teaches critical thinkers to question and distinguish between that which is conjecture and opinion and that which is the truth.

Analyze group influences on your life: Closely analyze the behavior that is encouraged, and discouraged, in the groups to which you belong. For any given group, what are you 'required' to believe? What are you 'forbidden' to do? Every group enforces some level of conformity. Most people live much too much within the view of themselves projected by others. Discover what pressure they are bowing to and think explicitly about whether or not to reject that pressure.

Next consider how you could integrate analyzing group influences on your life into your actions. One of the main things that groups do is control us by controlling the definitions you are allowed to operate with. When a group defines some things as 'cool' and some as 'dumb', the members of the group try to appear 'cool' and not appear 'dumb'. When the boss of a business says: 'That makes a lot of sense,' his subordinates know t5ey are not to say: 'No, it is ridiculous.' They know this because defining someone as the 'boss' gives him/her special privileges to define situations and relationships.

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:100-7:108

Makkah: *Guides not those who inherit the earth*
after its previous people that if We will,
We would light on them for their impieties,

and We set a seal on their hearts so they hear not? (7:100)
These are the towns.
Their tidings We relate to you.
And, certainly, their Messengers drew near them
with the clear portents.
But they had not been believing
in what they denied before.
Thus, God set a seal on the hearts
of the ones who are ungrateful. (7:101)
And We found not in many of them any compact.
And, truly, We found many of them
are ones who disobey. (7:102)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:103)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:104)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:105)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:106)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:107)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:108)

COMMENTARY°

This short commentary concludes with an address to the Prophet Muhammad, telling him that these histories are being related so that he knows the true position of those communities. He is the last Messenger and his followers are the nation which inherits the divine message in its totality.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:100-7:108

WHO IS GOD?

God seals the hearts of those who sin and transgress so they do not hear.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is told of peoples and towns of the past whose Messengers suffered the same way that he is by the ungrateful continuing to deny God's signs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet Muhammad about people of the past who denied the Messengers that God sent in the same way that the ungrateful Quraysh are denying the Quranic message. Do the ungrateful not know that God set a seal on the hearts of the ungrateful in the past who denied His signs. Those in the past who denied God's signs and the Messengers that He sent to the people had seals placed on their hearts so they could no longer hear the message. Many of them were ones who disobey. Prophet Muhammad should not lose heart, as what is happening to him by the ungrateful Quraysh, happened to Messengers in the past, as well. The ungrateful in the past were no different than they were at the time of Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad should not lose heart as what he is experiencing is what Messengers in the past also experienced. The ungrateful, past and present, deny God's signs.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 39(9). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Consequences follow from our actions.

REASONING WELL

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

IMPLICATIONS IN REASONING

WHEN YOU SPELL OUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR REASONING:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?
Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?
Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?
Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

As the revelation speaks of those in past generations who denied their Messengers, the ungrateful among the Quraysh decide that they should speak to Muhammad himself and try to bribe him to give up his mission with money and fame.

One evening at sunset, they gather around the Kabah. They send someone to bring Muhammad to meet with them. Muhammad sits down beside them. The leader of the Quraysh group says to him: No one has done to us what you have done. You have spoken out against our fathers and forefathers. You have reproached our beliefs. You have rebuked our gods. You have made light of our thoughts. You have destroyed our unity. What is your purpose in all of this? If it is to gather money and wealth, we will give it to you. If it is because of ambition, we will give you position. If you want leadership, we will follow you. If you suffer from a mental illness, we will send the best doctors to you. We have come to negotiate with you.

The Messenger responds with the moral reasonableness of a religiously cultured monotheist, saying: I do what I do neither to gather wealth nor to seek superiority nor have I been chosen for leadership.

God has sent me as a warner to you. He has revealed the Quran to me. I bring glad tidings and fear of the chastisement. I have expressed my mission to you. Whenever you accept you will find well-being in both this world and the next. If you reject it, I will persevere until God judges between you and me.

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:109-7:126

Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:109)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:110)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:111)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:112)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:113)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:114)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:115)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:116)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:117)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:118)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:119)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:120)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:121)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:122)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:123)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:124)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:125)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:126)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:127-7:129

MAKKAH: BOOK 27: PERSECUTION OF THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:127)
MAKKAH: BOOK 27: PERSECUTION OF THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:128)
MAKKAH: BOOK 27: PERSECUTION OF THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:129)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:130-7:141

MAKKAH: BOOK 27: MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:130)
MAKKAH: BOOK 27: MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:131)
MAKKAH: BOOK 27: MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:132)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:133)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:134)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:135)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:136)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:137)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:138)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:139)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:140)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:141)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:142-7:147

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:142)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:143)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:144)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:145)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:146)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:147)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:148-7:151

Makkah: Book 27: Worshipping the Calf (7:148)
Makkah: Book 27: Worshipping the Calf (7:149)
Makkah: Book 27: Worshipping the Calf (7:150)
Makkah: Book 27: Worshipping the Calf (7:151)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:152-7:157

Makkah: Book 27 Moses (7:152)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses (7:153)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses (7:154)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses (7:155)

Makkah: *And prescribe for us in the present benevolence*
and in the world to come.
Truly we turned back to You.
He said: I light My punishment on whom I will
and My mercy encompassed everything.

Then, I will prescribe it for those who are God-conscious
and give the purifying alms
and those, they who believe in Our signs, (7:156)
those who follow the Messenger—the unlettered Prophet—whom they
will find with them
that which is a writing in the Torah and the Gospel.
He commands them to that which is honorable
and prohibits them from that which is unlawful.
And he permits to them what is good
and forbids them from deeds of corruption.
And he lays down for them severe tests,
and the yokes that had been on them.
So those who believed in him and supported him
and helped him and followed the light
that was caused to descend to him,
those, they are the ones who prosper. (7:157)

COMMENTARY°

The expression here shows that God's grace and mercy is far greater than the whole universe whose dimensions are impossible for human beings to visualize. Great indeed is the mercy whose measure is only known to God Himself.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:156-7:157

WHO IS GOD?

God lights His punishment on whom He wills, but His mercy encompasses everything. He prescribes His mercy for those who follow His signs.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

In sign 7:157 the Quranic message states what had been told to Moses about Prophet Muhammad. It says that God's mercy will be prescribed for those who are God-conscious, who give the purifying alms and those who believe in God's signs, those who follow the unlettered Prophet who has been mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel. He commands the people to that which is honorable and prohibits them from that which is unlawful. He permits to them what is good and forbids them from deeds of corruption. He lays severe tests on them.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic messages tells the community that the name of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel that came before. Those who follow what he tells them will attain a state of happiness.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad what had been revealed about him in the Torah and the Gospel thereby insuring the community in Makkah that Prophet Muhammad was a Messenger sent by God. How is Prophet Muhammad mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel? In Deut. 18.15 Moses says: The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me. The only other Prophet who brought a divine law like that of Moses was Prophet Muhammad and he was of the house of Ishmael. And then, in the Gospel, Jesus promised another comforter (John 14.16). The Greek word, Periclyte, is the Greek form of Ahmad, an Arabic derivative of Muhammad. The coming of Prophet Muhammad had been mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel. The coming of Prophet Muhammad had been foreseen in previous sacred texts. This is further proof that Prophet Muhammad was chosen by God as His Messenger, and that Prophet Muhammad did not know before the revelation of these signs that he had been foreseen in the Torah and the Gospel.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned or answer the questions. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

LESSON 39(10). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT

WHAT ARE QURANIC MORAL TRAITS?

Moral traits are interdependent affective strategies. They are described as having:

The traits of mind and character necessary for right action and thinking;
The traits of mind and character essential for fair-minded rationality;
The traits that distinguish the narrow-minded, self-serving critical thinker from the open-minded, truth-seeking critical thinker.

Each moral trait is best developed while developing the others as well. They cannot be imposed from without; they must be cultivated by encouragement and example. People can come to deeply understand and accept these principles by analyzing their experiences of them: learning from an unfamiliar perspective, discovering they don't know as much as you thought, and so on.

To teach for the moral traits, one must recognize the significant differences between the higher order critical thinking of a fair-minded critical thinker (believer) and that of a self-serving critical thinker (ungrateful, hypocrite and so forth). Though both share a certain command of the skills of critical thinking, they are not equally good at tasks, which presuppose the moral traits. The self-serving (weak sense) critical thinker would lack the insights that underlie and support these traits.

Insight refers to the ability to see and clearly and deeply understand the inner nature of things. In the Islamic perspective, this is something that extremists would disagree with whereas instruction for Quranic critical thinking fosters insight rather than mere performance; it cultivates the achievement of deeper knowledge and understanding through insight. Thinking one's way into and through a sign (*ayah*) leads to insights as one synthesizes what one is learning, relating one sign to other signs and all signs to personal experience.

HOW DO I EXPERIENCE THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS?

Only when one gains analyzed experiences of working and reasoning one's way out of prejudice can one gain the higher order abilities of a fair-minded Quranic critical thinker. What one gains is somewhat 'procedural' or sequential in that there is a process one must go through; but one also sees that the process cannot be followed out based on a formula or an algorithm, it depends on principles. The somewhat abstract articulation of the moral traits will take on concrete meaning in the light of analyzed experiences. Their true meaning to us will be given in and by these experiences. We will often return to them to recapture and rekindle the insights upon which the moral traits depend.

Generally, to develop moral traits, you must create a collection of analyzed experiences that represent to you intuitive models, not only of the pitfalls of their own previous thinking and experiencing but also processes for rea-

soning their way out of or around them. These model experiences must be charged with meaning for you. You cannot be indifferent to them. You must sustain them in your mind by their sense of their importance as they sustain and guide them in their thinking.

Intuition can be defined as the direct knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning. You sometimes seem to know or learn things without recognizing how you came to that knowledge. When this occurs, you experience an inner sense that what you believe is true. The problem is that sometimes you are correct (and have genuinely experienced an intuition) and sometimes you are incorrect (having fallen victim to one of your prejudices or your imagination). A critical thinker does not blindly accept that what one thinks or believes but cannot account for is necessarily true. Critical thinkers realizes how easily they confuse intuitions and prejudices. Critical thinkers may follow their inner sense that something is so, but only with a healthy sense of humility.

What does this imply? It implies a somewhat different content or material focus. Our own minds and experiences must become the subject of our study and learning. Indeed, only to the extent that the content of our own experiences becomes an essential part of study will the usual subject matter truly be learned. By the same token, the experiences of others must become part of what you study. But experiences of any kind should always be critically analyzed, and you must do your own analyses and clearly recognize what you are doing.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO ATTAINING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS?

(1) Pursuit of Caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight?* (45:23) *And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper.* (2:120) *And who is one who goes astray than whoever followed his own desires without guidance from God? ...* (28:50) *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28) The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders unclear one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of Conjecture in the face of certitude: *And most of them follow nothing but opinion* (zann). *Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all. Truly, God is Knowing of what they accomplish.* (10:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. *And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge* (ilm) *of it. Truly, having the*

ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with desires or that which they themselves de- sires. *They follow nothing but opinion* (zann) *and that for which their souls yearn* (hawa). (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture that is meant. Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32) *There is no one who changes His Words.* (6:115)

(3) Blind Imitation of Others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170) This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. *And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give your- selves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.* (21:51-54) *They said: Have you brought about to us that we should worship God alone and forsake what our fathers had been worshipping?* (7:70) As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *And they will say: Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:67) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them.[10]

As the ungrateful Quraysh continue to follow the barriers to the traits that the Prophet was trying to teach them, they went to his family, sad and grieving, because his hope that the ungrateful would accept his preaching was in vain and because of their estrangement from him. When the Messenger had gone, Abu Jahl spoke, making the usual charges against him, and saying: I call God to witness that I will wait for him tomorrow with a stone which I can hardly lift, or words to that effect. When he prostrates himself in prayer I will split his skull with it. Betray me or defend me, let the Ibn Abd al-Manaf do what they like after that.

They said that they would never betray him on any account, and he could carry on with his project. When morning came Abu Jahl took a stone and sat in wait for the Messenger, who behaved as usual that morning. While he was in Makkah he faced Syria in formal prayer, and when he prayed, he prayed between the southern corner and the Black Stone, putting the Kabah between himself and Syria. Muhammad rose to pray while the Quraysh sat in their meeting, waiting for what Abu Jahl was to do. When the Messenger prostrated himself, Abu Jahl took up the stone and went towards him, until when he got near him, he turned back in flight, pale with terror, and his hand had withered upon the stone, so that he cast the stone from his hand. The Quraysh asked him what had happened. He replied that when he got near him a camel's stallion got in his way. He said: By God I have never seen anything like his head, shoulders, and teeth on any stallion before, and he made as though he would eat me.

I was told that the Messenger said: That was Gabriel. If he had come near, he would have seized him.

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)

Signs 7:158-7:162

Makkah: *Say: O humanity! Truly I am the Messenger of God to you all from Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes to die. So believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whoever believes in God and His words and follow him so that perhaps you would be truly guided.* (7:158)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:159)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:160)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:161)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:162)

COMMENTARY°

The section pauses at this point to address the unlettered Prophet himself, giving him God's order to declare that his message applies to all humanity, in fulfilment of God's promise: (7:158)

Therefore, it was conveyed by the unlettered Prophet whose nature remained pure, refined only by the care he received from God. The Prophet's pure nature conveyed the naturally pure message, addressing the very nature that is common to all humanity: (7:158) This Quranic sign which commands God's Messenger to address his message to all humanity was revealed in Makkah.

Having commanded the Prophet to declare that his message applies to all humanity, the Quranic sign continues to make it clear that the Prophet's role is to make people fully aware of who is their true Lord: *to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes to die.* (7:158)

The Prophet, then, is a Messenger to all humanity from their Lord who is the Sovereign of the whole universe to which they themselves belong. He is the only God to whom everything in the universe submits. The clearest manifestation of God and His power is seen in the fact that He alone grants life and causes death. (7:158)

SUMMARY OF SIGN 7:158

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is told to say: I am the Messenger of God to all of humanity. There is no god, but He. It is God who gives live and causes death so believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who himself believes in God and His words. Follow him so that you will perhaps be truly guided.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic message is for Prophet Muhammad to say that he is the Messenger for all of humanity. Those who follow him will perhaps be truly guided.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet Muhammad that he is a Messenger for all of humanity. What does the Quranic message say that Prophet Muhammad should tell all of humanity? He should tell all of humanity that there is no god but He, that it is He who gives life and causes death and that humanity should believe in the unlettered Prophet who himself believes in God and His Words. Prophet Muhammad is a Messenger for all of humanity. Prophet Muhammad has been given a message for all of humanity. The Quranic message that is revealed to Prophet Muhammad is not just for the Makkan community of that time, but for all of humanity. That the Makkan community does not know that Prophet Muhammad has been sent for all of humanity.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I WAS ABLE TO EXPLORE THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF THESE PARTS:

How did my point of view, values, desires, etc., affect what I noticed about the sign?

How did they prevent me from noticing other things?

How would I have interpreted the sign had I noticed those other things?

How did my point of view, desires, etc., affect my interpretation?

How should I interpret the situation?

LESSON 39(11). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness* (taqwa). *Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

WHAT IS PROOF THAT I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD?

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: *Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds,* (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and

obey Muhammad. The Prophet was sent as a Messenger to all of humanity to whom previous Messengers had been sent to tell the people to obey God and to obey the message that their Messenger is delivering.

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BELIEF?

Irrationality: Irrationality is defined as:

1. Lacking the power to reason.
2. Contrary to reason or logic.
3. Senselessness, absurdity.

Irrational, uncritical thinkers have failed to develop the ability or power to reason well. Their beliefs and practices, then, are often contrary to reason and logic, and are sometimes senseless or absurd. If you find that you continually conclude that a rational person would behave just as you behaved you are probably engaging in self-deception.

WHAT IS A SENSE OF SELF-UNITY?

Self-unity, as one of the our ideals, implies unity within ourselves. That is, a coordination of our reason, will, and actions. To do this, we have to control our desires and "what we want". Belief in God is a necessary step for having a moral life, but it should not be that we accept with our words only. Our inner sense of unity must be accompanied by good deeds: *But for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We place no burden on any soul beyond its capacity.* (7:42) Performing good deeds implies an attitude which is motivated by a complete submission to God's will: *When his Lord said to him: Submit! He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds.* (2:131)

WHAT IS FAMILY UNITY?

This ideal of unity also implies peace and harmony among members of a family. A husband and wife are mates for each other so that both may dwell in tranquillity with an attitude of mutual love and kindness; each is like a garment for the other for mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection. It is the duty of a man and woman to live with each other on a footing of kindness and equity.

WHAT IS UNITY OF OUR SOCIETY?

The ideal of unity in our society demands that people should develop a healthy social organization which takes the middle path of moderation, integrity, goodness and morality, avoiding all forms of extreme: *Thus, We made you a middle community that you be witnesses to humanity, and that the Messenger be a witness to you.* (2:143) Unity in our society means to oppose oppression and corruption, otherwise: there will be persecution on the earth and the hateful sin of corruption. (8:73) The Quran says that all Muslims are brothers/sisters: *Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters, so make things right*

between your two brothers/sisters. Be God-conscious of God so that perhaps you will find mercy. (49:10) Muslims should have great love and affection among themselves: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* (48:29) No excuse should be allowed to stand in the way of doing good or making peace between different persons: *Make God not an obstacle with your sworn oaths to your being good, and being God-conscious, and making things right among humanity.* (2:224) Every effort should be made to bring about peace between people. *Good is when we makes things right between humanity. And whoever accomplishes that—looking for the goodwill of God—then, We will give him a sublime compensation.* (4:114) We should be kind to those in need, to neighbors, and to the travelers as well.

WHAT IS THE UNITY OF HUMANITY?

Above all, this ideal of unity leads to the conception of unity of the whole of humanity. Humanity was created from a single pair of a male and a female and from a single breath of life. All people are equal members of the human community. The only distinction recognized by the Quran is based on the degree of God-consciousness possessed by people: *O humanity! Truly, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and types that you recognize one another. Truly, the most generous of you with God is the most devout. Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* (49:13)

WHAT DOES UNITY WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS MEAN?

This attitude of toleration is to be cultivated in our relation to people of other faiths. The Quran aims at establishing a peaceful social atmosphere where people belonging to other faiths can enjoy freedom of conscience and worship: *There is no compulsion in the way of life* (religion). *Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable..* (2:256)

The believers are urged to purposefully rise and fight against the oppressors so that monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is commemorated may not be destroyed. Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. Truly, Powerful is God to help them, those who were driven out from their homes without right because they say: *Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him.* (22:39-22:40)

The Quran praises some of the people of the Book for their faith: *You had been the best community that was brought out for humanity. You command to that which is honorable and prohibit that which is unlawful and believe in God.* (3:110)

It is because of this attitude of tolerance that according to the Quran all those who believe in God and the Last Day and practice God-consciousness, whether they are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians or Sabeans, shall receive their reward from their Lord: *Truly those who have believed and those who have become Jews and the Christians and the Sabeans, whoever has believed in God and the Last Day and is one who acted in accord with morality, then for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:62) *And: Truly, those who believed and those who became Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians and those who ascribed partners—truly, God will distinguish between them on the Day of Resurrection.* (22:17)

The Quran gives an open invitation to the People of the Book to come together and work conjointly for the establishment of peace and social harmony based on the idea of the unity of God. *Say: O People of the Book! Approach now to a word common between us and between you that we worship none but God and ascribe nothing as partners with Him, that none of us take others to ourselves as lords besides God.* (3:64)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF) SIGNS 7:163-7:171

Madinah (7:163)
Madinah (7:164)
Madinah (7:165)
Madinah (7:166)
Madinah (7:167)
Madinah (7:168)
Madinah (7:169)
Madinah (7:170)
Madinah (7:171)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF) SIGNS 7:172-7:181

Makkah: *And mention when your Lord*
took from the Children of Adam
—from their generative organs—
their offspring and called to them
to witness of themselves:
Am I not your Lord?

They said: Yea! We bore witness
so that you say not on the Day of Resurrection:
Truly We had been
ones who were heedless of this. (7:172)[12]
Or you not say:
Our fathers before us ascribed partners with God.
We had been offspring after them.
Shall You cause us to perish
for what the ones who dealt in falsehood
accomplished? (7:173)
And, thus, We explain Our signs distinctly
so that perhaps they will return. (7:174)
And recount to them the tiding of him
to whom We gave Our signs,
but he cast himself off from them.
So Satan pursued him then, he had been among
the ones who are in error. (7:175)
And if We willed, We would have exalted him with them,
but he inclined towards the earth,
and followed his own desires.
And his parable is like the parable of a dog.
If you will attack it, it pants.
Or if you will leave it, it pants.
That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs.
Then, relate these narratives
so that perhaps they will reflect. (7:176)
How evil is the parable of the folk who denied Our signs!
And they had been doing wrong to themselves. (7:177)
Whomever God guides, then, he is one who is truly guided.
And whomever He causes to go astray,
then, those, they are the ones who are losers. (7:178)
And, certainly, We made numerous for hell
many of the jinn and humankind.
They have hearts with which they understand not.
And they have eyes with which they perceive not.
And they have ears with which they hear not.
Those are like flocks. Nay!
They are ones who go astray.
Those, they are the ones who are heedless. (7:179)
To God belongs the Fairer Names,
so call to Him by them.
And forsake those who blaspheme His Names.
They will be given recompense

for what they had been doing. (7:180)
And of whom We created there is a community
that guides with The Truth,
and with it, it is just. (7:181)

COMMENTARY°

In this short passage we have the central issue of faith and human nature portrayed in a uniquely vivid scene that shows the generations of the faraway future, as they are still in the loins of human beings, before they make their appearance in this visible world. All of them are gathered in front of their Creator who asks them: *Am I not your Lord? And mention when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their generative organs—their offspring and called to them to witness of themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea! We bore witness so that you say not on the Day of Resurrection: Truly We had been ones who were heedless of this.* (7:172) They all acknowledge His Lordship, admit their position as obedient servants and His status as the only Lord. They are no bigger than small atoms held in the hand of the great Creator.

How did this event take place? How did God take the offspring of Adam's children from their loins to make them testify? How did He ask them: *Am I not your Lord?* And how did they reply: Yes, indeed. The answer to all these questions is that our human perception cannot understand how God acts, since it cannot perceive God's own nature. Perceiving the 'how' is subsequent to perceiving the nature of the one who does.

THE COVENANT

As the last creation of nature's Creator, we occupy a special place in nature because out of all of nature God breathes His Spirit within the human self alone. It is this infusion of the Divine Spirit that allows the us to become conscious of self, an advantage no other aspect of nature has. Therefore, even though all of nature, the universe, and the cosmos are divinely created from the combination of natural elements and their qualities, only the human form has "consciousness of self." Through this covenant, the human being becomes the trustee or representative of God on earth, accepts the trust of nature.

In terms of description, we see how those who have minds, ears and eyes, but understand nothing. At the same time there is an inspirational dimension whereby critical thinkers use their powers to reflect and think about the signs. When they become aware of: *They said: Yea! We bore witness* (7:172), they contemplate God's creation

and how in the distant past they had accepted that God was their Lord. However we imagine it to have been, God gives us the reason for the revelation of (7:172), *so that you not say on the Day of Resurrection: Truly, we had been ones who were heedless of this.*

One interpretation of this statement suggests that the pledge *And mention when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their generative organs—their offspring* (7:172) relates to their nature. He has established in their nature the tendency to acknowledge His Lordship as the only God in the universe. They grow up with this tendency until they deviate as a result of external factors of one sort or another.

In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir reports that many scholars are of the view that this testimony from the offspring of Adam's children refers to the fact that in their very nature, they have a tendency to accept God's Oneness. This is why the Quranic statement says: *And mention when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their generative organs—their offspring* rather than saying, from the loins of Adam himself or from his loins. And the statement speaks of *their offspring*, to indicate the succession of their generations, one after another.

This is similar to the Quranic statement: *It is He who has given you the earth to inherit.* (27:62)

God also says: *He brought you into being out of other people's seed.* (6:133)

Here, in the sign we are discussing, God goes on to say: *And called to them to witness of themselves: Am I not your Lord?* (7:172) This means that He has created them admitting this fact, testifying to it at the very moment of their existence.

Scholars also say that testimony is sometimes given verbally as in the Quranic sign: *They will reply: We bear witness against ourselves. The life of this world has beguiled them. So they will bear witness against themselves that they were ungrateful.* (6:130)

At other times, the testimony can be made by adopting a certain position or attitude, as that described in the Quranic sign stating: *It is not for the idolaters to visit or tend God's houses of worship, while they bear witness against themselves for being ungrateful.* (9:17) This means that their situation testifies against them, not that they make a statement to this effect.

The same applies to the Quranic signs: *The human being is surely ungrateful to his Lord, and of this he himself is a witness.* (100:6-100:7)

Requests also can be made verbally or by adopting a particular position. This is evidenced by the Quranic sign stating: *He gives you of everything you ask Him for.* (14:34) Scholars say that a factor that

supports this view is the fact that this testimony is counted against them as they associate partners with God. Had this taken place in the way some people suggest, then everyone would have remembered it, and it would have been taken against them. It is suggested that its being reported by the Prophet is sufficient as a proof of its taking place.

This is true, but we should remember that those who were ungrateful rejected everything that God's Messengers have stated. Since this is stated as an argument against them, it must be a reference to their nature, which admits God's Lordship and oneness. For this reason, the Quranic passage goes on to say: *Or you not say: Our fathers before us ascribed partners with God. We had been offspring after them. Shall You cause us to perish for what the ones who dealt in falsehood accomplished?* (7:173)

For our part, we do not exclude the possibility that the event related in this Quranic sign took place as is described, i.e. literally: (7:172) We believe that it could easily happen as God has described, because there is nothing to stop it happening when God wills. But at the same time we do not exclude the interpretation outlined by Ibn Kathir and approved by other scholars.

Had God's knowledge shown that nature and reason were sufficient for people to follow the right path without sending them messengers and messages, He might have made these the basis of accountability. But God's grace has dictated that this basis must be His message: *And, thus, We explain Our signs distinctly so that perhaps they will return.* (7:174)

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs, but he cast himself off from them. So Satan pursued him then, he had been among the ones who are in error. (7:175)

When the last scene of a dog always panting away is raised before our eyes, we have the highly significant comment on the whole panorama: *And if We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect. How evil is the parable of the folk who denied Our signs! And they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (7:176-7:177)

Can there be a more dismal example than that? *How evil is the parable of the folk who denied Our signs! And they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (7:177) Can there be a worse action than discarding guidance and pulling oneself away from divine revelations? Is there anything more disgraceful than clinging to the lowly life of

this earth and succumbing to desires? Can any human being cause himself more wrong than the one who does this? By so doing, he tears apart that protective shield which could have ensured his safety. Instead, he leaves his soul easy prey for Satan and sinks to the level of animals, with all that it entails of worry and uncertainty. He is soon seen as a dog constantly panting away.

The section then makes a short pause to comment on the example provided in this scene of a person to whom God has given His revelations, but who discards them. In this comment, the section tells us that true guidance is provided by God alone: *Whomever God guides, then, he is one who is truly guided. And whomever He causes to go astray, then, those, they are the ones who are losers.* (7:178) God certainly guides those who make an effort to find guidance.

God says in another section: *Those who strive for Us, We shall certainly guide along Our ways.* (29:69) He also says elsewhere in the Quran: *God does not change the condition of a certain people until they themselves initiate change.* (13:11) He further says: *By the soul and its molding and inspiration with knowledge of wickedness and piety. Successful is the one who keeps it pure, and ruined is the one who corrupts it.* (91:7-91:10)

Similarly, God lets go astray anyone who wishes to go astray. He allows him to turn away from the elements of guidance and pointers to the right faith, sealing his heart, ears and eyes in order that he does not hear, see or understand: *And, certainly, We made numerous for hell many of the jinn and humankind. They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless.* (7:179)

The sign tells us: Open your heart and mind. Have their not traveled in the land so as to endow their hearts with understanding? The emphasis here on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

This section follows this with a clear instruction to the believers to ignore those who deviate from the right path and go astray. At the time of the Prophet, those were the ungrateful who used to maintain idolatry in opposition to the Quranic message. They used to blaspheme against God's names, twist His attributes, and assign them to some of the idols they ascribe as partners to God: *To God belongs the Fairer Names, so call to Him by them. And forsake those who blaspheme His Names. They will be given recompense for what they had been doing.* (7:180)

The Arabic word in this Quranic sign which is translated here as '*blaspheme His Names*' signifies also twisting and distortion. The idolaters among the Arabs distorted God's fine names and gave them to their alleged deities. They distorted the name God so as to call one of their idols al-Lat, and twisted His attribute, al-Aziz, which means the Mighty, to call another idol, al-Uzza. The Quranic sign states clearly that these fine names and attributes belong to God alone. It instructs the believers to call Him alone by these names, without any distortion or twisting. They are also instructed to ignore the twisters who have gone far astray, and not to bother about them. They are left to God who determines their punishment. This is a very serious warning indeed.

And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. (7:181)

Humanity would not have deserved any honor had it not been for the fact that there will always be, even in the worst circumstances, that community which God calls by its Quranic term, *ummah*. By definition, the *ummah* is a community which believes in the same faith that remains its basic bond, and obeys the same leadership that supervises the implementation of that faith. It is then the community that adheres to, and implements the truth, in all situations.

It is the guardian of God's trust, the witness to His covenant with people, and it is the community to provide God's evidence against those who go astray turning their backs on His covenant.

The description given here of this community deserves reflection. *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just.* (7:181) This community will continue to be present at all times, even though it may at certain periods be very small in number. Its main characteristic is that those who belong to it: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just.* (7:181) They call on people to accept the truth, and will never relinquish their task of advocating the truth. They are not happy to keep it to themselves, or to be inward looking. They try to publicize the truth they know, and guide other people to it. Thus, they have a role of leadership among those around them who have strayed away from this truth, and who have violated their covenant. They adopt a positive attitude, which is not limited to knowing the truth but goes beyond that knowledge in order to advocate the truth and guide to it.

But this is not all that they do about the truth. Their other characteristic is that they 'establish justice' with the truth. This means that they go well beyond knowing the truth and advocating it, to take positive steps to implement the truth in human life and make it the

criterion for judgment in order to establish justice that cannot be based on anything other than the truth.

The crux of the matter is that the truth has not been revealed only to remain a mere branch of knowledge studied by scholars, or even an admonition to point out the right path. The truth has been revealed so that people conduct their lives according to it. It should govern people's concepts so that these are molded in accordance with it, and it should govern people's rites of worship so that these provide a practical image of the truth in as far as the relationship between human beings and their Lord is concerned.

QUESTIONS

Under what circumstances do you think with a bias in favor of yourself?
Did you ever become irritable over small things?
Did you do or say anything "irrational" to get your way?
Did you try to impose your will upon others?
Did you ever fail to speak your mind when you felt strongly about something and then later feel resentment?
What would a rational person feel in this or that situation?
What would a rational person do?
How does that compare with what I want to do?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:172-7:181

WHO IS GOD?

God explains distinctly His signs so that perhaps those who have gone astray will return. Whomever God guides is one who is truly guided. Those whom He causes to go astray are losers. God has made many of the jinn and humans for hell. To God belongs the Fairer Names. Call Him by them and forsake those who blaspheme His Names. God will recompense them for what they do.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet is told to mention when his Lord took from the generative organs of the Children of Adam their offspring and called them to bear witness to Him, which they did. He is told to tell of the story of he who cast off God's signs and was then pursued by Satan. He followed his own desires and is like a dog that pants.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Say not: My fathers were idolaters before. Will God cause to perish what their fathers had done? Those who are losers do not have hearts with which they understand nor eyes with which they perceive nor ears by which they

hear. They go astray. They are heedless. And there is a community that God created that guides to the Truth and with it, it is just.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells us that we, as Children of Adam, have born witness that God is our Lord. How did we bear witness? Through our generative organs that created our offspring. So that we not say on the Day of Resurrection that we were unaware that God was our Lord. That our innate nature has already born witness to the One God. That we are all Children of Adam. We cannot say that we are unaware of having borne witness to our Lord.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

LESSON 39(12). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

WHAT IS GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)?

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious. (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

WHAT IS HUMILITY?

Critical thinkers recognize that there is a limit of their knowledge. They are sensitive to their being self-centered and egocentric as they know that this

will only increase their self-deception. They are aware of bias and prejudice in their views. The basis of humility is to be able to avoid claiming to know more than they actually know. The presence of humility implies a lack of arrogance, conceit or pretentiousness as well as implying that we have insight into the basis for our beliefs. You learn to know what evidence you have, how you came to believe something and what additional evidence you would need. This indicates that as Quranic critical thinkers you know what you know as well as what you do not know.

If this insight and this humility is part of our goal, as the Quran encourages it, the extent and nature of Quranic coverage for most grade levels and subjects does not imply that bits and pieces of knowledge be easily attained, without any significant consideration of the basis for the knowledge claimed in the sacred text. You must think in an extended way about content before giving assent to what is claimed. As the Quran fosters critical thinking, it does not foster intellectual arrogance. In the Quranic context, humility is fostered through the concept of repentance. Though the human being is by nature after the pattern of God's nature (30:30) and, therefore, capable of approximating to the ideal embodied in the most beautiful names, yet being prone to different weaknesses he is often led to wrong his soul in spite of his best efforts to follow moral discipline.

Critical thinkers bring about humility by continually asking themselves: How could I know whether or not this is true? To suspend judgment until they find out more about a situation does not make them uncomfortable. Humility, therefore, is suspending judgment and having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including a sensitivity to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice, and limitations of one's viewpoint. Humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.

> Lacking any sense of humility, the ungrateful Quraysh, at the beginning of the public call to the Quranic message, namely Utba and Shayba, both sons of Rabia ibn Abd al-Shams along with Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, Abu al-Bakhtari (whose name is al-As ibn Hisham ibn al-Harith ibn Asad and al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib ibn Asad) Abu Jahl (whose name is Amr) ibn Hisham ibn al Mughayra, al-Walid ibn al-Mughayra and Nubayh and Munabbih, two sons of al-Hajjaj ibn Amir ibn Hudhayfa along with al-As ibn Wail, decide to do something to try to make Abu Talib relinquish his support of his nephew. To further these ends, they call upon him several times with this purpose in mind. The Quraysh leaders, who had fallen into a state of

fear and envy because of the growth of the numbers of Muhammad's followers, decide to go to Abu Talib who is the leader in Makkah. Abu Talib is known among the tribes as a most honored and respected leader.

In the meeting, they say: Your nephew rejects our idols and reproaches our faith. He laughs at our beliefs. He considers our ancestors to have gone astray. Tell him to either withdraw this invitation or you will withdraw your support from him.

Abu Talib, controlling his passions, tells them very calmly that he cannot do that. They somehow decide not to pursue the issue at that point. However, as people continue to come, the Quraysh become more concerned than ever. Once again they go to Abu Talib and say: Abu Talib, you are superior to us in regard to age, nobility, and position. We have asked you previously to stop your nephew from preaching this new faith, but you have done nothing. We will bear it no longer. We will not sit by and watch someone insult the way of our fathers or reproach our gods. You must make him stop or we will arise against you and one of us will be destroyed.

It is because of this that Abu Talib now speaks to his nephew and tells him what has happened. The Messenger speaks his well-known words in response which shows his steadfastness and perseverance upon this way. He says: My uncle! I swear by God that if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, as the price for me to stop my call, I would never agree to do so until the day that God makes our faith victorious or I myself die in attempting to do so.

The eyes of the Messenger fill with tears as he speaks. Then he gets up to go.

His beloved uncle calls him and says: Come here, my nephew.

The Messenger draws near. Abu Talib says to him: Go. Proclaim your invitation. Let me know whatever it is that you need. I will protect you as long as I am alive.

And Abu Talib kept his promise.

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF) SIGNS 7:182-7:188

Makkah: *And those who denied Our signs,*
We will draw them on gradually
from where they will not know. (7:182)
And I will grant them indulgence for awhile.

Truly, My strategizing is sure. (7:183)
Reflect they not?
There is no madness in their companion.
He is but a clear warner. (7:184)
Expect they not in the kingdom
of the heavens and the earth
and whatever things God created
that perhaps their term be near?
Then, in which discourse after this
will they believe? (7:185)
Whomever God causes to go astray
then, there is no one who guides him.
And He forsakes them in their defiance,
wandering unwilling to see. (7:186)
They ask you about the Hour, when will it berth?
Say: The knowledge of that is only with my Lord.
None will display its time but He.
It was heavy, hidden in the heavens and the earth.
It will approach you not but suddenly.
They will ask you as if you had been
one who is well-informed about it.
Say: The knowledge of that is only with God,
but most of humanity knows not. (7:187)
Say: I rule not over myself either for profit or for hurt,
but what God willed.
And if the unseen had been known to me,
I would have acquired much good
and evil would not have afflicted me.
I am but a warner
and a bearer of good tidings
to a folk who believe. (7:188)

COMMENTARY°

This section goes on to describe other types of people, telling us about a community which holds fast to the truth and calls on people to believe in it, and implement it with determination and conscientiousness. At the other extreme there is a community of people who deny the truth and reject God's revelations. This section tells us clearly that the first community exists without a shred of doubt. They guard the truth and hold tight to it when other people abandon it and deviate far away from it. When others reject the truth as a lie, they remain steadfast. This section further explains that the others shall have a dreadful end, as God will punish them through His mighty

schemes: *And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know. And I will grant them indulgence for awhile. Truly, My strategizing is sure.* (7:182-7:183)

Have they not thought things over? Their companion is no madman. He is only a plain warner. Have they not considered [God's] dominion over the heavens and the earth, and all that God has created, and [reflected] that it may well be that their own term is drawing near? In what other message after this will they, then, believe? *Reflect they not? There is no madness in their companion. He is but a clear warner. Expect they not in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and whatever things God created that perhaps their term be near? Then, in which discourse after this will they believe?* (7:184-7:185)

The Quran shakes them and wakes them up in order to rescue their nature, minds and feelings from the pressures that weigh heavily on them. It addresses their humanity with all its systems of reception and response. It does not make an academic argument, but tries to address their whole nature: *Reflect they not? There is no madness in their companion. He is but a clear warner.* (7:184)

In their propaganda campaign against the Messenger Muhammad, the notables of the Quraysh tried to deceive the public by saying that Muhammad was a madman who uttered strange words, unfamiliar to normal human beings.

The Quran calls on them to consider and reflect: They had known this companion of theirs, i.e. the Messenger Muhammad, (peace be upon him), for a long time and they had never experienced any fault with him. Indeed, they themselves testified to his honesty, truthfulness and wisdom. They accepted him as an arbiter when a quarrel erupted between them over which tribe was to have the honor of putting the Black Stone back in its position. They accepted his judgment which spared them a potentially very costly battle. They trusted him with their valuables which they kept in his custody until the day when he left Makkah to migrate to Madinah. His cousin, Ali returned every valuable article to its owner.

The Quran calls on them to consider and reflect on all this. They had known Muhammad for a very long time and were fully aware of his character. Was he a man to experience any madness? Were any of his words or actions indicative of madness? Certainly not: (7:184) There is certainly nothing wrong with his mind or with his speech. He speaks plainly to warn people about what is awaiting them. His statements could never be confused with those of mad people and his actions were certainly the actions of a very wise person.

And then comes this inviting question: This: (7:185) serves as another deeply touching call. They are invited to open their eyes and

hearts to this vast kingdom with all that it contains. Reflection with open heart and mind is sufficient to revive human nature and make it receptive to the truth underlined by God's inimitable creation and all its miraculous aspects testifying to its being the work of God, the only Creator. Reflection over anything God has created—and His creation is so greatly varied in the kingdoms of heaven and earth—is bound to leave both heart and mind in a genuine state of speechless amazement. The mind will then start to look for the origin of this creation, and the power that has made it all in such a perfect system.

Those who go astray do so because they choose not to consider and reflect: *Whomever God causes to go astray then, there is no one who guides him. And He forsakes them in their defiance, wandering unwilling to see.* (7:186) When people turn their minds away from the signs placed by God in the universe, they will be left to go astray.

Some of those arrogant, misguided and blind people who prefer not to see what is around them, questioned the Messenger about the final Hour, the timing of which God has chosen not to reveal. They are the same as the one who does not see what is under his feet but wants to see what lies beyond the horizon. Therefore, their questioning: *They ask you about the Hour, when will it berth? Say: The knowledge of that is only with my Lord. None will display its time but He. It was heavy, hidden in the heavens and the earth. It will approach you not but suddenly. They will ask you as if you had been one who is well-informed about it. Say: The knowledge of that is only with God, but most of humanity knows not.* (7:187)

The call to believe in the hereafter and its related concept of punishment and reward came as a complete surprise to the idolatrous Arabs. Although this concept is fundamental to Abraham's faith, the ancestor of those idolatrous people, and also to the faith of their noble father, Ishmael, their links with the faith of submission to God preached by Abraham and Ishmael were completely severed. The concept of the hereafter had been erased from their minds and they received it again with total amazement and complete surprise. They wondered at the Messenger Muhammad because he told them about life after death, resurrection, reckoning, punishment and reward.

But this does not apply to knowledge of the Hour only. It applies to everything in the realm which lies beyond the reach of human perception. It is God alone who knows all that there is in that realm. He has to choose his actions, and then the result takes place as God has determined: *Say: I rule not over myself either for profit or for hurt, but what God willed. And if the unseen had been known to me, I would have acquired much good and evil would not have afflicted*

me. I am but a warner and a bearer of good tidings to a folk who believe. (7:188)

With this declaration, the monotheism of the Quranic message is completely and absolutely purged of every trace of idolatry of whatever shape or form. God has His unique attributes in which no human being has any share, not even Muhammad, God's chosen and beloved Messenger. Human power and knowledge stop at the point of the unseen, which is the Quranic term for what lies beyond the reach of human perception. Within the limitations of humanity, God's Messenger himself stands, and his role is well-defined: (7:188)

Chapter 7 then turns to the ungrateful in Makkah who were denying the truth of the Quranic message, distorting God's names in order to coin up names for their false deities. It warns them against suffering God's punishment. It also invites them to reflect deeply and clearly on the status of God's Messenger who called on them to follow divine guidance. When they do so, they should remove their prejudices that cause them to accuse the Prophet of madness. They should contemplate the kingdoms of heaven and earth and what they contain of pointers to the truth of divine guidance. A touch is added reminding them of death that could come when they are totally unaware.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:182-7:188

WHO IS GOD?

God will draw on gradually those who denied the signs of God. They need to reflect on what they are doing. Whomever God causes to go astray, there is no one who guides him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message clearly states that there is no madness in the Prophet, but that he is a clear warner. There are those who ask Prophet Muhammad when the Hour will come. The Quranic message tells him to say that the knowledge of that is only with his Lord or with God. He repeats this twice. He is told to say that he rules over himself neither for profit or for hurt, but only what God wills. He adds that if he had known the unseen, he would have acquired much good and no evil would ever have afflicted him. He is but a warner and a bearer of good tidings to those who believe.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message is for Prophet Muhammad to state clearly that the knowledge of the Hour is only with God. How does the Prophet state this? He is told twice to say that the knowledge of the hour is only with his Lord, God. If the Prophet had knowledge of the unseen and of the Hour he would have been able to profit much from this knowledge, showing that clearly he lacks this knowledge that is only with his Lord. The Hour refers to the Day of Judgment. All of humanity should prepare for that Day that God has promised will come. That only God will display the time of the Hour.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to come up with questions and state each one clearly.
I figured out what things I had to do to answer it.
I was able to distinguish between questions over which I had control and ones over which I did not have control.
I was able to figure out the information I needed and I actively sought that information.
I carefully analyzed and interpreted the information I collected and was able to draw reasonable inferences from it.

Lesson 39(13). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empowering Constancy, Courage

How do I develop courage (determination, constancy)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

The struggle against the forces of evil and oppression demands that its participants must be characterized by perseverance, courage, fearlessness, and trust in God—the moral qualities which are described by the Quran as characteristic of the righteous in the social context. *And have patience, for, truly, God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good.* (11:115); those who are firm and steadfast will never lose heart, nor weaken in will, nor give in before the enemy. And how many a Prophet whom, along with him, many thousands fought, but none lost confidence with what lit on them in the way of God, nor were they weakened nor were they to give in. *And God loves the ones who remain steadfast.* (3:146)

To determine for yourself which is which, you must not passively and

uncritically 'accept' what you have 'learned'. Courage comes into play here, because inevitably you will come to see some truth in some ideas considered dangerous and absurd, and distortion or falsity in some ideas strongly held in your social group. You need courage to be true to your own thinking in such circumstances. The penalties for non-conformity can be severe.

Similarly, trust in God is the moral quality of all believers. The ones who believe are only those whose hearts took notice when God was remembered. *When His signs were recounted to them, their belief increased and they put their trust in the Lord—* (8:2) After you have taken all possibilities into consideration and made a decision, put your trust in God. ... *when you are resolved, then, put your trust in God. Truly, God loves the ones who put their trust in Him.* (3:159)

To be independent Quranic thinkers who are fair, we often have to deal with unpopular ideas, beliefs and points of view. This requires courage on our part not to fear the reproach that others may use against us. Courage as a human ideal implies that the human being has the potentiality of assuming responsibility undertaken by him of his own accord. He has all the faculties that are necessary for his physical and spiritual development. He is given the power of courage to distinguish between good and evil: *Truly, We guided him on the way, whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3) and, therefore, he alone is responsible for what he does. *No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.* (6:164) He is endowed with freedom of action, but his freedom is limited by the free causality of God. *No indeed! Truly, it is an admonition. So let whoever willed, remember it. But they will not remember unless God wilis. He is Worthy of God-consciousness and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness.* (74:54–56) *His responsibility is proportionate to his powers; he has been shown the path of God-consciousness and it is up to him to accept its lead or reject it. Truly, We guided him on the way, whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3)

WHAT IS TO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. *It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe.* (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. *The way is only against those who do wrong to hu-*

manity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. Those, for them is a painful punishment. (42:42) It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. *Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it.* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth: *And they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption.* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster.* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height.

WHAT IS ARROGANCE AND TRANSGRESSION?

Arrogant and obstinate transgressors: ... *those who dispute the signs of God without any authority having approached them. It is troublesome, repugnant with God and with those who believed. Thus, God sets a seal on every heart of one who increases in pride, haughtiness,* (40:35) vainglorious people: *Truly, God loves not ones who had been proud, boastful,* (4:36) *those fond of self glory: Nay! Those who were ungrateful are in vainglory and breach.* (38:2) people rebellious and wicked: *And He caused to be detestable to you ingratitude and disobedience and rebellion.* (49:7) and vying with one another in pomp and gross rivalry: *Know that this present life is only a pastime, a diversion and an adornment and a mutual boasting among you and a rivalry in respect to wealth and children as the likeness of plenteous rain water. The plants impressed ones who are ungrateful. Again, it withers; then, you have seen it yellowing. Again, it becomes chaff while in the world to come there is severe punishment and forgiveness from God and contentment. And this present life is nothing but a delusion of enjoyment.* (57:20) are held out as examples of those who misuse their power. Satan is condemned to everlasting punishment for abusing power and becoming haughty.

WHAT IS A MISUSE OF POWER?

Some people try to cover their misuse of power under the cloak of determinism: And those who ascribed partners with God said: *If God willed neither would we have worshiped other than Him anything, we nor our fathers, nor would we have held sacred anything other than what He forbade.* (16:35) but the Quran repudiates this stand as totally unrealistic. *Say: God has the conclusive disputation. And if He willed, He would have guided you one and all.* (6:149) The human being has the power to shape his destiny in the light of

the truth of revelation. *And whenever guidance approaches you from Me, then, whoever heeded My guidance, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:38)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:189-7:206

Makkah: *It is He Who created you*
from a single soul.
And out of it made its spouse that he rest in her.
And when he laid over her, she carried a light burden
and moved about with it.
But when she was weighed down,
they both called to God their Lord saying:
If You would give us one in accord with morality,
we will certainly be
among the ones who are thankful. (7:189)[13]
Then, when He gave them both one in accord with morality,
they made ascribed associates with Him
in what He gave them both.
God was Exalted above partners they ascribe! (7:190)
Ascribe they partners with God who create nothing
and are themselves created? (7:191)
And they are not able to help them
nor help themselves? (7:192)
And if you call them to the guidance,
they will not follow you.
It is equal whether you called to them
or you be ones who remain quiet. (7:193)
Truly, those whom you call to other than God
are servants like you.
So call to them and let them respond to you
if you had been ones who are sincere. (7:194)
Have they feet by which they walk?
Or have they hands by which they seize by force?
Or have they eyes by which they perceive?
Or have they ears by which they hear?
Say: Call you to your ascribed associates.
Again, try to outwit me and give me no respite. (7:195)
Truly, God is my protector,
Who sent down the Book.
And He takes into His protection

the ones in accord with morality. (7:196)
And those whom you call to other than Him,
they are not able to help you,
nor are they able to help themselves. (7:197)
And if you call them to the guidance, they hear not.
You have seen them look on you,
but they perceive not. (7:198)
Take what you can spare and command what is honorable.
And turn aside from the ones who are ignorant. (7:199)
But if enmity is sown by Satan in you, sowing enmity,
then, seek refuge in God.
Truly, He is Hearing, Knowing. (7:200)
Truly, those who were God-conscious
when they were touched by a visitation from Satan,
they recollected.
That is when they were ones who perceive. (7:201)
And their brothers/sisters cause them to increase in error,
and, again,
they never stop short. (7:202)
When you have not approached them with a sign, they said:
Why had you not improvised one?
Say: I follow only what is revealed to me from my Lord.
This is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance
and mercy for a folk who believe. (7:203)
And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed
so that perhaps you will find mercy. (7:204)*
And remember your Lord in yourself humbly
and with awe instead of openly publishing the sayings
at the first part of the day and the eventide.
And be you not among the ones who are heedless. (7:205)
Truly, those who are with your Lord
grow not arrogant from His worship.
And they glorify Him
and they prostrate themselves to Him. (7:206)

COMMENTARY°

Within the context of this confrontation with the ungrateful, the section gives an outline of the nature of idolatry and the story of deviation from the covenant made with human nature to always believe in God's Oneness. It shows how such deviation occurs within us, as if it is describing the deviation of that very generation which opposed the Prophet, while their early ancestors followed Abraham's faith: (7:189-7:192)

Since it aims to describe the situation of those particular idolaters whom the Quran was addressing at the time of its revelation, the section moves immediately from the case it outlines to a direct address to them. It directs the Prophet to challenge them and their deities: (7:193-7:198)

The Quranic account describes the stages of deviation in human beings. The idolaters at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and prior to his time, used to pledge their children to serve their deities or be servants in temples and houses of worship. They did so in order to gain favor with God. Although at the beginning they used to turn to God alone, they then deflected from the summit of believing in God's oneness and fell into the depths of abject idolatry. In their error, they used to pledge their children to such idols and deities, hoping that by doing so their children would have a healthy life and would be protected against dangers. It is the same as some people do today when they make pledges to saints dedicating to them certain parts of their children's bodies. Some people may keep a boy's hair to grow, pledging that his first hair cut will be undertaken at the tomb or shrine of a saint, or they keep the boy uncircumcised until his circumcision is undertaken at such a tomb or shrine. Yet these people acknowledge that God is one, but follow this acknowledgement with such idolatrous practices. Human beings remain the same.*Then, when He gave them both one in accord with morality, they made ascribed associates with Him in what He gave them both. God was Exalted above partners they ascribe!* (7:190) Rejected is all the idolatry they believe and practise.

Arab paganism was, as we have already explained, too foolish by the standards of any stage of the human intellect. Therefore, the Quran tries to alert the Arabs' minds to their folly as they ascribed divinity to such deities. Those idols did not have feet with which to walk, hands with which to grasp, eyes with which to see, or ears with which to hear. Yet they themselves had these senses. How could they then worship statues made of stone that could not even do the things they themselves could do? Sometimes they considered these idols as symbols of the angels or of their own forefathers. Yet these were creatures like themselves who could not create anything or give support to anyone, because they themselves are created and cannot help themselves. At the end of this argument, God directs His Messenger to challenge them together with all their powerless deities, and to declare his clear faith, acknowledging the patronage of God alone: (7:191-7:194)

This is the type of challenge, which an advocate of the true faith would throw to tribal honor. God's Messenger said it exactly as his

Lord directed him, and put the challenge to all his contemporary idolaters and their alleged deities: *Have they feet by which they walk? Or have they hands by which they seize by force? Or have they eyes by which they perceive? Or have they ears by which they hear? Say: Call you to your ascribed associates. Again, try to outwit me and give me no respite.* (7:195)

He invites them to muster all their scheming powers, and those of their deities, and to strike against him without waiting for a moment. As he threw out this challenge, he was fully confident, reassured that God would protect him against all their scheming: *Truly, God is my protector; Who sent down the Book. And He takes into His protection the ones in accord with morality.* (7:196)

He thus declares what sort of support He relies on. He simply trusts to God who has revealed the Book. By this revelation, God has indicated His will that His Messenger should confront people with the truth embodied in that Book, and that He has willed that this truth will triumph over all falsehood. He has also willed to protect his God-conscious servants who convey His message believing in its truthfulness. The same challenge should be thrown down by every advocate of God's message who follows in the footsteps of God's Messenger (peace be upon him). It is the same challenge everywhere and at all times: (7:195-7:197) An advocate of the divine faith must not rely on any earthly power, instead he must rely only on God's power. This will enable him to rise above all earthly powers.

This last passage of the section: (7:199-7:206) contains very important directives from God to those under His patronage, i.e. His Messenger and those who have accepted His message. They were still in Makkah, facing the onslaught of the ignorant society in Arabia, supported by ignorant, or tribal honor, societies all over the world. These directives define the attitude of the believers in their confrontation with tribal honor and human beings who have gone astray. God's Messenger is called upon to show forbearance and to encourage everything that simple human nature can recognize as good, without any need for complication or rigidity. He is further directed to turn away from the advocates of tribal honor and not to engage in futile argument with them. If they go beyond the limits of reason, so as to infuriate him by their obstinate attitude, and Satan stirs up this anger further, then he should seek refuge with God who alone can give him reassurance: (7:199-7:200)

The section takes a different approach in order to emphasize to the advocates of faith that they should face all situations with resigned acceptance, and they should remember God when they are angry so that Satan will not be able to get the better of them: *Truly,*

those who were God-conscious when they were touched by a visitation from Satan, they recollected. That is when they were ones who perceive. (7:201)

They suggest to the Prophet that he should pray to God to give them a miracle, or they even suggest to him that he himself should perform a miracle. To them, he should be able to do so, since he claims to be a Prophet. This shows that they do not understand the Prophet's role. They certainly could not appreciate his humble attitude towards his Lord, nor that he only takes what God gives him. He does not suggest approaches or measures to his Lord, nor does he initiate matters at his own behest. God orders him to explain this to them: *When you have not approached them with a sign, they said: Why had you not improvised one?.* (7:203)

The Prophet is also commanded to explain to them the nature of the Quran that has been revealed to him. If they would only consider the plain guidance that is contained in the Quran, they would certainly stop making foolish requests for signs and miracles: *Say: I follow only what is revealed to me from my Lord. This is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance and mercy for a folk who believe.* (7:203) It provides clear insight and it is an aspect of overflowing blessings and grace. But that is the case only for those who believe and avail themselves of its unending blessing.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:189-7:206

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who created us from a single soul. He is Hearing, Knowing.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad to tell the ungrateful to call to their ascribed partners with God, to try to outwit him and give him no respite, because God, who sent the revelation, is his protector. It is He who protects the ones in accord with morality. The message tells him to take what he can spare, command what is honorable and turn aside from the ones who are ignorant. If somehow enmity is sown in him by Satan, he should take refuge in God. When Prophet Muhammad does not approach them with a sign, the ungrateful ask him to improvise one. The Quran tells him to say: I follow only what is revealed to m e from my Lord. The Quran is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance and mercy for ones who believe. He tells the ungrateful to listen and pay heed to the recitation so that they perhaps find mercy. Prophet Muhammad is told to remember his Lord within himself humbly and with awe instead of openly publishing the signs at the first part of the day and at sunset. He should not be among the heedless. Those who are with him, who follow him, do not grow arrogant from worshipping God. They glorify God

and prostrate themselves to Him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

There are those who ask for a child that will be in accord with morality and when God gives them such a child, they create associates with God, ascribe partners with God who themselves create nothing and are themselves created. Those that the ungrateful call to are not able to help either themselves or the ungrateful. Those whom they call to guidance will not follow them. Those who ascribe associates and partners with God are servants like the community of believers. The Quranic message then asks several questions about the ascribed partners: Have they feet by which they walk? Have they hands by which they seize by force? Have they eyes by which they perceive? Have they ears by which they hear? In regard to those who are God-conscious, when they are touched by a visitation from Satan, they recollect. It is they who are ones who perceive. But their brothers/sisters never cease trying to lead them astray.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message says to seek refuge in God from Satan and evil whisperings If we have thoughts of enmity, what should we do? The Quranic message says we should take refuge in God from Satan who may sow enmity within us or may visit us. Sometimes we have evil thoughts. We should recollect that we are having these thoughts and seek refuge in God from them. Evil thoughts are to be avoided. Evil thoughts can lead to depression and grief.

Seeking refuge in God helps avoid evil thoughts. .

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS?

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events:

LESSON 40(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE IN GOODNESS?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: do good even as God did good to you (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. *All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

HOW DO I LEARN TO PERSEVERE IN GOODNESS?

Perseverance can be developed by reviewing and discussing the kinds of difficulties that were inherent in previous problems worked on, exploring why it is necessary to struggle with them over an extended period. You should come to see mental struggle as crucial to Quranic learning by discovering its reward in genuine understanding. You should have some experiences slowly reading difficult Quranic signs or sections. If you are careful and stick to it, examining

it one word, phrase, and sentence at a time, you can master it. Such in-depth reading can be done as a class, sentence by sentence, with you interpreting and explaining as you go. Raise difficult problems again and again over the course of the year. Design long-term projects for which you must persevere. Of course, it is important to work on skills of breaking down complex problems into simpler components, so that you will see how to attack problems systematically. You can discuss experiences you have had wherein you came to understand something that at first baffled you, or seemed hopelessly confusing and frustrating.

WHAT IS THE GOLDEN RULE?

The Golden Rule is to treat others the way that you want to be treated which is to persevere in goodness without regard to how you are being treated.

WHAT IS WRONGDOING?

The Quran denounces the obstacle to persevering in goodness which is wrong-doing i. e., doing wrong and shameful deeds. The Quran forbids—all shameful and evil deeds and uses a very comprehensive term *zulm* to cover them all. The Quran refers to Satanic tendencies in the human being such as ungratefulness (7:10), hastiness (16:37), impatience (70:19-21), despair, and unbelief in times of adversity and pride and conceit in times of prosperity (11:9-10), quarrelsomeness (16:4), arrogance (75:31-40), greed of ever more and yet more (74:15), miserliness (17:100), transgression of the bounds of propriety (96:6), and false sense of self–sufficiency: *No indeed! The human being is, truly, defiant. He considered himself self-sufficient.* (96:6) These tendencies often lead to different forms of wrong-doing and, therefore, must be counteracted by all right–thinking people.

> The spread among the right-thinking people causes great anxiety among the Quraysh because it is undermining their status quo, their social system, their classes and own class privileges, their unjust way of dealing with people and their arrogance. For a third time they go to see Abu Talib: You have taken Muhammad as your son and you protect him. Is it possible for your to withdraw your support from him and take Walid ibn Mughayra as your son? The child Walid is a young man, poet, speaker, wise, and handsome.
>
> In the previous meeting Abu Talib had spoken to them most softly and calmly. This time, when faced with their suggestion, he speaks in angry tones to them in rightful anger and says: What a ridiculous suggestion! I give my son to you to destroy and take Walid and raise him? I swear by God that this suggestion is not worth even listening to.
>
> These negotiations of the Quraysh with Abu Talib and their ab-

surd suggestion shows that they understand nothing of the depths of the Messenger's call and Abu Talib's affection for him. None of these negotiations succeed in affecting either the morale of the Messenger nor the resolve of Abu Talib in his defense of his nephew.

QURANIC CHAPTER 72: THE JINN (AL-JINN)
SIGNS 72:1-72:19

Makkah: *Say: It was revealed to me*
that a group of jinn listened to me.
They said: Truly, we heard a wondrous Recitation. (72:1)
It guides to the right judgment, so we believed in it.
And we will never ascribe partners with our Lord anyone. (72:2)
Truly, He, exalted be the grandeur of our Lord.
He took no companion (f) to Himself, nor a son, (72:3)
and yet a foolish one among us had been saying
an outrageous lie about God! (72:4)
But we, truly, thought that the humankind,
nor the jinn would ever say a lie about God (72:5)
and that there had been men of humankind
who would take refuge with the masculine of the jinn,
but they increased them in vileness. (72:6)
And they thought as you thought,
that God will never raise up anyone. (72:7)
And we stretched towards the heaven.
Then, we found it was filled with stern guards
and burning flames. (72:8)
And we had been sitting in positions
having the ability to hear.
But whoever listens now
will find a burning flame
and watchers for him. (72:9)
And we were not informed
whether the worst was intended
for those who are on earth
or whether their Lord intended
for them right mindedness. (72:10)
There are among us, the ones in accord with morality.
And there are among us other than that.
We had been of ways differing from one another. (72:11)
And we, truly, thought that we will never be able to weaken God
on the earth and we will never weaken Him by flight. (72:12)
So, truly, when we heard the guidance,

we believed in it. And whoever believes in his Lord,
he will fear neither meagerness nor vileness. (72:13)
And, truly, we are the ones who submit to God.
Among us there are the ones who swerve from justice.
And whoever submitted to God, then,
those sought right mindedness. (72:14)
As for the ones who swerve from justice,
they had been as firewood for hell. (72:15)
If they went straight on the way,
We would have satiated them
with copious water (72:16)
so that We try them in it.
But whoever turns aside
from the Remembrance of his Lord,
He will dispatch him to a rigorous punishment. (72:17)
Truly, the places of prostration belong to God
so call not to anyone with God. (72:18)
And, truly, when the servant of God stood up, calling to Him,
they be about to swarm upon him. (72:19)

COMMENTARY°

SUPPORT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

This section presents a testimony to the truth of many aspects of the divine faith from a different world, a world beyond that of ours. These aspects were the subject of much argument by the ungrateful who either denied them or who arrived at assumptions lacking any supporting evidence. The ungrateful in Makkah sometimes alleged that Muhammad was in contact with the jinn who taught him what to say about faith. Now, a group of the jinn give their testimony, stating that they did not know anything about the Quran until they listened to Muhammad reciting it, and that they were then overwhelmed by its powerful truth. In fact, its effect on them was so profound that they could not remain silent. They had to speak in detail about what they had heard and felt. Their discourse reflects their total amazement at this great event with its lasting effects on the heavens, the earth, humans, jinn, angels and stars. Indeed, its effects cover the entire universe. Their testimony undoubtedly has a strong effect on us as well.

Moreover, the jinns' statement corrects many aspects of superstition upheld by those addressed by the section for the first time, and by many other people across successive generations. It presents clear facts about this type of Gods creatures, without any exaggeration. The Arabs who were the first to be addressed by the Quran be-

lieved that the jinn exercised much power on earth. When an Arab found himself at night in a valley or an open plain, he would seek refuge with the jinn of that place, saying: I seek refuge with the master of this valley against the designs of the wicked elements among his people.

When he had said so, he could then sleep in peace. They also believed that the jinn had knowledge of the unseen, or what lies beyond the reach of human perception. They would give information to soothsayers who would then make predictions. Some Arabs worshipped the jinn, alleging that they were related to God. Some suggested that God had a wife from among the jinn and that she gave birth to angels.

Belief in the jinn on lines similar to these is widespread in all *jahiliyyah* societies. Indeed, some legends and superstitions about them continue to be spread in different environments, even in the present day.

While such superstitions used to circulate widely, giving people different ideas and concepts about them, there were also other people who denied their existence altogether. They described any talk about the jinn as superstitious. Therefore, the Quranic message sets the record straight. It confirms their existence and corrects wrong ideas about them, freeing people from the shackles of fear about the jinn and submission to their alleged authority.

The jinn do exist. They describe themselves in this section in the following words: *There are among us, the ones in accord with morality. And there are among us other than that. We had been of ways differing from one another.* (72:11) Some go astray and lead people astray, while others are naive and can easily be deceived: *And yet a foolish one among us had been saying an outrageous lie about God! But we, truly, thought that the humankind, nor the jinn would ever say a lie about God* (72:4-72:5) They are susceptible to divine guidance, able to listen to the Quran, understand it and be affected by it: *Say: It was revealed to me that a group of jinn listened to me. They said: Truly, we heard a wondrous Recitation. It guides to the right judgment, so we believed in it. And we will never ascribe partners with our Lord anyone.* (72:1-72:2)

By their nature, they can be punished, and the results of belief and unbelief can affect them: *So, truly, when we heard the guidance, we believed in it. And whoever believes in his Lord, he will fear neither meagerness nor vileness. And, truly, we are the ones who submit to God. Among us there are the ones who swerve from justice. And whoever submitted to God, then, those sought right mindedness. As for the ones who swerve from justice, they had been as firewood for hell.* (72:13-72:15)

When humans appeal to them, they cannot benefit them; on the contrary, they increase their affliction: *And that there had been men of humankind who would take refuge with the masculine of the jinn, but they increased them in vileness.* (72:6) They have no knowledge of the realm beyond their perception, and they no longer have any contact with heaven: *And we stretched towards the heaven. Then, we found it was filled with stern guards and burning flames. And we had been sitting in positions having the ability to hear. But whoever listens now will find a burning flame and watchers for him. And we were not informed whether the worst was intended for those who are on earth or whether their Lord intended for them right mindedness.* (72: 8-72:10) They have no relation to God Almighty: *Truly, He, exalted be the grandeur of our Lord. He took no companion (f) to Himself, nor a son.* (72:3) They have no power to resist Gods will: *And we, truly, thought that we will never be able to weaken God on the earth and we will never weaken Him by flight.* (72:12)

We learn all this about the jinn from what is mentioned in this section. Some of their other characteristics are mentioned elsewhere in the Quran. For example, there is the reference to those of them who were made subservient to the Prophet Solomon. They did not know of his death until sometime after it occurred, which confirms that they have no knowledge of what is beyond their faculties of perception: *Then when We decreed death for Solomon, nothing pointed out his death to the jinn but a moving creature of the earth which consumed his scepter. So when he fell down, it became clear to the jinn that if they had known the unseen, they would not have lingered in expectation in the despised punishment.* (34:14)

THE JINN'S ACCOUNT

This section contributes significantly to the formulation of the Quranic concept of the truth of the God and servitude to Him, as well as the truth of the universe, the creatures living in it and their interrelations.

There is a definite causal relation between people's following the right way and the operation of some forces in the universe, according to God's will and its effect on His creatures: *If they went straight on the way, We would have satiated them with copious water so that We try them in it. But whoever turns aside from the Remembrance of his Lord, He will dispatch him to a rigorous punishment.* (72:16-72:17) This is a truth that forms part of the Quranic concept of the interrelation between the human being, the universe and God's will.

In the jinn's account we have confirmation of God s Oneness, a

negation of His having a spouse or a son, affirmation of reckoning and requital in the life to come, and the fact that no creature can ever escape God anywhere in the universe. All will receive their fair dues.

The jinn's account asserts that God belongs only to God, and that servitude to Him is the highest status people can attain: *And, truly, when the servant of God stood up, calling to Him, they be about to swarm upon him.* (72:19)

The world beyond our perception belongs totally to God alone, and the jinn know nothing about it: *And we were not informed whether the worst was intended for those who are on earth or whether their Lord intended for them right mindedness.* (72:10)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 72:1-72:19

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad to say that it was revealed to him that a group of the jinn listened to his recitation of the Quran.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Jinn, unseen forces, are part and parcel of the community. We learn from this section that some interaction may take place between different types of creatures even though they may have totally different natures and constitutions. An example of such interaction is what happens between humans and the jinn, as mentioned in this section as elsewhere in the Quran. Even in his abode on earth, we are not isolated from other creation. We may have some interaction with them. The isolation we feel, as a species or a community or an individual, does not apply to the nature of the universe. This idea should broaden mans feelings towards the universe and the creatures, forces and secrets it contains. We may not be aware of these, bur they exist in the world around us. We are not the only dweller in the universe as we sometimes imagine.

QUESTIONS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?
Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells us about the unseen creatures known as the jinn. How did the jinn become believers in the Quranic message? **Fact:** They listened to Prophet Muhammad reciting the Quran and heard a wondrous recitation. The Quranic message has an inspiring message. The jinn are unseen forces or energies, creatures from a different world than ours. There is an unseen world habited by creatures different from us. Unseen creatures can also be believers. The Quranic message.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

LESSON 40(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM, LOVE

WHAT IS EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (ihsan). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic Altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

> The number of followers continues to grow in Makkah among men and women of the tribes of the Quraysh and others as the revelation continues, though the Quraysh were imprisoning and seducing as many of the Muslims as they could. Many of the Quraysh leaders gathered together after sunset outside the Kabah.
>
> They decided to send for Muhammad and to negotiate and argue with him so that they could not be held to blame on his account in the future. When they sent for him, the Messenger came quickly because he thought that what he had said to them had made an impression, for he was most zealous for their welfare, and their wicked way of life pained him. When he came and sat down with them, they explained that they had sent for him in order that they could talk together.

No Arab had ever treated his tribe as Muhammad had treated them, and they repeated the charges which have been mentioned on several occasions. If it was money he wanted, they would make him the richest of them all; if it was honor, he should be their prince; if it was sovereignty, they would make him king; if it was a spirit which had got possession of him (they used to call the familiar spirit of the jinn *raiy*), then they would exhaust their means in finding medicine to cure him. The Messenger replied that he had no such intention. He sought not money, nor honor, nor sovereignty, but God had sent him as an Messenger, and revealed a message to him, and commanded him to become an announcer and a warner. He had brought them the messages of his Lord, and given them good advice. If they took it then they would have a portion in this world and the next. If they rejected it, he could only patiently await the issue until God decided between them, or words to that effect.

They said: Well, Muhammad if you won't accept any of our propositions, you know that no people are more short of land and water, and live a harder life than we, so ask your Lord, who has sent you, to remove for us these mountains which shut us in, and to straighten out our country for us, and to open up in it rivers like those of Syria and Iraq, and to resurrect for us our forefathers, and let there be among those that are resurrected for us Qusayy ibn Kilab, for he was a true shaykh, so that we may ask them whether what you say is true or false. If they say you are speaking the truth, and you do what we have asked you, we will believe in you, and we shall know what your position with God is, and that He has actually sent you as a Messenger as you say.

He replied that he had not been sent to them with such an object. He had conveyed to them God's message, and they could either accept it with advantage, or reject it and await God's judgment. They said that if he would not do that for them, let him do something for himself. Ask God to send an angel with him to confirm what he said and to contradict them; to make him gardens and castles, and treasures of gold and silver to satisfy his obvious wants. He stood in the streets as they did, and he sought a livelihood as they did. If he could do this, they would recognize his merit and position with God, if he were a Messenger as he claimed to be.

He replied that he would not do it, and would not ask for such things, for he was not sent to do so, and he repeated what he had said before.

They said: Did not your Lord know that we would sit with you, and ask you these questions, so that He might come to you and instruct you how to answer us, and tell you what He was going to do

with us, if we did not receive your message? Information has reached us that you are taught by this fellow in al-Yamama, called al-Rahman, and by God we will never believe in the Rahman. Our conscience is clear. By God, we will not leave you and our treatment of you, until either we destroy you or you destroy us.

When they said this, the Messenger got up and left them. Abd Allah ibn Abu Umayya ibn al-Mughayra ibn Abd Allah ibn Umar ibn Makhzum (who was the son of his aunt, Atika bint Abd al-Muttalib) got up with him and said to him: O Muhammad, your people have made you certain propositions, which you have rejected; first they asked you things for themselves that they might know that your position with God is what you say it is so that they might believe in you and follow you, and you did nothing. Then they asked you to take something for yourself, by which they might know your superiority over them and your standing with God, and you would not do it. Then they asked you to hasten some of the punishment with which you were frightening them, and you did not do it, or words to that effect. By God, I will never believe in you until you get a ladder to the sky and mount up it until you come to it, while I am looking on, and until four angels shall come with you, testifying that you are speaking the truth, and by God, even if you did that I do not think I should believe you.

QURANIC CHAPTER 72: THE JINN (AL-JINN)
SIGNS 72:10-72:24

Say: Truly, I call only to my Lord,
and I ascribe not as partners with Him anyone. (72:20)
Say: Truly, I possess not the power to hurt
nor to bring right mindedness for you. (72:21)
Say: Truly, none would grant me protection
from God—not anyone!
And I will never find other than Him
that which is a haven (72:22)
unless I be delivering messages from God,
His messages.
And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger,
then, for him is the fire of hell,
ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally. (72:23)
Until when they saw what they are promised,
then, they will know who is weaker of ones

who help and fewer in number. (72:24)
Say: I am not informed
if what you are promised is near,
or if my Lord will assign for it a space of time. (72:25)
He is The One Who Knows of the unseen!
And He discloses not the unseen to anyone, (72:26)
but a Messenger with whom He was content.
Then, truly, He dispatches in advance of him
and from behind him, watchers (72:27)
that He know that they expressed
the messages of their Lord.
He enclosed whatever is with them
and He counted everything with numbers. (72:28)

COMMENTARY°

Some of the facts clearly stated by the jinn are then repeated in this section two the section that addresses the Prophet: *Say: Truly I call only to my Lord and I ascribe no partners with Him.* (72:20) *Say: Truly never would grant me protection from God anyone and never will I find othe than Him that which was a haven.* (72:22)

The section confirms this truth in its address to the Prophet: *Say: Truly, I possess not the power to hurt nor to bring right mindedness for you.* (72:21)

It is also unknown to Gods messengers, apart from what God, in His infinite wisdom, chooses to inform them of: *Say: I am not informed if what you are promised is near, or if my Lord will assign for it a space of time. He is The One Who Knows of the unseen! And He discloses not the unseen to anyone, but a Messenger with whom He was content. Then, truly, He dispatches in advance of him and from behind him, watchers.* (72:25-72:27)

Consistent with this phenomenon are the images and scenes the section portrays and the inspiring statements it includes, particularly in its last passage after the jinn concluded their discourse. In this last part, the section addresses the Prophet in a way that fills the listener with much sympathy. He is commanded to declare that he looks for nothing in respect of his message other than delivering it, and that he is closely watched by God as he goes about this task: (72:20-72:28)

Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger will have the fire of hell, where they will abide for ever. When they see what they have been promised, they will realize who has the lesser help and is smaller in number. (72:20-72:28)

In addition, the section delivers a special and psychological ef-

fect in its lucid presentation of what the jinn said and the truth included in their account. This truth is of great significance, inviting much reflection and contemplation. It also suits the sad overtone evident in the section's rhythm. It only needs to be read rather slowly to impart the feeling we have just outlined.

The Quran also refers to a quality of Iblis and his folk. Iblis, or Satan, belonged to the jinn, but he is devoted totally to evil, corruption and tempting others to do evil: *O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you as he drove your parents out of the Garden, tearing off their garments from both of them to cause them to see their intimate parts. Truly he and his type sees you whereas you see them not. Truly We have made he and the satans protectors of those who believe not.* (7:27)

This implies that the jinn have a form that humans cannot see, while they can see us. In addition, Chapter 55, The Lord of Grace, states from which substances the jinn and human beings are created: *He created the human being from earth mud like potter's clay. He created the ones who are spirits from a smokeless flame of fire.* (55:14-55:15)

The section corrects what the ungrateful Arab and other people used to say about the jinn, believing that they had exceptional powers and a large role to play in the universe. Others who have denied the existence of these creatures outright, mocking anyone who so believes, do not tell us the basis of their denial. Do they claim that they know every type of creature in the universe and cannot find the jinn among them?

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 72:20-72:28

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is commanded to declare that he looks for nothing in respect of his message other than delivering it, and that he is closely watched by God as he goes about this task.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message shows that Prophet Muhammad has commanded to declare that his purpose is only to deliver the Quran. Who are the watchers? He is protected by the watchers because he has been graced with the revelation. He is protected in all aspects of his life whether he is aware of them or not. God has blessed the Prophet and has sent watchers to protect him. There are watchers who are part of the unseen world. To the community listening to the revelation, they are relieved to know that God is watching over their beloved Prophet. That there are unseen forces in the universe.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 41(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT FAIRNESS (NOT BEING SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC)

HOW IS FAIRNESS DEFINED?

Developing a sense of fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just-minded Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness is similar to justice. Justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice (7:29); truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect. (16:90); and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) for He loves those who judge justly.

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who*

are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

When the Messenger's sense of fairness and justice begins to be blazed abroad throughout the land he is mentioned in Madinah. There is no tribe among the Arabs who know more about the Messenger when and before he is mentioned than this tribe of Aws and Khazraj. The reason for this is that they are well acquainted with the sayings of Jewish rabbis and they live side by side with them as allies. When the Messenger is spoken of in Madinah and they hear of the trouble he has had with Quraysh, Abu Qays ibn al-Aslat, brother of Ibn Waqif, composed signs about it.

Abu Qays is warmly attached to Quraysh since he is related to them through his wife, Arnab bint Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza ibn Qusayy, and he with his wife used to stay with them for years at a time. He composes an ode in which he magnifies the sanctity of the area, forbade Quraysh to fight there, urged them to stand by one another, mentioned their merits and virtues, urges them to protect the Messenger, and reminds them of how God has dealt with them and had saved them in the War of the Elephant.

When the Quraysh become distressed by the trouble caused by the enmity between them and the Messenger and those of their people who accept his teaching, they stir up against him, foolish men who call him a liar, insult him, and accuse him of being a poet, a sorcerer, a diviner, and of being possessed. However, the Messenger continues to proclaim what God has ordered him to proclaim, concealing nothing, and exciting their dislike by condemning their religion, forsaking their idols, and leaving them to their unbelief.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:1-36:12

Makkah: *Ya Sin.* (36:1)
By the Wise Quran, (36:2)
truly, you are among the ones who are sent (36:3)
on a straight path, (36:4)
sent down successively by
The Almighty, The Compassionate (36:5)
that you warn a folk whose fathers were not warned,
so they were ones who were heedless. (36:6)

Certainly, the saying was realized
against most of them for they believe not. (36:7)
We laid yokes on their necks up to the chins,
so that they are ones who are stiff-necked. (36:8)
And We laid in advance of them
an embankment and behind them an embankment.
Then, We covered them so they perceive not. (36:9)
And equal it is to them whether you warn them,
or you warn them not. They will not believe. (36:10)
You have only warned whoever followed the Remembrance
and dreaded The Merciful in the unseen,
so give him good tidings of forgiveness
and a generous compensation. (36:11)
Truly, We give life to the dead
and We write down what they put forward and their effects.
We counted everything in a clear record. (36:12)

COMMENTARY°

Ya Sin. By the Wise Quran. (36:1-36:2) God says an oath by these two letters and by the Quran. This combination endorses the view we have expressed elsewhere about the mention of separate letters at the beginning of many sections, and the relation between mentioning these letters and the Quran. The proof that God is the source of the Quran is obvious from these letters which are available to all Arabs to use yet they are incapable of producing with them anything like the thoughts and modes of expression contained in the Quran. Yet seldom do they consider such confirmation.

This Quran has a soul of its own, giving it qualities similar to those of a living person with whom you have mutual responses and feelings. This takes place when you pay full attention to it and listen to it with your heart and soul. Whenever you open your faculties up to it, the Quran reveals to you more of its secrets. When you have lived for a while in the company of the Quran, you will long for its distinctive features, just as you long for the features of a close friend. God's Messenger used to love to listen to the Quran being recited by other people. He would even stop by people's doors if he overheard someone inside reciting the Quran, just like a lover listens to a conversation about the one he loves.

The Quran is certainly wise. It addresses everyone according to their ability; touching heart strings, speaking in a measured way, and using a wisdom that suits each person. Furthermore, the Quran is full of wisdom. It educates people wisely, according to a straight logical and psychological system that releases all human potential and di-

rects people to what is good and beneficial. It establishes a code of living that allows every human activity within the limits of its wise system.

God Almighty swears by the two letters, Ya Sin, and by the Quran to confirm the truth of revelation and the message delivered by the Prophet: *Truly, you are among the ones who are sent on a straight path,* (36:3-36:4) Limitless in His glory, God does not need to express an oath, but this oath by the Quran and its letters gives the subject of the oath added greatness. God would not swear by anything unless it were great indeed, worthy of being sworn by.

Truly, you are among the ones who are sent. (36:3) The way this sign is phrased imparts a feeling that sending messengers is a well recognized fact, with many past cases. This is not what is being proved here. Instead, what is being emphasized is that Muhammad is one of these messengers. The oath is addressed to Muhammad himself, not to those who deny his message, so as to place the oath, the Messenger and the message above argument or discussion. It is a fact being stated by God about His Messenger.

Truly, you are among the ones who are sent on a straight path. (36:4) This explains the nature of the message after the truth about the Messenger has been stated. By nature, this message is straightforward. It is as straight as the edge of a sword. It admits no crookedness, deviation, or prejudice. The truth it contains is clear, free of ambiguity, and does not bend to serve any interest or to satisfy any desire. Whoever wants this truth will find it pure, simple and accurate.

Sent down successively by The Almighty, The Compassionate. (36:5) We note how God identifies Himself in such situations so that people will understand the true nature of what has been revealed to them. God is the Almighty who does what He pleases, yet He is Merciful to His servants. Whatever He does to them is born out of His mercy.

The purpose of this revelation is to warn people and give them God's message: *You warn a folk whose fathers were not warned, so they were ones who were heedless* .(36:6) To be unaware is the worst form of corruption. Unawareness makes a heart unable to respond or interact. It sees the pointers to the truth yet is unable to respond, unable to feel their presence. Therefore, a warning is the best thing that can be given to such people who remain unaware, having gone for generations without anyone to alert them to the truth.

The section then speaks of the fate of these people, and the judgment that is certain to befall them, considering that God knows all there is in their hearts and minds, and all that they did in the past or

will do in the future: *Certainly, the saying was realized against most of them for they believe not.* (36:7) Judgment has been passed, as God knows that they will not believe. Therefore, this is the fate of the majority of them because they will not see divine guidance for what it is nor will they interact with it.

At this point, the section draws an image of their psychological condition, and we see them with chains around their necks, barriers separating them from divine guidance, and with a cover over their eyes depriving them of the ability to see: *We laid yokes on their necks up to the chins, so that they are ones who are stiff-necked. And We laid in advance of them an embankment and behind them an embankment. Then, We covered them so they perceive not.* (36:8-36:9) Their hands are fastened with chains to their necks, placed under their chins, which has the effect of lifting up their heads such that they cannot see what is in front of them. Moreover, there are walls and barriers both in front of and behind them, which means that even if they were released from these chains, they still could not see through the barriers. Furthermore, the covers placed over their eyes makes it even more impossible for them to see.

And equal it is to them whether you warn them, or you warn them not. They will not believe. (36:10) Their case is settled. God knows that faith will not penetrate their hearts. No warning will ever benefit a heart that has steeled itself against divine guidance, and barracked its approach. Warnings do not create hearts; it only alerts a heart that is alive, ready to receive guidance: *You have only warned whoever followed the Remembrance and dreaded The Merciful in the unseen, so give him good tidings of forgiveness and a generous compensation.* (36:11)

Therefore the Prophet is told to give them *so give him good tidings of forgiveness and a generous compensation.* (36:11) They need the forgiveness of any sin they commit providing they do not persist in doing it, and they deserve the generous reward for fearing God and following what He has revealed. These two aspects go hand in hand: when a person truly fears God, he or she is certain to follow His guidance and implement the system He has laid down. At this point, the truth of resurrection is emphasized, together with the reckoning that ignores nothing: *Truly, We give life to the dead and We write down what they put forward and their effects. We counted everything in a clear record.* (36:12)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 36:1-36:12

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The signs here are directed to Prophet Muhammad confirming that God has sent him as God had sent previous Messengers to warn the people. Only those who follow the Remembrance and dread the Merciful in the unseen heed the warning.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message confirms that it was God who sent Prophet Muhammad. How does the Quranic message confirm that God sent Prophet Muhammad? The Quranic message states that Prophet Muhammad is among the ones who are sent on a straight path to warn people. It is those who follow the Remembrance and fear the Merciful in the unseen to heed the warning. The ones who are sent is another word for messenger and comes from the same root word in Arabic (*r-s-l*). These signs confirm those who follow Prophet Muhammad that he is on a straight path, and they, as well. There are those who are not on the straight path.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 41(2). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their an-

swers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life.

As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritaniam approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.

The prevailing reading of the Quran on being reasonable consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of both the inner and outer aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:13-36:32

Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:13)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:14)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:15)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:16)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:17)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:18)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:19)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:20)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:21)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:22)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:23)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:24)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:25)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:26)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:27)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:28)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:29)
Makkah: *O how regrettable for the servants!*
A Messenger approaches them not,
but they had been ridiculing him. (36:30
Consider they not how many generations
We caused to perish before them who,
truly, return not to them. (36:31)
And, truly, all of them will be altogether,
ones who are charged in Our Presence. (36:32)

COMMENTARY°

The first phrase: *O how regrettable for the servants!* expresses reaction to a sorrowful situation. This situation cannot be changed though sorrow and pain about it can be expressed. God Almighty does not experience such a feeling Himself, but He states that the situation these people are in deserves such reaction by others. Theirs is a depressing condition that leads to great misery: *O how regrettable for the servants!* They are offered a chance to save themselves but they turn away. This even though they see how earlier communities perished, yet they benefit nothing by the lessons they present. God opens wide the doors of His mercy to them, time after time, as He sends them messengers, but they ignore His mercy and behave with insolence and ill manners: *Consider they not how many generations*

We caused to perish before them who, truly, return not to them? And, truly, all of them will be altogether, ones who are charged in Our Presence. (36:31-36:32)

While those who had already gone will not return to their successors, they will not be ignored or left without reckoning. They will all face that at the proper time: *And, truly, all of them will be altogether, ones who are charged in Our Presence.* (36:32)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

O how regrettable for the servants! A Messenger approaches them not, but they had been ridiculing him. Consider they not how many generations We caused to perish before them who, truly, return not to them. And, truly, all of them will be altogether, ones who are charged in Our Presence.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

LESSON 41(3). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD
DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE)

When the Quraysh became distressed by the trouble caused by the enmity between them. and the Messenger and those of their people who accepted his teaching, they stirred up against him foolish men who called him a liar, insulted him, and accused him of being a poet, a sorcerer, a diviner, and of being possessed. However, the Messenger continued to proclaim what God had ordered him to proclaim, concealing nothing, and exciting their dislike by contemning their religion, forsaking their idols, and leaving them to their unbelief.

Yahya ibn Urwa b. al-Zubayr on the authority of his father from Abd Allah ibn Amr b. al-Aas told me that the latter was asked what was the worst way in which Quraysh showed their enmity to the apostle. He replied: I had been with them one day when the notables had gathered in the *hijr* and the Messenger's name had been mentioned. They said that they had never known anything like the trouble they had endured from this fellow. He had declared their mode of life foolish, insulted their forefathers, reviled their religion, divided the community, and cursed their gods. What they had borne was past all bearing, or words to that effect.[14]

While they had been thus discussing him, the Messenger came towards them and kissed the Black Stone. Then he passed them as he walked round the House. As he passed they said some injurious things about him. This I could see from his expression. He went on and as he passed them the second time they attacked him similarly. This I could see from his expression. Then he passed the third time, and they did the same.

He stopped and said: Will you listen to me O Quraysh? By him who holds my life in His hand, I bring you slaughter.

This word so struck the people that not one of them but stood silent and still. Even one who had hitherto been most violent spoke to him in the kindest way possible, saying: Depart, O Abu al-Qasim, for by God you are not violent.

So the Messenger went away, and on the morrow they assembled in the *hijr*, I being there too. They asked one another if they remembered what had taken place between them and the Messenger so that when he openly said something unpleasant, they let him alone. While they were talking thus the Messenger appeared, and they leaped upon him as one man and encircled him, saying: Are you the one who said so-and-so against our gods and our religion?

The Messenger said: Yes, I am the one who said that.

And I had seen one of them seize his robe. Then Abu Bakr interposed himself weeping and saying: Would you kill a man for saying God is my Lord?

Then they left him. That is the worst that I ever saw Quraysh do to him.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:33-36:50

Makkah: *And a sign for them*
is the dead body of the earth.
We gave life to it and We brought out grain from it
so that they eat from it. (36:33)
We made in them gardens of date palm trees and grapevines
and We caused a spring to gush forth in it (36:34)
so that they may eat of the fruit from there
that are not what their hands did.
Will they, then, not give thanks? (36:35)
Glory be to Him Who created pairs, all of them,
of what the earth causes to develop
as well as of themselves
and of what they know not! (36:36)
And a sign for them is the nighttime.
We pluck the daytime from it
and that is when they are ones in darkness! (36:37)
And the sun runs to a resting place for it.
That is foreordained by The Almighty, The Knowing. (36:38)
And for the moon We ordained mansions
until it reverted like an ripe aged, dry, date stalk. (36:39)
It is not fit and proper for the sun
to overtake the moon nor the nighttime
one to take the lead over the daytime.
They each swim in an orbit. (36:40)
A sign for them is that We carried their offspring
in a laden boat. (36:41)
And We created for them of its like that they ride. (36:42)
And if We will, We drown them with none for them
to whom they cry aloud for help nor will they be saved (36:43)
unless it be a mercy from Us
and as an enjoyment for awhile.(36:44)

Madinah (36:45)
Makkah: *There never approaches them any sign from the signs of their Lord, but they had been ones who turn aside from it.*(36:46)
And when it was said to them: Spend of whatever God provided you, those who were ungrateful said to those who believed: Will we feed him whom He would have fed, if He wills? You are nothing, but in a clear going astray.(36:47)
And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere? (36:48)
They expect but one Cry which will take them while they strive against one another.(36:49)
Then, they will not be able to leave a legacy nor will they return to their people.(36:50)

COMMENTARY°

ONLY LOOK AROUND

Life is a miracle which no person can produce. It is God's hand that produces miracles, initiating life in what has been dead. The sight of growing plants, flowering gardens and ripening fruit should open people's eyes and hearts to appreciate the wonderful work engendered by God's hand. It splits the earth to allow the shoot to appear, longing for freedom and light, gives vigor to the stem which is eager to enjoy sunlight, loads the branches with leaves and fruit, opens up flowers and gets the fruit ready for picking: *So that they may eat of the fruit from there that are not what their hands did. Will they, then, not give thanks?* (36:35)

Having given them this gentle and inspiring touch, the section then turns away from them a little to glorify God who gave them the flourishing gardens, making all plants in pairs, male and female, like men and women and countless other species known only to God: *Glory be to Him Who created pairs, all of them, of what the earth causes to develop as well as of themselves and of what they know not!* (36:36)
(36:37-36:40)

And the sun runs to a resting place for it. (36:38) God Almighty, who knows its movement and destination, says that it moves along its course to a particular destination which is known only to Him. He alone knows when and what this is. When we remember that the sun is much larger than the earth, we live on and imagine this great mass running its set course in space, unsupported, we appreciate what power controls and conducts the affairs of the universe and the sort

of might and knowledge that power commands: *That is foreordained by The Almighty, The Knowing.* (36:38)

And for the moon We ordained mansions until it reverted like an ripe aged, dry, date stalk. (36:39) People see the moon in these phases, as it is born a thin crescent then grows every day until it takes its shape as a full moon before it begins to decrease until it looks like an old date stalk. If you observe the moon night after night, you will appreciate this remarkable way of expression, particularly the use of the words: *Until it reverted like an ripe aged, dry, date stalk.* Therefore, the inspiring Quranic description.

The section then makes it clear that the system regulating all these great celestial bodies is most accurate, and that this controls its resulting phenomena: *It is not fit and proper for the sun to overtake the moon nor the nighttime one to take the lead over the daytime.* (36:40) Indeed every planet and star has its own orbit which it follows accurately.

They each swim in an orbit. (36:40) The movement of all these great bodies in space is similar to the movement of ships and boats in the sea. Huge as these bodies are, they are no more than little spots floating on the surface of the sea.

A sign for them is that We carried their offspring in a laden boat. And We created for them of its like that they ride. And if We will, We drown them with none for them to whom they cry aloud for help nor will they be saved unless it be a mercy from Us and as an enjoyment for awhile. (36:41-36:44)

WHAT OPENS SEALED HEARTS

Clear and inspiring as these signs are, people continue to pay little heed. Their hearts remain closed and they persist in ridicule and denial, hastening the end against which God's messengers have warned them:

When they are told: *There never approaches them any sign from the signs of their Lord, but they had been ones who turn aside from it. And when it was said to them: Spend of whatever God provided you, those who were ungrateful said to those who believed: Will we feed him whom He would have fed, if He wills? You are nothing, but in a clear going astray. And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (36:46-36:48)

If they are urged to be charitable and to give to the poor a portion of what God has provided for them, they say in ridicule: *And when it was said to them: Spend of whatever God provided you, those who were ungrateful said to those who believed: Will we feed him whom He would have fed, if He wills? You are nothing, but in a clear going*

astray. (36:47)

Finally the section mentions their expressed doubts about God's promise and their ridicule of the warnings given them: *And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (36:48) God's promise is not brought forward or delayed because of people's pleas. With God everything has its definite measure; everything takes place at its appointed time and place, in accordance with His infinite wisdom. It is He who conducts the universe and all that happens in it according to a perfect system. The answer to this rude question is given in the form of a scene from the Day of Judgment, showing them what happens then, but not its timing.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 36:33-36:50

WHO IS GOD?

Everything around us in the universe speaks to us about God, giving evidence of His presence. We only need to look at the land in front of us and how we see it dead, lifeless, lacking a drop of water. Then we see it quicken, producing grain and adorned with gardens replete with dates and grapes. Springs of water gush through it; and in no time, it is full of life.

When the night comes, light disappears and darkness spreads: this is something we see every day in every corner of the world, except for polar areas. Despite its daily occurrence, it is a remarkable sign that deserves contemplation. The Quranic description here is unique as it shows the day intertwined with the night and then God strips the day off the night to let darkness spread.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Although all these signs are enough to cause an open heart to shudder and bring it in line with the universe, the ungrateful will not see them for what they are, and even if they do see them, they still do not reflect on them. Because His grace is endless, God does not leave them to themselves. He sends them messengers to warn them and to call them to their Lord, the Creator of the universe. The messengers' role is to alert people's hearts so that they can see why they should be God-conscious, and to warn them against incurring God's displeasure, pointing out its causes and teaching them how to avoid it. Signs are constantly given them in their lives, time after time, in addition to the signs that are available in the universe around them, but they choose to remain blind.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a purpose within a point of view based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describes the ungrateful and their fate. What do the ungrateful say? When they are told to spent to feed the needy, they ask why they should feed those whom God feeds. They ask: When is the promise of the Day of Judgment? Expecting but one Cry which will take them, they do not realize that they will not leave a legacy then nor will they return to their people.The ungrateful deny the signs telling them to feed the poor and to be aware of the Hour. The ungrateful are ungrateful because they deny the signs that God explains so clearly here. Those who deny the signs will be taken with one Cry which will come when they are in dispute with one another. Those who are ungrateful will not be able to leave a legacy nor return to their people.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that the Quranic message contains some signs that are definitive.
I looked for inter-connections between these various Quranic signs.
I realized the inter-connectness of ideas in these signs.
I did not memorize the signs and repeat them like a parrot does, but I studied them as a detective would, relating new things
I learned to things that I previously knew.

LESSON 41(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

The revelation was having a positive effect on many of the people of Makkah except for the most hard core of the enemies of the Messenger urge their slaves and children to insult the Messenger. One day they even kill a camel and one of them orders his servant to throw the camel's intestines across the Messenger's shoulders while he is praying at the Kabah.

The Messenger does not react to these insults, being in control of his passions. He informs other than to inform Abu Talib about what is taking place. Abu Talib, his sword unsheathed, goes with his servant toward the enemies of the Messenger when they had gathered together. He says: I swear by God that I will kill whoever among you moves. Then he orders his servant to throw the intestines on them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:51-36:67

Makkah: *And the trumpet would be blown!*
That is when they will be sliding down
to their Lord from their tombs. (36:51)
They would say: Woe on us!
Who raised us up from our place of sleep?
This is what The Merciful promised
and the ones who are sent were sincere. (36:52)
It would be but one Cry.
That is when they will be in Our Presence altogether,
ones who are charged. (36:53)
This Day no soul will be wronged at all
nor will you be given recompense
but for what you had been doing. (36:54)
Truly, the Companions of the Garden that Day
are ones who are joyful in their engagements. (36:55)

They and their spouses, in shade on raised benches,
ones who are reclining. (36:56)
They will have in it sweet fruits
and they will have whatever they call for: (36:57)
Peace! A saying from the Compassionate Lord. (36:58)
And be separated on this Day, O ones who sin! (36:59)
Make I not a compact with you, O Children of Adam,
that you not worship Satan?
Truly, he is a clear enemy (36:60)
and that you should worship Me.
This is a straight path. (36:61)
And, certainly, He caused to go astray
many an array of you.
Be you not, then, reasonable? (36:62)
This is hell which you had been promised. (36:63)
Roast in it this Day because you had been ungrateful. (36:64)
On this Day We will seal over their mouths
and their hands will speak to Us and their feet will bear witness
to what they had been earning. (36:65)
And if We will, We would, certainly, have obliterated their eyes.
Then, they would race towards the path.
How would they have perceived? (36:66)
And if We will, We would, certainly,
have transformed their ability.
Then, they would not have been able to pass on,
nor would they return. (36:67)

COMMENTARY°

All they are waiting for is a single blast that will overtake them while they are still disputing. No time will they have to make bequests, nor will they return to their own people. The Trumpet will be sounded, and out of their graves they will rise and hasten to their Lord. *They would say: Woe on us! Who raised us up from our place of sleep? This is what The Merciful promised and the ones who are sent were sincere.* (36:52)

Those who are destined for paradise are today happily occupied. Together with their spouses, they will be in shady groves seated on soft couches. There they have fruit and whatever they ask for: Peace and fulfilment through the word of the Lord of mercy. *Truly, the Companions of the Garden that Day are ones who are joyful in their engagements. They and their spouses, in shade on raised benches, ones who are reclining. They will have in it sweet fruits and they will have whatever they call for: Peace! A saying from the Compassionate*

Lord .(36:55-36:58)

By contrast the section dwells on the scene of reckoning faced by the others. It is shown with all that it involves of reproach and blame:

And be separated on this Day, O ones who sin! Make I not a compact with you, O Children of Adam, that you not worship Satan? Truly, he is a clear enemy and that you should worship Me. This is a straight path. And, certainly, He caused to go astray many an array of you. Be you not, then, reasonable? This is hell which you had been promised. Roast in it this Day because you had been ungrateful. (36:59-36:64)

However, the scene does not end here. It moves on to provide a most singular image: *On this Day We will seal over their mouths and their hands will speak to Us and their feet will bear witness to what they had been earning.* (36:65) Thus, they let each other down; their own bodies give witness against them; their personalities are torn apart with each part claiming that the other is lying. Each organ in their bodies returns to their Lord separately, in full submission to Him. This is a terrible scene, one that we can hardly contemplate.

The section gives us here two examples of such hardships, making it clear that God could impose the same on anyone: *And if We will, We would, certainly, have obliterated their eyes. Then, they would race towards the path. How would they have perceived? And if We will, We would, certainly, have transformed their ability. Then, they would not have been able to pass on, nor would they return.* (36:66-36:67)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 36:51-36:67

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs tell of the end of the ungrateful and that of the Companions of the Garden.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message is to frighten the ungrateful with the truth of how their end will be. The Quranic message asks the ungrateful: Will you not be reasonable? The trumpet will be blown. No soul will be wronged at all. Ones who sin will be separated on that Day from the Companions of the Garden. The ones who sin had worshiped Satan who had caused them to go astray. The ungrateful are being unreasonable in denying the Quranic signs. To be reasonable. The ungrateful are not reasonable because they deny the signs of the Hour even though they are clearly explained in the Quranic message. There will be a Day of Judgment.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

MIND MAPPING YOUR OPINION

Write down the most important word or short phrase or symbol from these signs in the center of a page.
Think about it; circle it.
Post other important concepts and their words outside the circle. Edit this first phase.
Think about the relation of outside items to the center item.
Erase, edit, and/or shorten words to key ideas.
Relocate important items closer to each other for better organization.
If possible, use color to organize information.
Link concepts with words to clarify their relationships.
Continue working outward.
Freely and quickly add other key words and ideas (you can always erase!).
Think weird: combine concepts to expand your map or; break boundaries.
Develop in directions the topic takes you—not limited by how you are doing the map.
As you expand your map, tend to become more specific or detailed. Set the map aside.
Later, continue development and revision.
Stop and think about relationships you are developing
Expand the map over time (right up to an exam if necessary!).
This map is your personal learning document.
It combines what you knew with what you are learning and what you may need to complete your "picture."
Add descriptive links for the arrows.

LESSON 41(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts unlike al-Nadr ibn al-Harith.

> One day al-Nadr ibn al-Harith stood up and said: O Quraysh, a situation has arisen which you cannot deal with. Muhammad is a young man most liked among you, most truthful in speech, and most trustworthy, until, when you saw grey hairs on his temple, and he brought you his message, you said he was a sorcerer, but he is not, for we have seen such people and their spitting and their knots. You said, a diviner, but we have seen such people and their behavior, and we have heard their rhymes. You said a poet, but he is not a poet, for we have heard all kinds of poetry. You said he was possessed, but he is not, for we have seen the possessed. He shows no signs of their gasping and whispering and delirium. You men of Quraysh, look to your affairs, for by God, a serious thing has befallen you.
>
> Now al-Nadr ibn al-Harith was one of the satans of the Quraysh. He used to insult the Messenger and show him enmity. He had learned the tales of the kings of Persia, the tales of Rustam and Isfandiyar. When the Messenger had held a meeting in which he reminded them of God, and warned his people of what had happened to bygone generations as a result of God's vengeance, al-Nadr got up when the Messenger sat down, and said: I can tell a better story than he, come to me. Then he began to tell them about the kings of Persia,

Rustam and Isfandiyar, and then he would say: In what respect is Muhammad a better story-teller than I? he asks arrogantly.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:68-36:83

Makkah: *And he to whom We give a long life,*
We bend him over in his constitution.
Will they not, then, be reasonable? (36:68)
We taught him not poetry, nor is it fit and proper for him.
It is but a Remembrance and a clear Recitation (36:69)
to warn whoever had been living and that the saying be realized
against the ones who are ungrateful. (36:70)
Consider they not how We created for them
—out of what Our hands did—
flocks, so they were of them ones who are owners? (36:71)
And We subdued them for them so that of them,
some are riding animals and some of them, they eat. (36:72)
And they have profits from them
and providing a place from which to drink.
Will they not, then, give thanks? (36:73)
And they took to themselves gods other than God
so that perhaps they will be helped. (36:74)
They are not able to help them
while they are to them as a charged army. (36:75)
So let not their saying dishearten you.
Truly, We know what they keep secret
and what they speak openly. (36:76)
Consider not the human being
that We created him from seminal fluid?
That is when he is a clear adversary. (36:77)
He propounded parables for Us and forgot his own creation.
He said: Who will give life to these bones
when they decayed? (36:78)
Say: He will give life to them
Who caused them to grow the first time
and He is The Knowing of every creation. (36:79)
It is He Who made for you fire out of a green tree.
That is when you kindle from it. (36:80)
Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth
One Who Has Power to create the like of them?

Yea! And He is The Knowing Creator. (36:81)
Truly, His command when He wanted a thing
is but to say to it: Be! Then, it is! (36:82)
Then, Glory be to Him in whose hand
is the Kingdom of everything!
And to Him you will be returned. (36:83)

COMMENTARY°

Then, Glory be to Him in whose hand is the Kingdom of everything! And to Him you will be returned. (36:83) His hand, strong and innovative, has created cattle and subjected them to us, and created us from a mere gamete. The same hand can also give life to bones that had broken into dust, just like it originated them in the first instance. It was this hand that produced fire from the green tree and brought the heavens and the earth into being. In the end, it has control of everything in the universe.

We taught him not poetry, nor is it fit and proper for him. It is but a Remembrance and a clear Recitation. (36:69) Both descriptions apply to the same thing: the role of revelation is to be a reminder as it works on the mind keeping it alert, and the Quran is to be recited. It has been revealed to perform a particular task: *To warn whoever had been living and that the saying be realized against the ones who are ungrateful.* (36:70) Here the Quranic expression contrasts unbelief with life, making unbelief equal to death and propensity to faith equal to life.

JUST ONE GOD

The second section of this final part of the section addresses the question of God's oneness providing a framework for it from what people see around them and the blessings God grants them: (36:71-36:76)

These signs begin with the question, *Consider they not?* The sign to which their attentions are drawn here is present before them. They do not have to look far for it. It is before their very eyes, requiring little contemplation. It is the flocks God has created and made subject to their control. Thus, they are able to ride them, use them for food, milk and draw various other benefits from them. Therefore, the question: *Will they not, then, give thanks?*

Yet people do not give thanks. Some of them would even attribute divinity to beings other than God. *And they took to themselves gods other than God so that perhaps they will be helped. They are not able to help them while they are to them as a charged army.* (36:74-36:75) In the past, such deities were statues, stones, trees,

stars, angels or jinn. Such idolatry persists today in some areas of the world. Yet people today who do not worship such deities do not necessarily believe in God's Oneness. They may associate partners with Him, in the form of believing in some alleged powers other than His, or relying on other things. What we need to understand here is that polytheism can take different forms at different times and places.

The ungrateful used to worship these deities seeking their help to win victory, yet it was they who protected those deities against assault from others: (36:75) This was absurdity of the lowest order. However, in essence, most people have not gone far above this level of absurdity; only in form.

So let not their saying dishearten you. Truly, We know what they keep secret and what they speak openly. (36:76) This is an address to the Prophet as he confronted those worshipping deities other than God. He should not be concerned about them. God knows all about them and what they scheme. They represent no danger to any believer who places his trust in God.

The third section of this final passage raises the question of resurrection and reckoning. He asks: (36:77-36:82)

This section looks first at a person's own position, describing his origins and ends, putting it all before him so that he looks at it as a reality taking place all the time. Yet a person neither appreciates its significance nor takes it as evidence confirming the realization of God's promise to resurrect all humanity. *Consider not the human being that We created him from seminal fluid? That is when he is a clear adversary.* (36:77) The human being does not doubt that his immediate origin is a gamete. It is no more than a tiny drop of worthless fluid; a drop containing countless thousands of cells, one of which then becomes an embryo, which later grows into a contentious person, arguing with his Lord and demanding proof and evidence from Him.

It is the creative power of God that transforms that gamete into this quarrelsome, contentious person. What a gulf between origin and end! Yet we find it difficult to believe that this power can bring us back to life after death. *He propounded parables for Us and forgot his own creation. He said: Who will give life to these bones when they decayed? Say: He will give life to them Who caused them to grow the first time and He is The Knowing of every creation.* (36:78-36:79) How simple, using the logic of nature and obvious reality!

The section then further examines the question of the human being's initial creation and his subsequent resurrection: *Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth One Who Has Power to create the like of them? Yea! And He is The Knowing Creator.* (36:81)

The truth is that God creates this and that, as well as other types of creation, effortlessly. It is all the same to Him whether the creature He wants to bring into life is large or small: *Truly, His command when He wanted a thing is but to say to it: Be! Then, it is!* (36:82) This 'something' could be a galaxy, an earth, an ant or a mosquito. It is all the same, requiring no more than a simple word, 'Be', and it is there. Nothing is easier or more difficult, near or far. Once God's will intends something, it exists whatever it may be. However, God tells us of this fact in a way we understand. This is why He expresses it in this way: saying, 'Be', to His intended creation.

At this point, the section gives its final beat, describing the relation between the universe and its Creator: *Then, Glory be to Him in whose hand is the Kingdom of everything! And to Him you will be returned.* (36:83) The term 'mighty dominion' describes this relation in its majestic reality of absolute ownership and complete authority over everything in the universe. Then to Him all will return.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 36:68-36:83

WHO IS GOD?

In this final part, the section reviews all the issues it tackled earlier: The nature of revelation; God and its Oneness, and resurrection. These are reviewed in separate sections and shown with strong effects coupled with a clear rhythm. The overall aim is to show how God's hand controls everything in the universe.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophethood means constant contact with God, learning directly from what He reveals and an untiring attempt to mold human life in a way that pleases Him. Thus, the Quran has been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad so as to warn those who are alive and can benefit from the warning.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful, on the other hand, are dead and cannot hear the warning. Therefore, the function of the Quran, in as far as they are concerned, is to record their situation which makes them deserve punishment. God will not inflict punishment on anyone who has not received His message. Punishment is for those who did receive His message and who were determined to disbelieve in it, thereby writing their own ruin.

When we look at the matter in this Quranic light we are bound to feel that God's blessings overflow from every corner around us. Thus, every time we ride an animal, eat a piece of meat, have a drink of milk, taste a piece of cheese or use fat for cooking, or wear a garment made of hide, wool or animal hair,

we in our hearts feel God's endless blessings and infinite grace. This, then, applies to all things around us and everything we use, whether animate or inanimate. All our lives, then, become a continuous act of glorifying God and giving thanks to Him.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that when God wanted a thing, He says to it: "Be" and it is. The Quranic message in these verses asks several questions: Will the ungrateful not be reasonable? Consider they not how God is the Creator? Will they not give thanks? Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth One Who Has Power to create the like of them again? The ungrateful are not reasonable. They deny the blessings of God's creation. Everything is created one by one by God saying to it: "Be" and it is. The word "*kun*")"Be" is an important word in the Quranic context because it is the sound used by God to create. This is God's Command whenever He wills a thing including all human beings. God says: Glory be to Him in whose hand is the Kingdom of everything! God is the Creator of everything.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.
I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.

LESSON 42(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD
WORTHINESS, FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT

The ungrateful Quraysh did not focus on the message. Instead, their claims against God are even more singular and more impudent. Could there he anything worse than that a human being should claim that God has partners when it is God who has created him as well as everything else in the universe? The Prophet was asked: Which is the most cardinal sin? His reply was: That you should claim that God has equals, when it is He who has created you.[15]

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)
SIGNS 25:1-25:9

Makkah: *Blessed be He*
Who sent down the Criterion
between right and wrong to His servant
so that he be a warner to the worlds, (25:1)
He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth,
and Who takes not to Himself a son.
There be no ascribed associate with Him in the dominion.
And He created everything
and ordained it a foreordaining. (25:2)
Yet they took gods to themselves
other than Him who create nothing
and are themselves created.
And they neither possess for themselves
hurt nor profit nor have they dominion over death,
nor this life, nor rising up. (25:3)
And those who were ungrateful said:
This is nothing but a calumny he devised
and other folk assisted him.
So, surely, they brought about injustice and untruth. (25:4)
And they said: Fables of the ancient ones
that he caused to be written down!
And they are to be related from memory to him
at early morning dawn and eventide. (25:5)
Say: It was caused to descend
by He who knows the secret in the heavens and the earth.
Truly, He had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (25:6)

And they said: What Messenger is this that he eats food
and walks in the markets?
Why was an angel not caused to descend
to him to be a warner with him? (25:7)
Or why is not a treasure cast down to him
or why is there not a garden for him
so that he may eat from it?
And the ones who are unjust said:
You follow nothing
but a bewitched man. (25:8)
Look on how they propounded for you parables
for they went astray
and are not able to find a way. (25:9)

COMMENTARY°

This section defines God's purpose of the revelation of the Quran to His servant, *the Criterion between right and wrong to His servant so that he be a warner to the worlds.* (25:1) As a Makkan revelation, this Quranic statement is important as it proves the universal character of the Quranic message right from its early days. It defines its universal nature when the Prophet is still in Makkah, facing determined and unrelenting opposition. It sought to achieve all this through the Quran, the criterion God revealed to His Messenger to serve as a warning to all the worlds.

The One who revealed to His Messenger this standard is: *He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and Who takes not to Himself a son. There be no ascribed associate with Him in the dominion. And He created everything and ordained it a foreordaining.* (25:2)

Once more God is not mentioned here by name, but a relative pronoun is used instead to emphasize certain suitable attributes of His: *He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.* He has absolute dominion over the heavens and the earth: a dominion that signifies ownership, control and ability to change and transform.

And Who takes not to Himself a son. Procreation is one of the natural laws God has set in operation to ensure the continuity of life, but God is Eternal and able to accomplish His purpose, whatever that may be.

There be no ascribed associate with Him in the dominion. Everything in the heavens and the earth testifies to the unity of design, nature, law and control.

And He created everything and ordained it a foreordaining. He determines the size, shape, function, time and place of everything as

well as all their interactions and harmonization.

The nature of the universe, its make up and constitution fill us with wonder. It makes nonsense of any suggestion that the universe came into being by chance. It demonstrates the meticulous and detailed proportioning of creation, which human knowledge can hardly manage to fathom even in one area of the vast universe. With every scientific progress made, more aspects of the harmony and balance in the universe and its natural laws are discovered. Consequently, we can better appreciate the meaning of this wonderful statement: *And He created everything and ordained it a foreordaining.*

The ungrateful at the time of the Prophet did not understand any of this. Therefore, they persisted with their ingratitude. *Yet they took gods to themselves other than Him who create nothing and are themselves created. And they neither possess for themselves hurt nor profit nor have they dominion over death, nor this life, nor rising up.* (25:3)

Their false deities are deprived of the most essential characteristics of God. Thus, they "*who create nothing*," while God has created everything, and false deities "*and are themselves created.*"

Having shown how they fabricate such allegations against God, who is limitless in His glory, the section refers to their impudent claims against God's Messenger, replying to them in a way that shows how false and absurd it all is. (25:4-25:6)

The ungrateful were stubborn, motivated by fear for their social status that relied on religious position. Therefore, they resorted to such tactics, making false allegations that could be accepted by ordinary people who might not have similar literary talent. They claimed that the Quran was *nothing but a calumny he devised and other folk assisted him.* (25:4) It is said that those other people were three foreign slaves, or even more. This is such an absurd allegation. If a person could, with the help of others, devise this Quran, or invent it, what would stop them from producing, with the help to refute Muhammad's argument? He repeatedly challenged them to do so and they failed to take up the challenge.

Therefore, why the section does not employ any argument to refute their absurd allegations. Instead, it gives its clear judgment on their statements: *So, surely, they brought about injustice and untruth.* (25:4) It is an act of injustice against the truth, Muhammad and themselves. Moreover, it is a blatant falsehood.

The section gives other examples of their false accusations against the Prophet and the Quran: *And they said: Fables of the ancient ones that he caused to be written down! And they are to be related from memory to him at early morning dawn and eventide.* (25:5) The Quran gives accounts of the history of past communities

for the dual purpose of serving as lessons and admonition for people, and providing guidance for them. The ungrateful, however, label such true accounts of history as 'fables of ancient times', alleging that the Prophet sought such fables to be written down so that they could be read out to him, because he was unlettered, unable to read.

Their allegation that these accounts were fables of ancient communities indicates that they were accounts of events that took place much earlier. This means that Muhammad could not have known them without being taught by some of those who circulated such fables, generation after generation. Therefore, the section replies that the One who revealed them to Muhammad was the One whose knowledge is absolute. It is He who knows all secrets everywhere in the universe. Indeed, no situation, past present or future, is unknown to Him: *Say: It was caused to descend by He who knows the secret in the heavens and the earth.*knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth." (25:6) How could the knowledge of legend reciters be compared with God's perfect knowledge? How could legends and fables be compared to the secrets of the heavens and the earth, which are perfectly known to God? This is no more than comparing a drop of water to an endless ocean.

The section then examines their false accusations against the Prophet, their absurd objections to his being human, and their unreasonable suggestions about his message: (25:7-25:9)

HONORING HUMANITY

From this angle, the whole idea seems unlikely. However, taken from another angle, it seems perfectly natural. God has breathed of His own spirit in us, and with this breath we have become distinguished among all God's creation, and placed in charge of the earth. Yet our human knowledge, experience, and abilities remain limited and inadequate. God would not leave us without support and guidance to show us the way to fulfil the trust. Therefore, He gave us the potential to be in contact with Him through the breath of the divine spirit that distinguishes us. It is no wonder that God should choose a human being who has the spiritual potential to receive His message and so impart to us what guides us and humanity along the right way.

This is an aspect of the grace God bestows on the us, which appears amazing in one way and perfectly natural in another. But those who do not know the value of this creature and the true nature of the honor God has bestowed on us deny that we should be in contact with God through divine revelation. They refuse to acknowledge that such a person should be chosen by God as His Messenger. They think that angels are better placed to carry out such a role: *And they said:*

What Messenger is this that he eats food and walks in the markets? Why was an angel not caused to descend to him to be a warner with him? (25:7) But God had ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before the human being as He granted us superior qualities associated with the breathing of His spirit in us.

Another absurd objection focused on God's Messenger walking about the market-place earning his living. His position as Messenger would have been recognized had he been granted great wealth to save him the trouble of so working for his living: *Or why is not a treasure cast down to him or why is there not a garden for him so that he may eat from it? And the ones who are unjust said: You follow nothing but a bewitched man.* (25:8)

The section then refers to another false accusation the ungrateful repeated time after time against the Prophet. The Quran gives the reply to this accusation. *Or why is not a treasure cast down to him or why is there not a garden for him so that he may eat from it? And the ones who are unjust said: You follow nothing but a bewitched man.* (25:8) *Look on how they propounded for you parables for they went astray and are not able to find a way.* (25:8-25:9)

They liken him to bewitched people at one time, accuse him of false fabrication at another, and even compare him at times to those who relate legends. All this is far beyond the truth. They have missed every road that leads to the truth and are left in error: *Look on how they propounded for you parables for they went astray and are not able to find a way.* (25:9)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:1-25:9

WHO IS GOD?

This opening gives a clear indication of the main themes of the section, namely the revelation of the Quran by God, the addressing of its message to all humanity, God's absolute Oneness that admits no partner or offspring, and His sovereignty over the whole universe which He, in His wisdom, controls. The Quran is named here as the Criterion, which is also the title of the section. The name indicates distinction and separation between the truth and falsehood, divine guidance and erroneous beliefs.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

This section, a Makkan revelation, appears to aim at comforting the Prophet and giving him solace, reassurance and support as he faced the stubborn rejection, maltreatment, haughty argument and open hostility of the Quraysh idolaters. In one aspect, it shows the divine kindness bestowed by God on His Messenger, dispelling his pain, comforting his heart so that it over-

flowed with reassurance and showing him an abundance of care and compassion. In another aspect, it portrays the fierce battle against arrogant mortals who stubbornly oppose God's Messenger, combining falsehood with arrogance, and hostility with a wilful rebuttal of divine guidance.

Yet despite all this, the ungrateful continue to associate partners with God and the fabricators persevere in their falsehood. Moreover, baseless arguments and arrogant statements are made.

The elders among the ungrateful instructed them to circulate lies when they were fully aware that the Quran which Muhammad recited could not have been authored by a human being. They actually knew this given their appreciation of the Arabic language. Furthermore, they could not stop themselves from being influenced by the Quran. Moreover, they knew Muhammad long before his prophethood, and they were aware that he was exemplary in his honesty: He never told a lie, broke a promise, or breached a trust. How could he, then, invent a lie against God, attributing to Him words which He did not say?

We see how God's infinite wisdom, which ordains all things in due proportion, has determined that His Messenger should be a human being so that he fulfils the role of leading humanity along the way He has laid down for them. To object to this choice is to betray ignorance of such wisdom and the honor God has granted humanity.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question**(s)?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept**(s)?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption**(s)?
7. What is (are) the **Implication**(s)?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message indicates that the Quran is the stable Criterion of

true and false or right and wrong, with a standard of moral valuation binding upon the individual and society. Does Criterion (*furqan*) apply to human reason that enables us to distinguish between the true and the false? The Quranic message continuously distinguishes between the followers of Prophet Muhammad and the ungrateful who deny the Quranic message. We need to use our reason and critical thinking to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. The word Criterion (furqan) is used seven times in the Quran in reference to distinguishing or discerning the difference between right and wrong. Using reasoning and determining the criterion when we want to act is an important part of the Quranic message. That as human beings we have been given the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain this to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain this sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 42(2). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

In terms of critical thinking, numerous as an intellectual standard means involving multiple viewpoints: In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth.

The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

As we think of the early days of the revelation, we can see it from the view of those who were tortured because of their belief. Among those tortured are the aged Yasir and his wife, Sumayah, their son, Ammar ibn Yasir, Bilal, Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, Suhayb al-Rumi and tens of poor and abased people who had no tribal support.

The torture of his Companions is the greatest difficulty that the Messenger has to bear. Those followers who have a protector among the Quraysh tribe are insulted, but not tortured. However, those Companions who have no family name or who are slaves become the immediate victims of the leading idolater, idol-worshippers. The only crime of these early Muslims in Makkah is their belief in God and their loyalty to His Messenger. For this, they become the victims of torture.

THE FIRST MARTYR

This courageous black woman, Sumayah, so enrages Abu Jahl by her silence, in spite of all of the painful torture inflicted upon her, that, while beating her, mad with rage, he abuses her with filthy language, then he takes his spear and stabs and kills her.

Sumayah's husband, Yasir, and son are made to watch her be killed. Abu Jahl then orders Yasir, her husband, to be killed as Ammar is made to watch. Sumayah becomes the first martyr for the Quranic message.

She dies from the knife stab that Abu Jahl had inflicted upon her in order to try to get her to renounce her faith and belief that God is One. Abu Jahl is among the most persistent persecutors of the followers of Muhammad. If the followers come from a powerful tribe that would defend them, Abu Jahl would insult them, mock them, and promise to ruin their reputation. If the converts were merchants,

he would threaten to stop their trade by organizing economic sanctions against them. If the converts were weak and unprotected by a clan, as were Sumayah, her husband, Yasir, and their son, Ammar, Abu Jahl would torture them and even instigated his powerful allies in many other clans to do the same thing with their weak and unprotected.

Sumayah knows that the Messenger of God is the last Messenger. He and all those who had preceded him had come to teach the world wisdom, the Book, and justice. Prophet Muhammad had come to bring unity to races, to groups, to families, and to social classes in order to destroy the discord that had arisen among them by the concerted efforts of those who worship other than the One God and in order to supplant this with the world view of monotheism (*tawhid*). The slogan of unity that Sumayah knew and in which she believed with all her heart to the point that she was willing to die for this principle is a liberating slogan. It is because of this freedom and liberation from all that divides humankind and a movement towards all that unites, that a special sensitivity to monotheism developed among the slaves, the whipped, the hungry, and the oppressed of history, the morale of whom was weakened by people like Abu Jahl who only thought about his own economic interests and of preserving the status quo.

This was why the group of early converts that Sumayah had joined, those who had gathered around the Messenger of God in Makkah are, for the most part, among the most deprived, the most forgotten of the scorned. This is why Sumayah hears the enemies of the Quranic message refer to her 'kind' as 'too poor to make a difference'.

Sumayah senses something else. She senses that this was the greatest praise that could be given to the Quranic message. It changes values of self-interest into values for humankind as a whole. She sees the Messenger of God as a savior for the slaves who are certain that their only fate is slavery. Slaves or the scorned and despised, for they are one and the same, hear the language of coercion of Abu Jahl, that only he and his interests should be served. They are treated in a way to believe that they are only born to experience suffering, to bear hardship, and the heavy loads that others above them are unwilling to carry and—to go hungry.

Sumayah knows the Messenger of God has begun a different kind of movement, a movement in opposition to deception, falsehood, polytheism, discord, a sense of superiority, and class differences. He announces that all of humanity is of one race, from one

source, and had one God. He declares equality for all and follows this.

He destroys all values that had taken the form of idols and shatters all values of ignorance and the aristocratic way of thinking, much as his ancestor, Abraham, had done. He commands his followers to take the scissors to the long, splendid robes some of them wore. He orders them to chop off their long beards that was a sign of aristocracy in the early years. He orders people not to walk in arrogance down the streets and narrow passage ways. He instructs people to ride two at a time upon a horse. And, in order to break down aristocratic values, he sometimes even rides bareback upon a donkey.

Sumayah senses, as she bears the torture of being chained in place to die from the heat of the hot Makkan sun, that the Messenger of God is bringing the same message that Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other Prophets had brought. Their message, however, had been forgotten and buried with the passage of time. What they had all said was: Say: God is One. She feels that he had stood up to save her and all those who were rightly guided from powerful, aristocrats like Abu Jahl. The Messenger of God explains that just as there is One God, so there is one way, one religion, one spirit, one class—the believers— and but one slogan: There is no deity but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Sumayah dies under the torture of Abu Jahl with these words upon her lips. This first martyr for the Quranic message—and a woman at that—through her martyrdom kept the Quranic movement alive.

AMMAR

Ammar converts in the House of Arqam at the same time as Suhayb ibn Ammar's father is Yasir, a stranger from Yemen. His mother is Sumayah and his brother, Abd Allah, are also believers.

Yasir belongs to a tribe in Yemen of the Madhij or Qahlan stock. He with two brothers had visited Makkah to seek out their maternal relatives. Instead of returning to Yemen, he remains behind with his patron, Abu Hudhayfah, who gives him in marriage to his slave girl Sumayah. She gives birth to Ammar.[17]

The Makhzum clan used to take out Ammar ibn Yasir with his father and mother, who are Muslims, in the heat of the day and expose them to the heat of Makkah. The Messenger would pass by them and say: Patience, O family of Yasir! Your meeting-place will be paradise.

Once the Messenger happened to pass by Ammar and saw that he was crying. He asked him what had happened.

Ammar said: Evil, O Messenger. They would not let me go until

I had abused you and spoken well of their gods.

The Messenger asked: How did you find your heart?

Ammar said: Secure and steadfast in the faith.

The Messenger replied: Then, if they repeat their cruelty, repeat you also your words.[18]

Quranic Signs Revealed: The Criterion (al-Furqan) Signs 25:10-25:20

Makkah: *Blessed be He Who, had He willed,*
assigned for you better than that,
Gardens beneath which rivers run
and He will assign for you palaces. (25:10)
Nay! They denied the Hour.
And We made ready a blaze
for whoever denied the Hour. (25:11)
When it saw them from a far place,
they heard it raging furiously and roaring. (25:12)
And when they were cast down into it, a troubling place,
ones who are chained,
they called for damnation. (25:13)
It will be said to them
Call not today for a single damnation,
but call for many damnations! (25:14)
Say: Is that better or the Garden of Infinity
that was promised the ones who are God-conscious?
It had been a recompense for them and a Homecoming. (25:15)
For them in it will be whatever they will,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
That had been from your Lord a promise,
one that is besought. (25:16)
And on the Day He will assemble them
and what they worship other than God.
To them He will say: Was it you who caused these
My servants to go astray?
Or went they astray from the way? (25:17)
They would say: Glory be to You!
It had not been fit and proper for us
to take to ourselves any protectors other than You.
But You gave them enjoyment and their fathers
until they forgot the Remembrance

and had been a lost folk. (25:18)
So, surely, they denied you in what you say.
Then, you will neither be able to turn away from it,
nor help. And whoever does wrong among you,
We will cause him to experience the great punishment. (25:19)
And We sent not before you any ones who are sent but that,
truly, they eat food and walk in the markets.
And We made some of you as a test for some others.
Will you endure patiently,
and your Lord had been Seeing. (25:20)

COMMENTARY°

Blessed be He Who, had He willed, assigned for you better than that, Gardens beneath which rivers run and He will assign for you palaces. (25:10) But God has willed to give His Messenger what is much better and more valuable than gardens and palaces. He has given him a direct relation with the One who gives all such luxuries, bestowing on him His care and guidance. He enjoys this relationship which is far superior to any worldly comfort or luxury, great as it may be.

We see the ungrateful here as they stand on the Day of Judgment when hardened hearts are shaken to their core. They are made to see what awaits them there in comparison with the happiness that is prepared for the believers: (25:11-25:16)

On the day He gathers them with all those they worship instead of God, He will ask: (25:17-25:19)

The enjoyment that people are allowed for a long time, inheriting it generation after generation, without acknowledgement of the One who gives such blessings or expression of thanks and gratitude to Him, has been their main preoccupation. They forgot to turn to the One who gives us everything we have, and thus their hearts became devoid of all goodness, barren, like a land without fruit, vegetation or life. It is people such as them who are able to torture people because they believe in One God. The Quran tells the torturers: You cannot do anything for yourselves, neither avoiding your well deserved punishment, nor gaining support from anyone or any quarter.

All this is shown as a scene of the Day of Judgment which is held before our eyes. Suddenly, the address is made to those ungrateful in their present condition here on earth: *And whoever does wrong among you, We will cause him to experience the great punishment.* (25:19) Such is the Quranic method of addressing people's hearts at

the moment when they are ready to respond, influenced as they may be by the fearful scene already portrayed.

ENTRUSTING GOD'S MESSAGE TO A HUMAN BEING

Thus they are shown to have witnessed the end of all false fabrication concerning faith and ridicule of God's Messenger. Now the section addresses the Prophet consoling and reassuring him, telling him that his was not a special case among God's messengers. They all shared the same essential attributes:

And We sent not before you any ones who are sent but that, truly, they eat food and walk in the markets. And We made some of you as a test for some others. Will you endure patiently, and your Lord had been Seeing. (25:20)

If the ungrateful voice objections, these are not made against the Prophet in person; rather, they are objections to a law God has put in place for a definite purpose: *And We made some of you as a test for some others.* Thus, those who do not appreciate God's wisdom and plans will object, while those who have full trust in His wisdom and support will persevere and remain reassured. The divine message will continue the struggle using human means and methods, so that those who have faith will demonstrate their patience in adversity: Are you able to endure with patience?

And your Lord had been Seeing. He sees human nature, and what is in people's inner thoughts. He sees to what end each one is driving. We note here the use of the possessive pronoun, 'your Lord', to give the Prophet a feeling of comfort and reassurance. God knows what best affects people's hearts and feelings.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:10-25:20

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is among God's Messengers who all shared the qualities with him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

At this point in its discussion of their wrongful statements about God and His Messenger, the section reveals another dimension of their disbelief. They deny the Last Hour. Therefore, they have no qualms about making baseless accusations or fabrications. They do not fear that they will face God who will hold them to account for their lies' and fabrications.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message shows that the Garden of Infinity promised to the ones who are God-conscious is better than the blaze for those who deny. Is the blaze and many damnations better or the Garden of Infinity that was promised the ones who are God-conscious? When the ungrateful drawn near the blaze they will hear it raging furiously and roaring. They will be cast into it chained, damned. Using our ability to reason, clearly one would prefer the Garden over the blaze. In the Garden of Infinity will be all that one wants, an eternal place of dwelling. Our actions determine whether we will be in the Garden of Infinity or in the blaze. That God's promise is true.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered class time as a time in which I practiced thinking (within the subject) using the fundamental concepts and principles of the course.

I did not sit back passively, waiting for knowledge to fall into my head.

LESSON 42(3). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

RIGHT JUDGMENT

Right judgment and truth are related to understanding the purpose or goal. The ungrateful in Makkah lacked a sense of right judgment as they continued to torture the believers.

Bilal had seen the Messenger of God wandering the streets of Makkah looking for crowds of people to whom to tell his message? He sees the Prophet standing before the people and, without thinking about what they may say, tries to help them fear God, gave them tidings of the Day of Judgment, warn them of the dangers of not heeding, show them the way to salvation for he had a Message. His Message is from the One Who befriends the honorable and the One Who is an enemy of the arrogant (*mustakbir*) for it had been revealed to him: *O you wrapped up in a cloak! Arise and deliver your warning.* (74:1-74:2)

The Messenger had been told to warn those who are asleep, who slumber in the tranquillity of their ignorance and the security of their tyranny and arrogance as those who rebel against God's commands (*taghut*). These were people who shepherd the wolf within while grazing the people/sheep without any humiliation. The One God whose message had been given to Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and His last Messenger, Muhammad, is the One God Who commands the angels to bow down before His creation of humankind. And now, in the Makkah of Arabia in the early seventh century, the Children of Adam are being required by the idolaters to bow down before the feet of those who follow satan—the carvers, and guardians of whom were the supporters of classes and clans.

Bilal, the slave of Ethiopian descent, does not fit into their picture, into their class, and as he had no protecting clan, he is among those most severely tortured. The Quraysh show special enmity towards this group of the slaves and the deprived. They imprison them, beat them, deny them food or drink, and expose them to the heat of the sun in order to get them to renounce their faith. Umayya ibn Khalaf devises unheard of tortures towards breaking Bilal's resistance. He dresses him in a suit of armor and makes him lie in the hot midday sun until the metal scorches his skin. When this fails, he puts heavy stones, hot from the heat of the sun, on his chest. Bilal is then asked if he believes in the idols, Lat and Uzza. Bilal, under the strain of the heat and the heavy stone burning through his skin, repeats over and over again: *One, One* (*Ahad, Ahad*). The Quraysh are amazed

by his ability to resist the merciless brutality. Even Umayya is beginning to think that he would have to use a new tactic because this one was not working.

Bilal, a thin and foreign slave of Umayya ibn Khalaf, is taken outside the city everyday by his master to the place where Muslims are tortured. Ibn Khalaf dunks Bilal's head in water and holds it under it until his body stops moving and then he pulls his head up so he can catch a breath and once again holds it under water. He continues to repeat this until Bilal faints and Ibn Khalaf can no longer continue to torture him. He wants Bilal to insult the Messenger. Bilal remains unperturbed by the torture. The moment his head is out of the water, with his first breath, he cries out: Ahad! Ahad, One God! One God! It is as if this is the only word he knows.

Then Ibn Khalaf strips Bilal of his clothes, makes him lie down on stones heated by the noon day sun of the desert, and has a huge stone placed on his frail, bony chest. The slave-master then tries to make Bilal express disgust at Muhammad. Bilal remains silent to whatever he says. Whenever Bilal is able to gather a breath, once again, with great difficulty, he makes his tongue repeat the only word which seems to hold his very life and being within itself. This so angers Ibn Khalaf in his state of ignorance of Reality and infidelity to the One God, that he becomes enraged—this obstinate Ethiopian slave will not obey his orders. Ibn Khalaf has the boulder removed from Bilal's chest. He orders his other slaves to tie a rope to Bilal's feet. He gives the rope to city ruffians and bullies who then pull Bilal along the ground.

When the Quraysh showed their enmity to all those who followed the Messenger; every clan which contained Muslims attacked them, imprisoning them, and beating them, allowing them no food or drink, and exposing them to the burning heat of Makkah, so as to seduce them from their religion. Some gave way under pressure of persecution, and others resisted them, being protected by God.

Bilal, who was afterwards freed by Abu Bakr but at that time belonged to one of Jumah clan, being slave born, was a faithful Muslim, pure of heart. His father's name was Ribah and his mother was Hamama.

Umayya ibn Khalaf ibn Wahb ibn Hudhayfa ibn Jumah used to bring him out at the hottest part of the day and throw him on his back in the open valley and have a great rock put on his chest; then he would say to him: You will stay here till you die or deny Muhammad and worship Al-Lat and al-Uzza.

He would say while he was enduring this: One, One!

Hisham ibn Urwa told me on the authority of his father: Waraqa

ibn Nawfal was passing him while he was being thus tortured and saying: One, One, and he said: One, One, by God, Bilal.

Then he went to Umayya and those of Jumah clan who had thus maltreated him, and said: I swear by God that if you kill him in this way I will make his tomb a shrine.

One day Abu Bakr passed by while they were thus ill-treating him for his house was among this clan. He said to Umayya: Have you no fear of God that you treat this poor fellow like this? How long is it to go on?

He replied: You are the one who corrupted him, so save him from his plight that you see.

I will do so, said Abu Bakr. I have got a black slave, tougher and stronger than he, who is a heathen. I will exchange him for Bilal.

The transaction was carried out, and Abu Bakr took him and freed him.

ABU BAKR , RIGHT JUDGMENT AND THE FREEING OF SLAVES

Before he migrated to Madinah, Abu Bakr freed six slaves, Bilal being the seventh, namely: Amir ibn Fukayha, and Umm Ubays and Zannira. Zannira lost her sight when he freed her and Quraysh said: Al-Lat and al-Uzza are the ones that have taken away her sight; but she said: By the house of God, you lie. Al-Lat and al-Uzza can neither harm nor heal, so God restored her sight.

And he freed al-Nahdiya and her daughter who belonged to a woman of Abd al-Dar tribe. He passed by them when their mistress had sent them about some flour of hers, and she was saying: By God, I will never free you.

Abu Bakr said: Free yourself from your oath.

She said: It is free; you corrupted them so you free them.

They agreed upon the price, and he said: I will take them and they are free. Return her flour to her.

They said: Oughtn't we to finish the grinding and then take it back to her?

He said: Yes, if you like.

He passed by a slave girl of the Muammil, a clan of the Adiyy ibn Kab clan, who was a Muslim. Umar ibn al-Khattab was punishing her to make her give up her belief. At that time he was a idolater. He beat her until he was tired and said: I have only stopped beating you because I am tired.

She said: May God treat you in the same way.

Abu Bakr bought her and freed her.

Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Abu Atiq from Amir ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr from one of his family told me: Abu Quhafa said

to his son Abu Bakr: My son, I see that you are freeing weak slaves. If you want to do what you are doing, why don't you free powerful men who could defend you and protect you?

He said: I am only trying to do what I am attempting for God's sake.

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)
SIGNS 25:21-25:34

Makkah: *Those who hope not*
for a meeting with Us said:
Why were angels not caused to descend to us
and why see we not our Lord?
Surely, they grew arrogant among themselves,
defiant, turning in great disdain. (25:21)
On a Day they will see the angels
there will be no good tidings for the ones who sin.
And they will say: Unapproachable! Banned! (25:22)
We will advance on whatever actions they did.
We will make them as scattered dust. (25:23)
The Companions of the Garden on that Day
will have the best resting place
and the fairer place of noonday rest. (25:24)
On a Day when heaven will be split open
with the cloud shadows and the angels were sent down,
a sending down successively, (25:25)
on that Day the true dominion will belong to The Merciful.
And it will be a Day difficult
for the ones who are ungrateful. (25:26)
And on a Day when one who is unjust will bite his hands,
he will say: Would that I took myself
to a way with the Messenger! (25:27)
Ah! Woe is me! Would that I take not to myself
so-and-so as a friend! (25:28)
Certainly, he caused me to go astray
from the Remembrance after it drew near me.
And Satan had been a betrayer of the human being. (25:29)
And the Messenger said: O my Lord!
Truly, my folk took this, the Quran to themselves,
as that which is to be abandoned! (25:30)
And, thus, We assigned for every Prophet
an enemy of the ones who sin.

And your Lord sufficed as one who guides
and as a helper. (25:31)
And those who were ungrateful said:
Why was the Quran not sent down to him all at once?
Thus, We will make firm your mind by it.
And We chanted a chanting. (25:32)
And they bring you no parable.
We brought about The Truth to you
and fairer exposition. (25:33)
Those who will be assembled
on their faces in hell,
those are worse placed,
ones who go astray from the way. (25:34)

COMMENTARY°

OMINOUS PROSPECTS FOR THE UNGRATEFUL

The ungrateful do not hope to meet God. This means that they do not expect such a meeting and do not take it into account so as to determine their prior behavior. In their hearts they do not feel any awe of God. Therefore, they are ready to make utterances that no one who expects to meet God would entertain. *Those who hope not for a meeting with Us said: Why were angels not caused to descend to us and why see we not our Lord? Surely, they grew arrogant among themselves, defiant, turning in great disdain.* (25:21)

They considered it unreasonable that God's Messenger should be a man. They demanded that angels be sent to them testifying to the truth of the message in order for them to believe in it. An alternative demand they made was that they should see God, so as to believe in Him. Such an overbearing attitude betrays the sort of ignorance associated with denying God and His attributes, having no proper esteem for Him. Who are they to make such overbearing demands? What are they in comparison with God Almighty? In God's dominion, they are no more than a particle floating aimlessly in the air, unless they establish a bond between them and God through believing in Him, deriving their strength from Him. Therefore, the reply given them in the same sign shows the source of their overbearing attitude: (25:21)

A truly sarcastic reply is given to the ungrateful as they are informed of the terrible eventuality awaiting them when they see the angels, which is the less overbearing of their demands. For they will only see the angels on a very hard and difficult day on which they will be destined to receive unbearable and inescapable suffering. That is the Day of Reckoning when evil deeds are punished. *On a Day*

they will see the angels there will be no good tidings for the ones who sin. And they will say: Unapproachable! Banned! (25:22)

This is the day when their suggestion is granted: *On a Day they will see the angels.* No good news is given to the sinners on that day, for their punishment awaits them. How terrible is the fulfilment of their request! This is when they say, a forbidding ban!' This phrase used to be said by the Arabs to avert evil and enemies. It is a sort of appeal which hopes to drive enemies away and avoid any harm that might ensue. They utter it on that day by force of habit, because the whole thing comes as a surprise. But what will their words avail them of on that day?

We will advance on whatever actions they did. We will make them as scattered dust. (25:23) It all happens in a brief moment. Our imagination follows the motion described in detail, with actions being raised and thrown up in the air.

The actions of the ungrateful are thus made to die, and their death is shown in a highly tangible image: (25:23)

On the other side we find the believers, who dwell in heaven, in a perfectly contrasting image: *The Companions of the Garden on that Day will have the best resting place and the fairer place of noonday rest.* (25:24) They are well settled, enjoying their comfort. This feeling of settlement contrasts with the scattered dust in the opposite image, and the reassurance felt by the believers contrasts with the fear of the ungrateful that obliges them to make a worried prayer.

The ungrateful also used to suggest that God and the angels should appear before them on the tops of clouds. Such suggestions perhaps show the influence of Jewish legends speaking of God revealing Himself over a cloud or a column of fire. Therefore, the Quran shows another image of the day when their request to see angels is granted: *On a Day when heaven will be split open with the cloud shadows and the angels were sent down, a sending down successively, on that Day the true dominion will belong to The Merciful. And it will be a Day difficult for the ones who are ungrateful.* (25: 25-25:26)

WHAT USE IS REGRET?

In this section God threatens the ungrateful with the sky being rent asunder by clouds. This may be a reference to clouds formed out of the vapors produced by the great explosions. On that day, the angels will go to the ungrateful as the latter suggested, but their task will not be to confirm the Prophet's message, but rather to administer punishment to the ungrateful as God will have ordered: *And it will be a Day difficult for the ones who are ungrateful.* (25:26) So why

do they want the angels to go to them when their arrival signals so much distress?

Everything around the wrongdoing ungrateful is still, while he sends out expressions of regret, with sorrow marking his voice. The rhythm here is deliberately long to add to the sound effects. As we read or hear these signs, we also seem to participate in the expression of regret. *And on a Day when one who is unjust will bite his hands.* (25:27) One hand is not enough. He bites both, alternating from one to the other, because his sorrow and regret are so keen. The movement itself is very common, expressing what the person making it feels. Therefore, it is shown in full clarity.

The wrongdoer will also say: *He will say: Would that I took myself to a way with the Messenger* (25:27) Would that I followed his way and had not moved a single step away from it! He says this about God's Messenger despite the fact that he had denied the very possibility that God might have entrusted him with a message.

Ah! Woe is me! Would that I take not to myself so-and-so as a friend! (25:28) No name is mentioned here, but the friend is described as 'so and so' to include every bad friend who encouraged him to turn away from the path of God's Messenger and follow the wrong way. *Certainly, he caused me to go astray from the Remembrance after it drew near me.* (25:29) He was indeed Satan's aide, or was himself just another Satan. *And Satan had been a betrayer of the human being* leading him into situations of error and letting him down when he most needs help.

We see how the Quran shakes their hearts, painting these fearful scenes of their fate as though this is already happening before their eyes. Yet still they deny God and speak of Him in a way that shows no respect. Indeed they make careless suggestions when what awaits them is certain to fill them with regret.

A COMPLAINT BY GOD'S MESSENGER

After these scenes of the Day of Judgment, the section brings us back to this world with a discussion of the ungratefuls' attitude towards the Prophet and their objections to the method of revealing the Quran from on high. This part of the section again ends with a scene of what happens to the ungrateful on the Day of Judgment.

They have abandoned the Quran, which God revealed to His Messenger to warn and explain to them what lies ahead for humanity. They refused to listen to it because they feared they would be attracted to its message. Stubbornly, they refused to consider its message which would have guided them to the truth and given them light. Although God revealed it as a constitution for human life, guiding it

to all that is best, they shut their minds to it. *And the Messenger said: O my Lord! Truly, my folk took this, the Quran to themselves, as that which is to be abandoned!* (25:30) His Lord certainly knew this, but God's Messenger made his complaint, humbly stating that he had exerted his best efforts, but still his people adamantly refused to listen to the Quran and consider its message.

God comforts His Messenger, telling him that the same was the case with all earlier messengers. *And, thus, We assigned for every Prophet an enemy of the ones who sin. And your Lord sufficed as one who guides and as a helper.* (25:31)

God has willed that every Prophet has to face enemies. Such wicked people stand in the face of the divine message, which is the message of truth. Its advocates then resist its enemies and bear whatever sacrifices they are called on to give. The end is predetermined, and those who place their trust in God are certain of it. It is the provision of divine guidance that leads to the ultimate victory: *And your Lord sufficed as one who guides and as a helper.* (25:31)

THE TIME SPAN OF QURANIC REVELATIONS

The Quran was revealed in small parts, explaining things first to the Prophet and strengthening his resolve to fulfil his task. Its revelation progressed, one passage or section after another, as suited the different stages along the road the Muslim community traveled: *And those who were ungrateful said: Why was the Quran not sent down to him all at once? Thus, We will make firm your mind by it. And We chanted a chanting.* (25:32) The Arabic term *tartil*, translated here as '*chanting*', indicates successive steps according to God's knowledge of what suited the Muslims at the time and their readiness to receive more.

The section continues to reassure the Prophet that he will be given the ultimate argument and the final evidence whenever the ungrateful come up with a new suggestion or objection. *And they bring you no parable. We brought about The Truth to you and fairer exposition.* (25:33) The Quran gives the best explanation and response.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:21-25:34

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The ungrateful ask why the Quran was not sent down all at once to him. The Quranic message assures Prophet Muhammad that God will firm his mind by it. It adds that the ungrateful bring no parable to him while the Quranic message reveals the Truth to him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful have given themselves airs and graces, become conceited, proud and haughty. All of which has led them to great transgression. Their pride is their main preoccupation, which means that they no longer give proper estimation to other things and values. They think themselves too great, or masters of the universe who deserve that God should appear before them in person so that they can believe in Him.

The purpose of revealing the Quran is to re-educate a community and establish a new social order. Such a task requires time. In a process of proper education it is not enough to understand the words being said, rather one must interact with them as also with the ideas expressed. This interaction should then be brought into the practical world. Human nature does not go through a total transformation overnight, as a result of reading a book which provides a complete new way of life. It is more likely to be influenced day by day, and by one aspect after another. This gives human nature the chance to gradually, but thoroughly understand it, and to get used to it bit by bit, bearing the responsibilities it requires. Thus, people are not scared off as they might be were it presented in full, surrounded by difficulties. This gradual approach is like serving a fresh nourishing meal every day, from which the recipient becomes stronger and better able to benefit by the next meal, enjoying it even more.

The Quran provides a comprehensive way of life, as well as a system of education that suits human nature. For it is revealed by God, the Creator of human nature who knows it thoroughly. For this reason, it was revealed in parts, to suit the real needs of the Muslim community as it came into existence and began to grow. It is not meant to be a theoretical book which is read for enjoyment or increasing one's knowledge. It is meant to be implemented i full, with every task accomplished and every detailed order carried out. Indee its signs are 'orders of the day' which Muslims receive and start to implement immediately, just like military personnel receive their daily orders on the battlefield. They must understand these orders properly, interact with, and implement them.

This method accomplished miracles in transforming the community which so received it, interacting with it day after day and absorbing its message part after part. When the Muslims ignored this method, viewing the Quran as a book for theoretical knowledge and recitation in worship only, they no longer benefited by it. They simply abandoned its method which aimed to reshape their way of thinking and their everyday lives.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message comforts Prophet Muhammad when faced with the allegations, suggestions and objections made by the ungrateful. How do these Quranic signs comfort the Prophet? The signs list the punishment that is awaiting the arrogant. The warning is given loud and clear to those who deny the signs. The Day will be difficult for the ungrateful while the Companions of the Garden will have the best resting place. The end for those who hope not for a meeting with God will regret their denial on the Day. That Day will come.

USING PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

Examine and try out what you know
Discover what you need to learn
Develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
Improve your communications skills
State and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
Become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
Practice skills that you will need after your education

LESSON 42(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARDS

CLARITY, UNDERSTANDABLE

The word "clarity" or 'to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error.

Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities.

Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it, as the example of the continuation of torture of the early believers by the ungrateful Quraysh.

> Khabbab al-Aratt, an Arab who had been sold into slavery as a result of a raid against his clan of the Tamim tribe, is among the early companions of God's Messenger. He suffers great torture at the hands of his owner, Umm Anmar. A blacksmith by trade, Khabbab had seen the Messenger of God being insulted, conspired against, threatened, and ridiculed in an attempt by the aristocratic Quraysh to try to silence him, make him 'not speak,' and yet he spoke.
>
> Khabbab is among those who suffered torture in order to preserve their faith in God. His master, Umm Anmar, taught him to be a blacksmith in order to make use of his talents. Before the call to prophethood, Muhammad used to sit in front of Khabbab's workshop as he had grown very fond of him. Khabbab then converts once the invitation is given to him by Muhammad. When Umm Anmar hears of his conversion, she takes a hot iron and brands him on his head. Khabbab complains of her actions to the Messenger. The Messenger prays for him, saying: O Lord, help Khabbab. Umm Anmar develops a very painful illness from which she dies.

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)

SIGNS 25:35-25:44

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (25:35)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (25:36)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (25:37)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad,

Salih and the People of Thamud (25:38)
Makkah: Book 25: The Companions of the Rass (25:39)
Makkah: *And, certainly, they approached the town*
where the reprehensible rain was rained down on them.
Is it that they see it not?
Nay! They had been not hoping for any rising up.
And when they saw you, (25:40)
they take you to themselves but in mockery:
Is this the one whom God raised up as a Messenger? (25:41)
He was about to cause us to go astray from our gods,
if it were not that we endured patiently in them!
And they will know at the time when they see the punishment,
who is one who goes astray from the way. (25:42)
Had you considered him who took to himself
his own desires as his god?
Would you, then, be over him a trustee? (25:43)
Or assume you that most of them hear or are reasonable?
They are not but as flocks. Nay!
They are ones who go astray from a way. (25:44)

COMMENTARY°

After this quick reference to earlier communities, the section mentions the ridicule faced by the Prophet Muhammad from his people. This follows upon the earlier mention of their arrogance and objection to the method of revelation of the Quran. The section also earlier described what will happen to them on the Day of Resurrection, and also the fate suffered by earlier ungrateful. All this is given by way of solace to the Prophet before mentioning the ridicule they direct at him. They are warned that they will be placed in a position lower than that of animals: *Nay! They had been not hoping for any rising up. And when they saw you, they take you to themselves but in mockery: Is this the one whom God raised up as a Messenger?* (25:41)

Had you considered him who took to himself his own desires as his god? Would you, then, be over him a trustee? (25:43) This sign is carefully phrased to paint a picture showing the psychological condition of a person who pays no heed to accepted standards or values. Instead, they only submit to their own desires and worship none but their own pleasure. They apply no standard, recognize no value, acknowledge no logic. Once their desire moves clearly in a particular direction, they follow like slaves submitting to a powerful master.

God, who is limitless in His glory, addresses His servant and Messenger in a kindly and compassionate manner, referring to this

type of person. He asks him: *Had you considered...* He follows this by drawing a picture of a person who pays no regard to truth, logic or sound argument. He comforts the Prophet so that he does not feel too disappointed at having failed to guide someone who has no propensity to follow guidance. Therefore, the Prophet need not concern himself with such people: *Would you, then, be over him a trustee?* (25:43)

All this is given by way of introduction to the ungratefuls' ridicule of the Prophet and their offensive remarks about him. The section immediately delivers a strong comment on this portraying them in a very contemptible light: *They are but as flocks. Nay, they are ones who go astray from a way.* (25:44)

The signs put them on the same level as animals which are devoid of hearing or logic. This is followed by yet more ridicule which shows such people as even inferior to animals: *Or assume you that most of them hear or are reasonable? They are not but as flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray from a way.* (25:44)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:40-25:44

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prior to his choice as God's Messenger, Muhammad was highly respected among his people, being the descendant of a leading family and tribe. His honesty and morality enhanced his position, as he was nicknamed *al-amīn*, which meant 'the trustworthy'. When the community faced a serious dispute over which tribe should replace the Black Stone, they accepted him as arbiter. When he gathered them to give them the first news of his mission, he asked them whether they would believe him if he were to tell them that armed people were moving behind the hills, preparing to attack them, they said: Yes, because you enjoy our full trust.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Yet when the Prophet told the ungrateful of his mission and recited to them this great book of divine revelations, they ridiculed him, saying: Is this the one whom God has sent as His emissary? This is cruel ridicule. Yet, were they so convinced that he deserved such ridicule, or that the message he preached also deserved it? Not at all! For it was all a scheme devised by the Quraysh elders to detract from his great personality and to counter the irresistible influence of the Quran. They felt that the new message constituted a threat to their social and economic positions. Therefore, they resorted to every conceivable means to counter it.

They convened meetings and conferences to devise plots and strategies, and to agree on what accusations they should level at Muhammad, knowing full well that they were only fabricating blatant lies.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues)

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message shows that our ego, our own desires, can become our god. Had **you**, Muhammad, considered him who took to himself his own desires as his god? Would **you**, Muhammad, then, be over him a trustee? Or assume **you**, Muhammad, that most of them hear or are reasonable? The ungrateful ridicule the Prophet and say that he is causing them to go astray from their gods, one of which is their own ego. We can also worship our own ego and our own desires instead of worshiping God. Our ego is our animal soul (*nafs al-ammarah*) and we have to guard against worshiping it instead of God. We may consider ourselves to be believers without recognizing that in many of our actions we are following our own ego and our own desires. We have an ego that has to be disciplined.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

Lesson 42(5). Critical Thinking Intellectual Quranic Standard

Being Fair and Just (not self-serving or egocentric)

Having a sense fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view. We might ask ourselves:

The Ukaz Fair

On or about August 23, 613 CE (Dhul-Qadah 1, 9 BH) it was time for the annual Ukaz Fair. It lasted twenty-one days, and was held three days journey east of Makkah between Taif and Nakhiah, beginning the first day of the month of Dhul-Qadah, at the commencement of the three sacred months (followed by Dhul Hajjah and the first month of the year, Muharram. These were the months of a "holy truce" when the usually warring tribes laid aside their hatreds and warfare and concentrated on offering sacrifices to their pagan gods and visiting their "holy" sites. Pilgrims came from all over Arabia to attend the Fair.

The shady palm and cool fountain offered a grateful resting place. Goods were bartered, exhibitions of Bedouin chivalry held, and verses recited by poets of the various tribes. The successful

poems produced at this national gathering were treated with distinguished honor.

The Fair served as a locus for the literature of all Arabia: everyone with any pretensions to poetic power came, and if he could not himself gain the applause of the assembled people, at least he could form one of the critical audience on whose verdict rested the fame or the shame of every poet.

The Fair of Ukaz was a literary congress, without formal judges, but with unbounded influence. It was here that the polished heroes of the desert determined points of grammar and prosody; and here a magical language, the language of the Hijaz, was built out of the dialects of Arabia.

When the time of the fair came, a number of the Quraysh go to al-Walid ibn al-Mughayra, who was a man of some standing. He said to them: The time of the fair has come round again. Representatives of the Arabs will come to you. They will have heard about this fellow of yours, so agree upon one opinion without dispute so that none will give the lie to the other.

They replied: You give us your opinion about him.

He said: No, you speak and I will listen.

They said: He is a traitor (*kahin*).

He said: By God, he is not that, for he has not the unintelligent murmuring and rhymed speech of the traitor.

They said: Then he is possessed.

He said: No, he is not that. We have seen possessed ones, and here is no choking, spasmodic movements and whispering.

They said: Then he is a poet.

He said: No, he is no poet, for we know poetry in all its forms and meters.

They said: Then he is a sorcerer.

No, we have seen sorcerers arid their sorcery, and here is no spitting and no knots: *And from the worst of those who ... blow on knots* ... (113:4-113:5)

They asked: Then what are we to say, O Abu Abd al-Shams?

He replied: By God, his speech is sweet, his root is a palm-tree whose branches are fruitful and everything you have said would be known to be false. The nearest thing to the truth is your saying that he is a sorcerer, who has brought a message by which he separates a man from his father, or from his brother, or from his wife, or from his family.

At this point they left him, and began to sit on the paths that men take when they come to the fair. They warned everyone who passed them about Muhammad's doings.

Once at the Fair, the Messenger stands up and says: Oh people! Say: *There is no god but God* and be saved. Abu Lahab runs after him and says: People, this man is my nephew and he is mad.

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)
SIGNS 25:45-25:60

Taif: *Have you not considered how your Lord stretched out the*
shade? And had He willed, He would have made it still.
Moreover, We made the sun an indicator over it. (25:45)
Makkah: *Again, We seized it to Us an easy seizing.* (25:46)
And it is He Who made the nighttime
a garment for you
and sleep a rest and made the daytime for rising. (25:47)
And it is He Who sent the winds,
bearers of good tidings in advance of His Mercy.
And We caused to descend undefiled water from heaven (25:48)
that We give life by it to a lifeless land and with it We satiate.
We created flocks on it and many humans. (25:49)
And, certainly, We diversified among them so that they recollect.
Then, most of humanity refused everything,
but ingratitude. (25:50)
And if We willed, We would have raised up
a warner in every town. (25:51)
So obey not the ones who are ungrateful
and struggle against them thereby with a great struggle. (25:52)
And it is He Who let forth the two seas
—this, agreeable and water of the sweetest kind
and this, salty, bitter.
He made between the two that which was unapproachable,
a banned barrier. (25:53)
And it is He Who created a mortal from water
and made for him kindred by blood and kin by marriage.
And your Lord had been ever Powerful. (25:54)
And they worship other than God
what neither profits them nor hurts them.
And the one who is ungrateful had been ever
a sustainer against his Lord. (25:55)
And We sent you not, but as one who gives good tidings
and as a warner. (25:56)
Say: I ask of you no compensation for this

but that whoever willed should take himself
on a way to his Lord. (25:57)
And put your trust in the Living
Who is Undying and glorify His praise.
And He sufficed to be aware
of the impieties of His servants, (25:58)
He Who created the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between the two in six days,
again, He turned His attention to the Throne.
The Merciful! Ask the aware, then, about Him. (25:59)
And when it was said to them:
Prostrate yourselves to The Merciful,
they said: And what is The Merciful?
Will we prostrate ourselves to what you have commanded us?
And it increased aversion in them. (25:60)

COMMENTARY°

Moving on, the section highlights an image of the night, its stillness and peaceful slumber, contrasted with the day and its bustling movement. *And it is He Who made the nighttime a garment for you and sleep a rest and made the daytime for rising.* (25:47)

The night spreads its cover over animate and inanimate objects so as to make the world appear as though it wears the blackness of the night. Therefore, the night is described as a garment. At night, movement stops and footsteps cease to allow people and most animals, birds and insects to sleep. Sleep is a cessation of sensation, consciousness and feeling, which is why it is described as 'repose'. Then the dawn starts to breathe and movement begins. Life is thus resumed. Therefore, the day is a new 'resurrection' after a short mini-death. The two alternate with every daily cycle of the earth. Again this phenomenon is ignored by human beings, but it is indicative of the great design of the universe made by God, who never sleeps or overlooks anything.

All life on earth depends on rain water, either directly, or through the rivers and other water courses, springs, wells and underground reservoirs it supplies. Only those who directly depend on rain for their living properly appreciate God's grace as He sends rain. They look forward to rain, full of hope, realizing that it brings them life. They look for wind, which they know to drive the clouds. Therefore, they realize that the wind is an early indicator, announcing the forthcoming act of God's grace, provided that they believe in God.

It is important to look at the last two signs very carefully: *And We caused to descend undefiled water from heaven.* (25:48) We note

how the concept of purity and purification points to the life brought about by rain: *that We give life by it to a lifeless land and with it We satiate. We created flocks on it and many humans.* (25:49) Thus, life is given an added aspect of purity, because God wants human life, and indeed all life on earth, to be pure of evil. Thus, He washes the face of the earth with pure water that brings life to an otherwise dead land, and which also serves as a pure drink for all creatures.

THE QURAN PURIFIES HEARTS

We have put it to them in a great variety of forms, styles and presentations, addressing it to their minds, hearts, souls and feelings. We sought to awaken their consciences to its import in numerous ways, employing different means to ensure that they interact with it. All it needs from them is that they should 'take it to heart.' *And, certainly, We diversified among them so that they recollect.* (25:50)

The point is that the Quran aims to remind people of a truth that is well established in their nature, even though they often forget it. What makes them heedless of it is the fact that they submit to their desires: *Then, most of humanity refused everything, but ingratitude.* (25: 50)

This means that the mission entrusted to God's Messenger is a very tough one. He faces the whole of humanity when the great majority of them choose to follow their desires, insisting on ingratitude despite the presence of numerous signs pointing to the truth of faith.

And if We willed, We would have raised up a warner in every town. (25:51) Such a course would have divided the task and made it easier to carry out. God, however, chose one of His servants, the last of His messengers, and required him to address all humanity, so as to give them the same message which remains free from local variations. God also gave His Messenger the Quran, so as to make it the address he drove home to them: *So obey not the ones who are ungrateful and struggle against them thereby with a great struggle.* (25:52)

This Quran has great power and influence. It is irresistible. When God's Messenger addressed the Arabs with it, it shook their hearts and consciences. They tried hard to counter its effects, employing every means at their disposal, but all their efforts were useless.

This betrayed their profound fear that the Quran would touch their own hearts and the hearts of their followers and that they would embrace the Quranic message. They were aware that it took only the reading of a couple of signs, or perhaps a section or two, by Muhammad, and listeners were so affected they accepted his message. To

them, it seemed like the Quran had a magic effect on people.

SEPARATING TYPES OF WATER

The section again portrays images from the world around us. Having spoken about winds heralding rain and its pure water, now it speaks of the great bodies of water, some of which are sweet and some salty, and how they do not mix.

And it is He Who let forth the two seas—this, agreeable and water of the sweetest kind and this, salty, bitter. He made between the two that which was unapproachable, a banned barrier. (25:53)

It is God who created both types and left them to run their courses, meeting at certain points. Nevertheless, their waters do not mix because they have a natural barrier keeping them apart. In most cases, rivers run at a level higher than the sea, which means that at the meeting point, it is the river with its sweet water that runs into the salty sea. It is very rare that a river runs below sea level. Therefore, the sea with its much greater body of water does not overpower the river whose water gives life to plants, animals and humans. The fact that this is the natural order in practically all cases where a river meets the sea means that it is certainly not coincidental. It happens by the will of the Creator who made the universe in such a way as to fulfil His purpose and remain subject to His laws of nature.

Indeed the natural laws God has set in operation ensure that the salty waters of sea and ocean do not overrun dry land or overpower rivers. This remains so even during high tides caused by the moon's gravity as it affects the earth's surface water.

As the section proceeds, it refers to a fluid that is totally different from the water pouring down from the skies, or moving along in seas and rivers. It mentions the sperm that gives rise to human life: *And it is He Who created a mortal from water and made for him kindred by blood and kin by marriage. And your Lord had been ever Powerful.* (25:54)

IN LEAGUE AGAINST GOD

In this atmosphere of careful planning of creation, and in the light of life that is produced by rain water and human sperm, the very thought of worshipping anyone other than God is incompatible with nature, as also singular and absurd. Therefore, the section refers to the ungrateful' worship and puts it in perspective: *And they worship other than God what neither profits them nor hurts them. And the one who is ungrateful had been ever a sustainer against his Lord.* (25:55))

The task of God's Messenger is defined: it is to give happy news

and issue a warning. *And We sent you not, but as one who gives good tidings and as a warner.* (25:56)

Say: I ask of you no compensation for this (25:57) God's Messenger does not entertain any thought of making any worldly gain or profit as a result of people's acceptance of the message. None will have to pay any fee or make any offering as he embraces the Quranic message. All that he needs to do is to say certain words verbally, provided that he believes in them with his heart. God's Messenger receives only one reward for all his troubles in advocating God's faith, and this reward is nothing other than the fact that someone answers the divine call and receives God's guidance: *but that whoever willed should take himself on a way to his Lord.* (25:57) Such are his only wages. When the Prophet sees someone accepting divine guidance and seeking to earn God's pleasure, then his compassionate heart finds comfort, and his noble conscience is set at ease.

And He sufficed to be aware of the impieties of His servants. (25:58) Everyone other than God is dead, because life comes to an end with death. The only one that remains is God, the Living One who does not die. If we rely on someone whose life comes to an end after a short or long time, then we are only putting our weight against a wall that will eventually collapse, or seeking shade that will inevitably fade away. To be truly assured one must rely only on the One who never dies, and place one's trust solely in Him.

And put your trust in the Living Who is Undying and glorify His praise. (25:58) The only one worthy of praise is God who grants all favors and blessings. Therefore the Prophet is instructed to leave alone those ungrateful who heed no warning and care for no happy news. He should give them up to Him since He knows their sins. Nothing is hidden from Him: *And He sufficed to be aware of the impieties of His servants.* (25:58)

Within the same context of God's limitless knowledge and His power to grant reward and inflict punishment, the section mentions the facts that He is the One who has created the heavens and the earth, and established Himself on the Throne:

He Who created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two in six days, again, He turned His attention to the Throne. The Merciful! Ask the aware, then, about Him. (25:59)

Together with God's greatness, control and might comes His all-encompassing mercy, and with it is joined His absolute knowledge: *The Merciful! Ask the aware, then, about Him.* (25:59) Thus, when you put your request to God, you are putting it to the One whose knowledge includes everything anywhere in the universe.

Setting the Universe to Order

Yet those impudent, shameless people behave discourteously when they are called upon to believe in God, the Most Merciful, and worship Him: *And when it was said to them: Prostrate yourselves to The Merciful, they said: And what is The Merciful? Will we prostrate ourselves to what you have commanded us? And it increased aversion in them.* (25:60)

Summary of Signs 25:47-25:60

Who is God?

The Quran always directs people's hearts and minds to reflect on, and interact with, what they see in the universe. They will then recognize the work of God's hand in all that they see, hear and feel. They will have much to reflect upon which will strengthen their bond with God through His work.

We see in this passage how the section paints a scene of shadows extending then gently contracting, before we move to a picture of a quiet night of deep slumber and a bustling day of tireless activity. We then see the winds as heralds of God's mercy, followed by water pouring down from the skies to quicken barren land. We see the salty sea and the sweet river water, and the barrier between them preventing them from mixing. Then we look at a different type of fluid, the semen that gives rise to human life. We contemplate how the heavens and the earth were created in six days, and look at the star constellations in the sky, with the sun as a lamp lightening the world for us, and the moon doing the same at night. We also contemplate the unfailing succession of night and day.

As it paints these images, the section directs our hearts and minds to reflect that they are all of God's creation, reminding us of His power and fine planning. It shows how singular the ungrateful' attitude is when they associate partners with God and worship alongside Him entities that can cause them neither benefit nor harm. The ungrateful are so ignorant that they speak impudently about God and support one another in denying Him. This is very strange, particularly when seen against the multitude of universal signs demonstrating God's creation. It is all a great display that the Creator raises before our eyes for us to contemplate.

How are the signs directed towards the Prophet Muhammad?

The Prophet is told to put his trust in The Living Who is Undying and to glorify His praise.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

When the ungrateful are asked to prostrate themselves to The Merciful, they said: And what is The Merciful? Will we prostrate ourselves to what you, Muhammad, have commanded us? And it increased aversion in them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describes how the Creator created a barrier between two kinds of water: sweet and salty. What does the barrier symbolize between the two kinds of water that are in our body as well? An invisible barrier was created between the salty seas, the water of which evaporates to form clouds that then condense into rain and snow that feeds springs and rivers and then returns to the seas. Some commentators have seen this invisible barrier as symbolic of the separation between our ability to reason and our passionate soul and worldly needs. The word "barrier" (*barzakh*) appears three times in the Quran (23:100; 25:53 and 55:20). It is important for all life that this barrier between the two kinds of water exist. There is an important difference between sweet and salty water.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 42(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)
SIGNS 25:61-25:77

Makkah: *Blessed be He*
Who made constellations in the heaven
and made in it a light-giving lamp
and an illuminating moon. (25:61)[16]
And He it is Who made the nighttime and the daytime
to follow in succession for who wanted to recollect,
or who wanted thankfulness. (25:62)
And the servants of The Merciful

are those who walk on the earth in meekness.
And when the ones who are ignorant addressed them,
they said: Peace! (25:63)
And those who spend the night with their Lord
as ones who prostrate themselves and are upright, (25:64)
and those who say: Our Lord!
Turn You away the punishment of hell from us.
Truly, its punishment will be continuous torment. (25:65)
How evil a habitation and resting place. (25:66)
And those who, when they spent,
neither exceed all bounds,
nor are they tightfisted,
but had been between that, a just stand: (25:67)
Whoever has repented and believed
and whose actions were done as one in accord with morality,
for those God will substitute for their evil deeds benevolence.
Madinah (25:68)
Madinah (25:69)
Madinah (25:70)
Makkah: *And whoever repented*
and did as one in accord with morality,
he, truly, repents to God, turning in repentance. (25:71)
And those who bear not witness to untruth
and if they passed by idle talk, they passed by nobly,(25:72)
and those who, when they were reminded
of the signs of their Lord,
fall not down unwilling to hear and unwilling to see (25:73)
and those who say: Our Lord! Bestow on us from our spouses
and our offspring the comfort of our eyes
and make us leaders of the ones who are God-conscious, (25:74)
those will be given recompense in the highest chambers
because they endured patiently.
They will be in receipt of greetings and peace, (25:75)
ones who will dwell in it forever.
Excellent it is for habitation and as a resting place! (25:76)
Say: My Lord would not concern Himself with you
if it had not been for your supplication,
for, surely, you denied so it will be close at hand. (25:77)

COMMENTARY°

Blessed, then, is the One who created the heavens and the earth, and created everything according to a definite measure. *Blessed is the One who Blessed be He Who made constellations in the heaven*

and made in it a light-giving lamp and an illuminating moon. And He it is Who made the nighttime and the daytime to follow in succession for who wanted to recollect, or who wanted thankfulness. (25:61-25:62)

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF FAITH

And the servants of The Merciful are those who walk on the earth in meekness. And when the ones who are ignorant addressed them, they said: Peace! (25:63)

The true servants' first feature is that they walk gently, with no affectation, pretension, or display of arrogance. Like every movement they make, walking delivers an expression of one's personality and feelings.

In their serious and dignified approach, and in their attention to serious concerns, God's true servants do not bother themselves with other people's absurdities and stupidities. They do not waste their time or energy in futile arguments with such people. They recognize that engaging in an argument with people who argue for argument's sake is fruitless. Therefore: *And when the ones who are ignorant addressed them, they said: Peace!* (25:63) But this is by no means a sign of weakness or lack of ability. It is simply a dignified approach which does not permit them to waste time and energy over what is unbecoming of the honorable.

Such is their conduct in daytime when they are with other people. At night they reflect their God-fearing nature, as they stand in awe of God and fear His punishment, who stay up far into the night in adoration of their Lord, prostrating themselves and standing; who pray: (25:64-25:66)

In their formal prayers, with all its movements, and all their inner feelings, they are fully conscious of their Lord, fearing to incur His displeasure and so His punishment. Thus they appeal to Him: *And those who say: Our Lord! Turn You away the punishment of hell from us. Truly, its punishment will be continuous torment. How evil a habitation and resting place.* (25:65-25:66) They have not seen hell or its suffering, but they believe in it. They also visualize it according to its descriptions in the Quran and in the Prophet's statements. Thus their genuine fear of it is the fruit of true faith.

STEERING AWAY FROM SIN

God's true servants lead a balanced life that is exemplary in its seriousness and moderation: *And those who, when they spent, neither exceed all bounds, nor are they tightfisted.* (25:67) Balance is the distinctive feature that the Quran establishes in the life of the indi-

vidual and the community. Its achievement is what the Quran aims for through educating its followers and through its legal system. Its whole structure is based on balance and moderation.

As the Quran seeks to regulate this aspect of human life, it begins with the individual, making the adoption of a balanced approach in life a feature of faith. Thus, whenever true servants of God, the Most Merciful, put their money to use, they: *but had been between that, a just stand.* (25:67)

ERASING SIN THROUGH REPENTANCE

But the door remains open for anyone who wishes to save himself from such a fate. This requires repentance, firm belief and good action: *Whoever has repented and believed and whose actions were done as one in accord with morality.* (25:70) Those who fulfil these three conditions are promised that whatever sin they did prior to their repentance will be changed into good deeds which will be added to their newly earned good actions: *for those God will substitute for their evil deeds benevolence.* (25:70) This is an aspect of God's bounty that is granted without the person concerned having to do anything to deserve it other than turn away from error and seek refuge with Him: *And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (25:70)

The door of repentance is always open to admit anyone whose conscience is reawakened and wants to return to the fold. No one is ever turned away from it, no matter who he might be or what sins he might have committed in the past.

There is a rule for repentance and a condition for its acceptance, which are clearly spelled out: *And whoever repented and did as one in accord with morality, he, truly, repents to God, turning in repentance.* (25:71) Repentance begins with genuine regret and desisting from bad deeds and is made complete through doing good deeds that prove that it is a serious and genuine repentance. At the same time, good deeds produce a positive sense that favorably compensates for abandoning sin. Sin is an action which, when withdrawn, leaves a vacuum that must be filled with an action in the opposite direction. Otherwise, the feeling of emptiness makes one miss one's old sinful ways. Therefore we see here a remarkable feature of the Quranic method of cultivating goodness within the community of believers. It is based on profound knowledge of human nature. Who can know this better than the Creator?

FURTHER QUALITIES OF TRUE BELIEVERS

Having completed this interposition of the conditions of repen-

tance, the section resumes its outline of the qualities of the true servants of the Most Merciful: *And those who bear not witness to untruth.* (25:72) This may be taken literally which means that they never give false testimony, since such an action leads to usurping people's rights and helps injustice. It may also be taken to mean that they do not attend any place or stay with any group where falsehood is said or done. They steer away from such places or company so as not to be party to anything that happens there. This is a more powerful meaning. They also steer away from all frivolity and idle talk: *and if they passed by idle talk, they passed by nobly.* (25:72) They remove themselves from participation in any such practice. A believer has more serious preoccupations that leave no time for frivolous and idle pursuits. His mind is as to ensure that God's message is delivered to humanity. This is sufficient preoccupation for anyone.

Another of their qualities is that they are quick to remember when a reminder is given to them. Their hearts are open to the understanding of God's signs and revelations: *And those who, when they were reminded of the signs of their Lord, fall not down unwilling to hear and unwilling to see.* (25:73) The picture drawn here is critical of the idolaters who approach their deities and false beliefs like the deaf and blind, deprived of guidance and light.

Finally, these true servants of God are not content with staying up far into the night offering their voluntary worship, prostrating themselves to God, and allowing their other fine qualities to shine. They want something more. What they hope for is that they should have spouses of their type and children who follow in their footsteps, thus bringing them great joy. Not only so, but in this way, those who are classified as God's servants will multiply. They also pray that God will make of them a good example for those who are God-conscious: *And those who say: Our Lord! Bestow on us from our spouses and our offspring the comfort of our eyes and make us leaders of the ones who are God-conscious.* (25:74)

DESTINED FOR THE FINEST ABODE

What reward do God's true servants receive? This outline of their qualities concludes with what they earn: *Those will be given recompense in the highest chambers because they endured patiently. They will be in receipt of greetings and peace, ones who will dwell in it forever. Excellent it is for habitation and as a resting place!* (25:75-25:76)

The Arabic text uses the term *al-ghurfah*, which is translated here as *the highest chambers.* The term may be taken to mean in this context either heaven, or a special place in heaven. Linguistically

speaking it means, 'a chamber or room', which is a more honorable place than the reception room where Arabs normally received their guests. True servants are received in this high position with a warm welcome, on account of their patient endurance of whatever they had to put up with in order to maintain their sound qualities. What is implied here is recognition of the strong will-power needed to restrain desire and resist temptation. This is not easy to do without a good degree of endurance that can only be shown by someone who is deservedly mentioned by God in His book, the Quran.

With the picture of God's true servants fully drawn, showing them as the cream of humanity, the section concludes by stating that humanity are worth very little in God's sight, except for the fact that some of them turn to Him in prayer. As for those who deny Him and His messages, they will be punished. *Say: My Lord would not concern Himself with you if it had not been for your supplication, for, surely, you denied so it will be close at hand.* (25:77)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:61-25:77

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

This final passage of the section portrays the distinctive features of the true servants of God, The Merciful. They appear to be the highest model of humanity that remains after the end of the long battle between true guidance and error, between those who impertinently deny the truth and God's messengers who bring His guidance for humanity. They seem to be the fruit ripening after such a long struggle. They are the ones who bring comfort to the bearer of divine guidance, after they had been met with denial and rejection.

The previous passage recounted the impertinent remark of the ungrateful when they said that they did not know the name of The Merciful, as belonging to God. In this passage we have a full description of 'the true servants of the Most Merciful' who know Him well and deserve to be described as belonging to Him. The section shows their distinctive features as reflected in their behavior and the way they conduct their lives. They provide a living example of the Muslim community which the Quranic message aims to build, and the type of person it moulds through the implementation of its perfect system. These are the ones who deserve God's care.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describes the characteristics of servants of The Merciful. What are the characteristics of the servants of The Merciful? They walk on the earth in meekness. When those who are ignorant address them, they say: Peace! They spend the night with their Lord in prayer and prostration. They are upright. They ask God to turn the punishment of hell away from them. They are neither extravagant nor tightfisted, but somewhere in the middle taking just stands on issues. They repent and believe and act as ones in accord with morality. They refuse to bear witness to lies and turn aside from idle talk. When they hear the signs of their Lord being recited, they fall down willingly listening and willingly seeing. These are the characteristics that the servant of the Merciful develops. The servant of the Merciful used here is a new phrase for the early believers. The consequences of having these characteristics is a place in the highest chambers. That those who are listening to this recitation for the first time will strive to develop these characteristics.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why

APPENDIX 1: LIFE OF THE PROPHET IN YEAR 4 OF THE REVELATION

LESSON 39(1). QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:1-7:10

Wahidi says in regard to (7:32): *Say: They are for those who believed in this present life and, exclusively* (for them), *on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* (7:32): Some of the Bedouins used to circumambulate the Sacred House completely naked to the extent that their women circumambulated the House completely naked except for straps—like the straps placed on the faces of donkeys to protect them from flies—placed around their lower parts, reciting: Today some or all of it will show. And whatever appears of it, I do not make it lawful.[1]

It was the norm according to the religion which they followed (Hums) that, when they went to pilgrimage and returned from Mina, none of them was allowed to go round the House with the clothes which they wore. And so, whoever wanted to go round the House had to undress and put his clothes aside until after circumambulation.[2] This act was supposed to display more piety from the person who did it. Then God revealed about them: *Say: Who forbade the adornment of God which He brought out for His servants. And what is the good of His provision? Say: They are for those who believed in this present life and, exclusively, on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who know.*(7:32). This was revealed about those who go round the Sacred House naked.[3]

During the days of pilgrimage, people of the pre-Quranic period ate very little and refrained from fats as a sign of their glorification of pilgrimage. The Muslims said: O Messenger of God, we have a better right to do that', and as a result, God revealed (and eat) meat and fats (and drink).[4]

LESSON 39(5) QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:48-7:53

Ibn Abbas:[5] *Are these, those about whom you swore an oath that God would never impart mercy? Enter the Garden. There will be neither fear in you nor will you feel remorse.* (7:49): O Walid Ibn al-Mughayrah! O Abu Jahl Ibn Hisham! O Umayyah Ibn Khalaf! O Ubayy Ibn Khalaf al-Jumahi! O Aswad Ibn Abd al-Muttalib! O lead-

ers! (What did your multitude) of wealth and servants (and that in which you took your pride) which made you scorn belief in Muhammad and the Quran (avail you?) *The Companions of the Elevated Places would cry out to men whom they would recognize by their mark. They would say: Your amassing availed you not, nor that you had been growing arrogant.* (7:48)

Then, they looked at the dwellers of Paradise: Salman al-Farsi, Suhayb al-Rumi, Ammar Ibn Yasir and all the other believers who lacked tribal support, and said: *Are these, those about whom you swore an oath that God would never impart mercy? Enter the Garden. There will be neither fear in you nor will you feel remorse.* (7:49)

LESSON 39(7). QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:54-7:58

The directive: *Call to your Lord humbly and inwardly. Truly, He loves not the ones who exceed the limits.* (7:55) is made at the most appropriate point, with human beings in the proper frame of mind. They are directed to call upon their Lord and address Him with humility and submission. They should also call on Him in the secrecy of their hearts, not making loud noises. A secret appeal to God is much more befitting because it affirms the close relationship between us and our Lord. Muslim, the renowned hadith scholar, relates this authentic hadith on the authority of Abu Musa who reports: We were with God's Messenger on one of his travels—(in one version it is stated that this took place when they were on a military expedition)—and people started to glorify God out loud. God's Messenger said to them: O you people, gently and quietly. You are not calling on someone who is deaf or absent. You are calling on the One who hears all and is close at hand. He is indeed with you.

LESSON 39(11). QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:172-7:181

Ibn Abbas, a companion of the Prophet who is renowned for his scholarship, reports: *And mention when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their generative organs—their offspring and called to them to witness of themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea! We bore witness so that you say not on the Day of Resurrection: Truly We had been ones who were heedless of this.* (7:172)

Both al-Bukhari and Muslim relate in their authentic collections, a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah who quotes the Prophet as saying: Every human being is born with upright nature. [One version puts the statement as: every human being is born believing in this faith.] His parents then make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.

A hadith related by Muslim quotes the Prophet as saying: God says I have created My servants following the pure faith. Satans then assaulted them and removed them from their faith, forbidding them what I have made lawful.

Al-Aswad ibn Sari, one of the Prophet's Companions who belonged to the Saad clan reports: I joined God's Messenger in four expeditions. Once, when our people had killed enemy fighters, they also attacked their children. On hearing this, the Prophet was very angry and rebuked them, saying: How is it that some people attack children?

One man said: Messenger of God, are they not the children of ungrateful?

He said: The best among you have been born to the ungrateful. Let it be known that every human being is born following the right faith. He will continue to do so until he is able to express himself. His parents then make of him a Jew or a Christian.[6]

LESSON 39(13). QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:189-7:206

There are various reports suggesting different situations when the order applies to listen attentively and in silence to Quranic recitation (7:204). Some scholars are of the view that it applies in obligatory prayer when the imam reads aloud. An authentic hadith related by Imam Ahmad as well as Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasai and Ibn Majah mentions a report by Abu Hurayrah that one day, on finishing a prayer in which he recited aloud, the Prophet said: Has any of you recited something of the Quran while I was reciting?

A man said: Yes, Messenger of God!

The Prophet said: I was wondering why the Quran was being pulled away from me.

From that day, people stopped reciting the Quran in prayer when the Prophet was reciting aloud.

Another report mentions that Abd Allah ibn Masud, a leading scholar among the Prophet's Companions, was praying when he heard some people in the congregation reciting the Quran with the imam. When he finished, he said: When will you understand? When

will you use your reason? You must do as God has commanded you: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (7:204)

In reply to them, God revealed this sign: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (7:204) Al-Qurtubi mentions this and says that it was revealed in relation to prayer.

Another reason for revealing this sign is mentioned by Ibn Jarir al- Tabari who quotes Abd Allah ibn Masud as saying: Some of us used to greet others in prayer, but then the Quranic sign was revealed which says: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (7:204)

In his commentary on the Quran, al-Qurturbi mentions a report by Muhammad ibn Kab al-Qurazi who says: When God's Messenger used to recite the Quran aloud in prayer, those in the congregation recited with him.

When he said: In the Name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate,'they would say likewise, until he finished reciting the Opening Chapter and another section.

The situation continued like that for some time until the sign was revealed which says: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (7:204) This suggests that the order to listen attentively to the Quran means to stop reciting it aloud with the Prophet when he recited it in prayer.

Al-Qurturbi also mentions a report by Qatadah concerning this sign, which says: A man may come when a prayer is in progress and ask people in the congregation: How many cycles have you completed? How many are left?

Then God revealed this sign: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy* .(7:204)

Mujahid also mentions that they used to speak in prayer, and then God ordered them to listen so that they may be graced with mercy.

Those who consider this sign to apply only to recitation in formal prayer quote a report mentioned by al-Tabari which mentions that a man named Talhah saw Ata ibn Abi Rabiah, a leading scholar, talking to Ubayd ibn Umayr when a man was reciting the Quran. Talhah said to them: Should you not be listening to the recitation so that you receive what has been promised (i.e. referring to God's mercy which is promised to those who listen attentively to the Quran)?

They looked at me, and continued their conversation.

I repeated what I said, and they looked at me and said: That relates to formal prayer.

In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir also mentions that Sufyan al-Thawri, a leading scholar of the early period of the Quranic message, also mentions that this sign applies to formal prayer only. Several scholars are of the view that if a person is reciting the Quran in any situation other than formal prayer, then people may speak if they wish.

Other scholars, such as Said ibn Jubayr, Amr ibn Dinar, Yazid ibn Aslam and Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak suggest that the Quranic sign applies to recitation in formal prayer and in sermons that are given on Fridays and on weekdays. Al-Qurtubi says that such a suggestion is not practically sound, because the Quran constitutes only a small portion of such sermons, when people are required to listen to all the sermon. Besides, this sign is a Makkan revelation, when there was no sermon or Friday prayer held in Makkah.

Al-Qurturbi mentions in his commentary on the Quran a report by al-Naqqash who says: All commentators on the Quran are unanimous that listening attentively to the Quran in obligatory and voluntary prayer is a binding duty. Al-Nuhhas says: From the linguistic point of view, this attentive listening must apply in all situations, unless we have cause to believe that it is restricted.

LESSON 42(4). QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)

SIGNS 25:61-25:77

A hadith related by al-Tabarani mentions that Abu Farwah asked the Prophet: If a person has committed all kinds of sin, leaving out nothing, will his repentance be accepted? The Prophet asked him: Are you a Muslim? When he answered in the affirmative, the Prophet said: Then do what is good and abandon what is evil, and God will change all your past misdeeds into good ones. The man asked: And even my worst, treacherous ones? The Prophet said: Yes. The man glorified God and continued to do so as he went away.

CONVERSIONS RECORDED CONTINUING DURING YEAR 4

Some of the early converts when Prophet Muhammad was in the House of Arqam are:

Adiyy or Makhzum Clan

Four sons of Abu al-Bukhayr, a confederate of the family of Khattab, a descendent from Kinana through an off-shoot more ancient than that of the Quraysh, are the first to convert in the house of Arqam. This family is included among the Dudan branch.[7]

Amir ibn Abi Bukayr

Aqil ibn Abi Bukayr: His name had been Ghafil, meaning negligent. When he gave his allegiance to Muhammad, Muhammad changed his name to Aqil, meaning "intelligent."

Iyas ibn Abi Bukayr

Khalid ibn Abi Bukayr

We may then conclude that, although Umar, al-Khattab's son, was not yet converted, the new doctrine was already spreading rapidly among his connections.

Walid ibn al-Walid: Al-Zubayr ibn Ukasha ibn Abd Allah ibn Abu Ahmad told me that he was told that some men of Makhzum clan had gone to Hisham ibn al-Walid when his brother al-Walid ibn al-Walid had become a follower of Muhammad. They had agreed to seize some young men who had become Muslims, among whom were Salma ibn Hisham and Ayyash ibn Abu Rabia. They were afraid of his violent temper and so they said: We wish to admonish these men because of this religion which they have newly introduced; thus we shall be safe in the case of others.

All right, he said, admonish him, but beware that you do not kill Walid. Be careful of his life, for I swear by God that if you kill him, I will kill the noblest of you to the last man.

They said: God damn the man. After what he has said who will want to bring trouble on himself, for, by God, if this man were killed while in our hands the best of us would be killed to a man.

So they left him and withdrew, and that was how God protected him from them.

Salma ibn Hisham

Ayyash ibn Abu Rabia

Abd al-Dar Clan

Musab ibn Umayr ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf: It may be through the connection of his brothers, Abu al-Rum ibn Umary, Firas ibn al-Nadr ibn al-Harith and Jahm ibn Qays ibn Abd ibn Surahbil that Musab ibn Umary visits the house of Arqam, listens to the words of Muhammad and embraces his doctrine. However, he is afraid to publicly confess his change of faith because his tribe and his mother are very fond of him and oppose to Muhammad. His conversion is noticed and his family imprisons him at home and keeps him under pressure. He escapes and goes to Abyssinia with the first Muslim emigrants. The Prophet later sends him to Madinah after the first oath of Aqaba to instruct the Helpers in the learning the Quran.[8]

Abu Fukayha (Yasar): Shortly after the House of Arqam is made into a meeting place of Muslims, Abu Fukayha converts. Abu Fukayha is better known as Yasar [according to Wahidi]. He is frequently mentoned as one of the converts who suffered most severely in the early persecutions.[9]

Fukayha bint Yasar: Abu Fukayha's daughter accepts the Quranic message. She is married to Hattab, a convert, who migrated to Abyssinia. (Hatib and Mumir are mentioned by Ibn Hisham as sons of Harith of the Jumah Clan. Waqidi places his genealogy to Mumir[10] but makes Hatib and Hattab sons of the Amr clan of the Amir ibn Luaay.[11]

Non-Quraysh:

Suhayb ibn Sinan is the first Greek convert. His family had said that he had led from Constantinople to Makkah and voluntarily placed himself under the guardianship of Abd Allah. Sinan's home had been at Mosul or some neighboring village in Mesopotamia. His father, or his uncle, had been the Persian governor of Ubolla. A Grecian band having made a raid into Mesopotamia, carry him off while yet a boy to Syria, perhaps to Constantinople. Bought afterwards by a party of Bedouin, he is sold at Makkah to the chief, Ibn Judan, who gives him freedom and protection. A fair skin and ruddy complexion mark his northern birth, and broken Arabic betrays a foreign education. He acquires considerable wealth at Makkah, but having converted, and being left by the death of his former master without a patron, he suffers much at the hands of the unbelieving Quraysh.[12]

Jabr: Jabr is a Christian servant of a family from Hadhramaut.[13]

Ammar: Ammar accepts the Quranic message in the House of Arqam at the same time as Suhayb. Ammar's father is Yasir, a stranger from Yemen. His mother is Sumayah and his brother Abd Allah are also believers. Yasir belonged to a tribe in Yemen of the Madhij or Qahlan stock. He with two brothers visit Makkah to seek out their maternal relatives. Instead of returning to Yemen he remains behind with his patron, Abu Hudayifa who gives him in marriage to his slave girl Sumayah. She bears Ammar.[14]

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Aqqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Aqqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT *BOOK YEAR 4*

1. Ibn Hamid from Salama from Ibn Ishaq from Abd Allah ibn al-Ghaffar ibn al-Qasim from al-Minhal ibn Amr from Abd Allah ibn al-Harith ibn Nawfal ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib from Abd Allah ibn Abbas from Ali ibn Abu Talib.

2. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(1)

3. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim*, Beirut, Vol. 2, pp. 193-194)

4. Ali Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima*, translated by Laleh Bakhtiar. Tehran, Iran: Hamdami Foundation, 1980, p. 82, incorporated in *Shariati on Shariati*.

5. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(3)

6. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(6)

7. Osman Bakar, "Reflections on Islamic Environmentalism."

8. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(7)

9. *Kitab al-Waqidi*.

10. See Introduction.

11. Paul, R. (1993). *Critical Thinking: What Every Student Needs to Survive in a Rapidly Changing World*, Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.)

12. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(11)

13. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(13).

14. I was told this by Yahya ibn Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, on the authority of his father, from Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn al-As, Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*.

15. Related by Bukhari and Muslim.

16. See Appendix 1: 42(6)

17. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 224.

18. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 227.

NOTES TO APPENDIX 1

1. Ibn Abbas said: Said ibn Muhammad al- Adi informed us> Abu Amr ibn Hamdan> al-Hasan ibn Sufyan> al-Hasan ibn Hammad al-Warraq> Abu Yahya al-Himmani> ... > Sa'id ibn Jubayr.

2. Ibid.

3. Abu Salamah ibn Abd al-Rahman said: Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Farisi informed us> Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Hamdun> Ahmad ibn al-Hasan al-Hafiz> Muhammad ibn Yahya> Ismail ibn Uways> his brother> Sulayman ibn Bilal> Muhammad ibn Abi Atiq> Ibn Shihab.

4. Said al-Kalbi

5. Ibn Abbas, *Commentary on the Quran*.

6. See *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*.

7 *Kitab al-Waqidi* pp 196, 256 ½.

8. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, IV, pp 368-370.

9. *Kitab al-Wahidi*, p 227.

10. *Kitab al-Wahidi*, p 259.

11. *Kitab al-Wahidi*, p 260.

12. Chapter 16:105; see also 15:5 and 44:13, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 222. Perhaps 16:103 and 44:4 and 25:4 were revealed about him.

13. *Kitab al-Wahidi*, p 227.

14. Freed by Abu Judan and Abd Allah. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 224.

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Laleh Bakhtiar

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 5

of the Revelation

(9 BH/613-614 CE)

Revised Edition

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 5* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic chapter. *Book Year 5* is from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 9 BH, ca. October 22, 613 CE-October 10, 614 CE. It is in this year that the first migration to Abyssinia took place as some of the Prophet's followers who had no tribal protection began to undergo torture and humiliation and Hamza Abd al-Muttalib converted and gave his allegiance to Prophet Muhammad.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim,

Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning

of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the

Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief

in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)

6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
   - DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING

ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most im-

portant concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

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Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and*

within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior

to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This

is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran

goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the

secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones*

who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah.*

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad.* Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad.* Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh.*

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad.* Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed

about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 5*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think, which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 5 begins with Lesson 43 and Quranic Chapter 35 which is the 43rd Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 19, 20, 56, 26 and, finally Quranic Chapter 27 the 48th Chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary, an analysis of the signs that answer three questions: Who is God?, How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad? and How are the signs directed towards the Community? Following these questions, there is a section called Example of How Critical Thinking works. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 43(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that *there is no compulsion in religion* (din).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: *right judgment*

that is clear from error. It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using *right judgment* about what it is that we believe.

In order for us to be sure that our beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, we need to be rational. We do this by critiquing our own irrationality which includes our own fears and desires. We are rational when we cultivate our desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into our behavior and thoughts.

WHAT DOES "THINKING INDEPENDENTLY" MEAN?

An education in Quranic Studies respects our autonomy. We should be encouraged to discover information and use our knowledge, skills and insights to think for ourselves. Merely giving us 'facts' or telling us 'the right way' to answer a question is a way of compelling us to believe. Accepting beliefs through compulsion does not lead to being able to discern *right judgment*. We believe because we have been told what to believe. We have not been taught how to think to then believe. We learn that developing "discernment," deciding something for ourselves, leads to *right judgment becoming clear from error.*

In other words, the Quran teaches how to think to then believe, not what to believe without knowing how to think. The Quranic process of teaching how to think—by thinking independently without being compelled to think—leads to right judgment in belief. Being compelled to believe through social pressure or due to a teaching method that solely relies on memorization results in a thought-less belief, an un-discerning belief.

QURANIC CHAPTER 35: THE ORIGINATOR (AL-FATIR)
SIGNS 35:1-35:7

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God,*
One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth,
the One Who Makes the angels messengers imbued with wings
by twos and in threes and fours.
He increases in creation what He wills.

Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (35:1)
Whatever God may open of mercy to humanity,
there is not one who holds it back.
And what He holds back,
there is not one who sends it after that.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (35:2)
O humanity! Remember the divine blessing of God on you!
Is there anyone who is a creator other than God
Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth?
There is no god but He.
Then, how you are misled! (35:3)
And if they deny ***you****, surely,*
Messengers before ***you*** *were denied.*
And to God all affairs are returned. (35:4)
O humanity! Truly, the promise of God is true.
So let not this present life delude you.
And let not the deluder delude you about God. (35:5)
Truly, Satan is an enemy to you
so take him to yourselves as an enemy.
He calls only his party that they be
among the Companions of the Blaze. (35:6)
Those who were ungrateful, for them will be a severe punishment.
And those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them there is forgiveness
and a great compensation. (35:7)

COMMENTARY°

Signs 35:1-35:3 highlight three major truths of the Quranic faith: The oneness of God, the Creator of all; the grace that He alone bestows; and that He is the only One who provides sustenance for all His creation. Sign 35:4, the Quran addresses the Prophet, comforting him because his people's rejection of his message and their false accusations of his lying caused him much pain. It stresses that all matters are in God's hand.

It also addresses us all, confirming that God's promise is a true promise and warning us against Satan's schemes which aim to divert us from recognizing the major truths already outlined. What Satan, our avowed enemy, wants is to lead us to hell and its torment. It shows us the types of requital that await the believers and unbelievers in the life to come. Finally it enjoins the Prophet not to worry about what might happen to them. Both belief and rejection are in God's hand, and He knows all that people do.

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

This Makkan section possesses a special character both in its subject and style. It perhaps best compares with chapter 13, Thunder, in the way in which it addresses the human heart, using, from start to finish, a fascinating rhythm employing various beats. It moves us into contemplation of the great universe and the numerous signs to be found in every nook and cranny. The human being thus remembers God's blessings and appreciates the grace and favor He bestows on all His creatures. He also visualizes the end suffered by earlier communities and their fate on the Day of Judgment. He thus feels humility as he looks at the countless marvels that constitute God's work. He also recognizes that there is only one truth and one law running through all existence, and that this is controlled by God's hand. It imparts all this in a style and rhythm that leaves a profound and powerful effect on our minds.

The great universe, with its limitless expanse, has been brought into existence by God, according to His design.

THE ORIGINATOR

The section begins by offering all praise to God, as its whole purpose is to make our hearts turn to Him, contemplate His signs, appreciate His mercy, and look at the wonders of His creation. We are made to fully appreciate these wonders so that our hearts overflow with His praise and glorification: *The Praise belongs to God.*

Next comes God's attribute indicating creation and His bringing it into being: *One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth.* It is He who has originated all these great bodies, some of which we see around us. We know only a little about the smallest and nearest to us of all these bodies, i.e. our mother earth. Yet they are all subject to one law of nature that keeps them in harmony, despite the huge distances separating them, which we can only imagine with great difficulty. Despite their great sizes and endless spaces separating their orbits, there exists certain relations between them which, if disturbed even by just a little, could lead to a major catastrophe.

The Praise belongs to God, One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the One Who Makes the angels messengers imbued with wings by twos and in threes and fours. (35:1) This section dwells long on God's messengers, revelation and the truth it contains. The angels are God's messengers to His chosen servants on earth. The message they bring is the greatest thing in life. Therefore, God follows the reference to His creation of the heavens and the earth by mentioning the role of the angels whereby it is they who make contact between heaven and earth, fulfilling the greatest task of all

as they deliver His message. It is a message from the Originator of the heavens and the earth to His prophets whom He sends as guides to humanity.

For the first time in the Quran we have a physical description of the angels. Here we have a reference to their physical appearance. They are 'endowed with wings, two, or three, or four.' This description does not, however, help us imagine how they look, because we do not know anything about their physique or about the form their wings take. We can do no more than take this description as it is, without adding anything from our imagination, for anything we may imagine could be wrong. We do not have any definite description of how the angels look from a reliable source.

Wings are specified as being in twos, threes and fours, but we know only a two-winged form in all birds. Therefore, the opening sign states that God. *He increases in creation what He wills*, thus making it clear that God's will is free, unlimited to any one form of creation. We know and see countless forms of creation, but the ones we do not know about are far more numerous. *Truly, God is Powerful over everything*. This comment is broader and more comprehensive than the statement before it. Its import applies to all forms of creation, origination, transformation and alteration.

UNRESTRICTED GRACE

Whatever God may open of mercy to humanity, there is not one who holds it back. And what He holds back, there is not one who sends it after that. And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (35:2)

What we have in this second sign of this section is an aspect of God's power mentioned at the end of the first sign. When this aspect is instilled in a person's heart and mind, he undergoes a complete transformation in his concepts, feelings, values, standards and life generally. It invalidates any thought of any other power having any control over the heavens and earth, and puts him in touch with God's own power. It makes him abandon any thought of receiving grace from anyone else and links all to God's grace. It closes before him every door and way in the universe yet opens for him the door and the way leading to God.

Whatever God may open of mercy to humanity, there is not one who holds it back. (35:2) All that people need to be assured of God's mercy is to request it from Him directly, without intermediaries: *And what He holds back, there is not one who sends it after that.* (35:2)

It was with signs and images like this that the Quran produced that unique community of believers in the early days of the Quranic message. It was a community molded under God's own care, and

through the Quran, so as to function as a means of God's will and establish on earth the faith, values and systems He wanted to establish. In that first community we have a unique example of human life that seems to us today to belong to the realm of legends and dreams. That community did not deal with the Quran as words, sentences and signs with superb meanings, but dealt with the truth those signs represented. Furthermore, they practised it in real life. Yet, still today, the Quran is able to produce, by means of its signs, individuals and communities that can achieve, by God's leave, whatever God wills them to achieve. All of us can read the Quran seriously, implement it fully and live its meanings as though they are a tangible reality.

WHO ELSE?

The third sign in this short passage confirms the import of the first two, reminding people of God's blessings, emphasizing that God is the only One who creates and provides sustenance for His creation, and wondering at how people lose sight of this truth when it is so clear and obvious: *O humanity! Remember the divine blessing of God on you! Is there anyone who is a creator other than God Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? There is no god but He. Then, how you are misled.* (35:3)

Nothing is needed more than the mention of God's blessings for people to see, feel and recognize them. Nevertheless, they do forget them. The earth around them and the skies above them give them abundant blessings and unlimited sustenance, in every step and at every moment. It is God the Creator who gives all this. They are asked here whether there is a different creator who provides them with all the good things in their hands. Obviously, they cannot say this. Indeed, they did not even claim this during their worst period of idolatry, associating all sorts of partners with God. Since there is none other than God to create and provide, why do they not remember and express gratitude? Why do they not address their gratitude to Him alone and express their thanks by praises and prayers? Indeed, *there is no god but He.* How is it that they turn away from this indisputable truth? *Then, how you are misled.* (35:3) It is most singular that anyone should turn away from this clear truth, evidenced by the constant sustenance they are provided with from heaven and earth. Even more singular is for a person to turn away from it all while admitting that all sustenance comes from God alone.

Just these three signs constitute the first section of the section. In each we have an image that gives us rebirth. All that is needed is for us to firmly establish God's truth in our heart and conscience.

THE TRUE PROMISE

The first address is aimed at the Prophet: *And if they deny you, surely, Messengers before you were denied. And to God all affairs are returned.* (35:4) With all these truths easily and clearly recognizable, you need not worry that they accuse you of lying. The same thing happened to earlier messengers. All matters eventually return to God who determines every end the way He pleases.

Then the address is made general, to all people: (35:5-35:6) God's promise is true: There is no doubt that it will come. It is a reality that will not fail. It is the truth. Nothing can cause it to disappear, lose its way or change. Nevertheless this present life can delude people, as can Satan. *So let not this present life delude you And let not the deluder delude you about God.* (35:5) Satan has declared his hostility to you and that he will never be anything but an enemy to you. Therefore: *Satan is an enemy to you so take him to yourselves as an enemy.* (35:6) Do not befriend him, listen to his advice, follow in his footsteps, for no rational person would follow in his enemy's footsteps. Moreover, you should realize that he does not call you to anything good, nor does he want you to be safe: *He calls only his party that they be among the Companions of the Blaze.* (35:6) Can anyone with reason and clear thinking answer a call that would put him in the fire?

Such single-mindedness demanded from believers is followed by an outline of the fate of those who responded to Satan's call. To reinforce the contrast, the situation of the believers who reject him and drive him away is reiterated: *Those who were ungrateful, for them will be a severe punishment. And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them there is forgiveness and a great compensation.* (35:7)

Thinking independently of his tribe, support comes for the Muslims from the Messenger's uncle and foster brother, Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib. He is known as a valiant warrior. He gives his allegiance to the Messenger. This conversion gives added strength to the first followers of Muhammad.

One day as Hamza is returning from hunting. He hears that Abu Jahl of the Makhzum tribe has again insulted the Messenger and caused him great anguish. His zeal aroused, he senses silence is unmanly at a time like this. He goes directly to the Kabah. He strikes Abu Jahl on the head so hard with his belt before the eyes of the Makhzum Clan that blood flows. Abu Jahl senses such fear that not only does he not show any reaction, he even apologizes and says: I should not have said those things about Muhammad.

Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib (c.566–625 CE) is a companion and

paternal uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. Hamza's father is Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn Abd al-Manaf ibn Qusayy from the Quraysh tribe in Makkah. His mother is Halah bint Uhayb from the Zuhrah Clan of the Quraysh. His parents had met when Abd al-Muttalib had gone with his son Abd Allah to the house of Wahb ibn Abd al-Manaf to seek the hand of Wahb's niece, Amina, for his son.

While they are there, Abd al-Muttalib notices Wahb's daughter, Halah bint Uhayb, and he ask for her hand as well. Wahb agrees, and Muhammad's father Abd Allah and his grandfather Abdal-Muttalib are both married on the same day in a double marriage ceremony. Hence Hamza is the younger brother of Muhammad's father. Hamza is Muhammad's foster-brother: they had both been suckled by the wet-nurse Thuwaybah.

Upon returning to Makkah once after a hunting trip in the desert, Hamza hears that Abu Jahl had "attacked the Prophet and abused and insulted him," "speaking spitefully of his religion and trying to bring him into disrepute." Muhammad had not replied to him.

Filled with rage, Hamza goes out at a run intending to punish Abu Jahl when he meets him. He enters the Kabah, where Abu Jahl is sitting with the elders, stands over him and strikes him a violent blow with his bow. He says: Will you insult him, when I am of his religion and say what he says? Hit me back if you can! He strikes Abu Jahl's head with a blow that cut open his head.

Some of Abu Jahl's relatives approach to help him, but he tells them: Leave Abu Umara [Hamza] alone, for, by God, I insulted his nephew deeply.

After that incident, Hamza enters the House of Al-Arqam and accepts the faith. Hamza's faith is complete. He follows the Messenger's commands. When he becomes a Muslim, the Quraysh recognize that the Messenger had become strong, and had found a protector in Hamza, so they abandoned some of their ways of harassing him. Instead, they tried to strike bargains with him; but he does not accept their offers.

Abd ibn Qusayy Clan

Tulayb ibn Umayr ibn Wahb: He is the son of Muhammad's paternal aunt, Arwah bint Abd al-Muttalib.[1] Tulayb accepts Islam in the house of Arqam. He tells his mother that he now believes in the One God and follows Muhammad. She said that he did the right thing. She adds: And by the Lord, if I had the strength to do that which men do, I would also defend and protect him.

Tulayb said: But, my mother, what prevents you from believing and following him. Your brother Hamza has believed.

She said: I will wait to see what my sisters do. I will do the same as they.

He said: I beg you, mother, by the Lord! Will you not go to him and bear witness to his faith?

She does so and helps Muhammad's cause from then on.[2]

These are among the first Muslims who gather around the Messenger at this most difficult time. They do not hesitate to bear torture or exile or to give up their life, property, family, well-being, and worldly desires. Those who understand know that if the Quranic message is to serve the consciousness and the spiritual perfection of human civilization and culture, it will be because of people who give of things that they themselves need (*ithar*). They know that not only will later Muslims bless them, but human civilization and morality, in general, will move closer to the goal of completing and perfecting the Will of God as it moves through human nature. They know that the lives and deeds of these early Muslims will not only reflect the purity of the faith's early beginnings, but also help in presenting the real visage of the Messenger to humanity. These are some of them who bear witness to the Messenger and his message.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:1-35:7

WHO IS GOD?

Praise belongs to God who originated the heavens and the earth. He created the angel messengers and increases in creation what He wills.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad that Messengers before him were also denied.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic message tells the community that the promise of God is true. They should not let Satan, the deluder, delude them. He calls them to the blaze. Those who are ungrateful will have a severe punishment while there is forgiveness and a great compensation for those who believe and act in accord with morality.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Questions of accuracy force you to evaluate and test for truth and correctness.

How does right judgment become clear from error?

How is this an example of accuracy?

How could we verify or test it?

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message comforts the Prophet because of some of the Quraysh denial and rejection of his message. Were Messengers before denied? Messengers before Muhammad were denied. All things are in God's hand and, therefore, it is not Muhammad's fault that some of the Quraysh continue to deny the message. Those who continue to deny the message are mislead. There is no god but He. There is only one God who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. Creation has only one Creator. The Quranic message.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 43(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists (Salafists) as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists (Salafists) today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless those who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give people prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This

prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

We can learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that we may have. We should learn to reflect on our reasoning ability as well as on our behavior. This we do by clarifying our beliefs, critiquing them and when we realize that they may be false, we stop believing or behaving as we had been doing. We should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that our conclusions are consistent with the evidence we have before us. We need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by extremists, for instance, that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community,

they find that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help us move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps us learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

A teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
I have a right to have everything I want.
Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

Point out the contradictions of ego-centric attitudes:

When I use something of yours without permission, it is borrowing.
When you use something of mine, it is stealing.
Taking something without asking is okay. Taking something without asking is wrong.

Persons like Pharaoh or Korah illustrate ego-centricity.

The most real and immediate form of socio-centricity you experience is in the mini-society of your peers. Their attitudes present a microcosm of the patterns which exist on a larger scale in societies. Most peer groups share some attitudes which are socio-centric. Furthermore, they divide themselves into 'subcultures' or cliques', each of which is narrower than the 'culture'. Honest and realistic exploration of these phenomena allow you to clarify and evaluate the ways in which 'group think' limits you.

The Quranic text often attempts to discourage socio-centricity by encouraging tolerance—asking you to agree that people whose ways are different are not necessarily wrong. Yet, if your classroom discussion remains general and specific advantages of different ways are not introduced, you are left with a vague sense that you should be tolerant, rather than a clear Quranic sense that others have ways worth knowing about and learning from. Encourage yourself to recognize socio-centric bias, reconstruct and consider other views of current and historical issues, and discuss how to avoid thinking socio-centrically.

Assume not those who are misers that what God has given them of His grace is better for them. Nay! It is worse for them. To be hung around their necks will be what they were misers with on the Day of Resurrection. To God is the heritage of the heavens and the earth. God is Aware of what you do. (3:180)

In the month of Rajab, the 5th year of the revelation (on or about April 17,614-May 16, 614 CE), the Messenger and some of the people of the Hashim tribe are under the protection of Abu Talib and somewhat immune to the enemy, but life is very difficult for them as they are faced with the socio-centricity of the idol worshipping Quraysh. Because of this, the Messenger feels it advisable for them and others who are suffering persecution to migrate to Abyssinia.

When the Messenger sees the affliction of his companions and that though he escapes it because of his standing with God and his uncle Abu Talib, he cannot protect them, he says to them: If you were to go to Abyssinia (it would be better for you), for the king (Negris) will not tolerate injustice and it is a friendly country, until such time as God shall relieve you from your distress. Thereupon his companions go to Abyssinia, being afraid of apostasy and fleeing to God with their religion. This is the first migration. It had been a land with which the Quraysh used to do trade because they found there an abundance of food, protection and good trade.[3]

[Ten] men, some mounted and some on foot, and four of them accompanied with their wives, set out for the port of Shueiba. They

found two vessels about to sail. They embarked in haste and were taken to Abyssinia for half a dinar each. The Quraysh opponents pursued them, but they had already left the port.

Thus, a group of the Muslims from various tribes who migrate to Abyssinia under the leadership of Uthman ibn Mazun without the idolaters knowing anything about it. They flee at night in secret. They leave Makkah for Jeddah to go by ship to Abyssinia.

It is a difficult journey, in particular, for women and children. They are able to bear it because of their deep faith. When the idolaters learn of what had happened, a group go to Jeddah to prevent them from going, but they arrive too late.

The Muslims remain in Abyssinia during the months of Shaban and Ramadan. When word reaches them that the Quraysh are no longer torturing the people, they return to Makkah in the month of Shawwal (on or about July 15, 614-August 12, 614 CE). However, upon returning, they find that the reports that had been given to them had not been correct and some of them return to Abyssinia such as Abd Allah ibn Masud who had no protector in Makkah. He immediately returned to Abyssinia in the month of Shawwal in the 5th year of the revelation.[5]

Quranic Chapter 35: The Originator (al-Fatir)
Signs 35:8-35:14

Makkah: *Then, who is there*
that was made to appear pleasing to him
the direness of his actions
so that, then, he saw it as fairer?
Truly, God causes to go astray whomever He wills
and guides whomever He wills.
So let not your soul be wasted in regret for them.
Truly, God is Knowing of what they craft! (35:8)
And it is God Who sent the winds so that they raise clouds
and We drove them to a dead land
and We gave life by them to the earth after its death.
Thus, will be the rising! (35:9)
Whoever had been wanting great glory, great glory
belongs to God altogether.
To Him Words of what is good rise.
He exalts the actions of one in accord with morality.
But those who plan evil deeds,
for them will be a severe punishment.
And the planning of those, it will come to nothing. (35:10)

And God created you from earth dust:
Again, from seminal fluid. Again, He made you pairs.
And no female carries nor brings forth her burden
but with His Knowledge.
No one who is given a long life is given a long life,
nor is anything reduced from his lifetime but it is in a Book.
Truly, that is easy for God. (35:11)
The two bodies of water are not on the same level.
This is agreeable, water of the sweetest kind,
that which is delicious to drink,
and the other is salty, bitter.
But from each you eat succulent flesh
and pull out glitter that you wear.
And ***you*** *will see the boats,*
that which plows through the waves on it,
that you be looking for His grace
and so that perhaps you will give thanks. (35:12)
He causes the nighttime to be interposed in the daytime
and He causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime
and He caused the sun to be subservient and the moon.
Each runs its course for a term, that is determined.
That is God, your Lord. For Him is the dominion!
And those whom you call to other than Him possess
not even the white spot of a date stone. (35:13)
If you call to them, they would not hear your supplication.
Even if they heard, they would not respond to you.
And on the Day of Resurrection they will disbelieve
in your association with them.
And none tells ***you*** *like One Who is Aware.* (35:14)

COMMENTARY°

THE KEY TO EVIL

The signs give an explanation of what makes people go astray, the nature of Satan's work, the sign being the presence of ego and socio-centricity, the door through which all evil flows. It shows the route that takes people astray and why, when a person goes far along it, he cannot turn back.

This is the key to all evil: Satan makes evil deeds seem fair to people, and they will then admire themselves for what they do. Such a person will not review his work to identify what is right or where he has gone wrong, because he feels he cannot go wrong. He is so preoccupied with self-admiration that he does not give a thought to self-criticism. Needless to say, he likes accountability to others much

less. He does not permit anyone to question him about anything he does, because he feels it is good and, therefore, above criticism. This is the worst curse Satan invokes on a person, and can be likened to a yoke he puts around his neck taking him far into error and its inevitable results.

A person who follows God's guidance is one who is careful, wary and alert. He knows that feelings change, that weakness may creep into one's heart, and that a short fall may occur. He is, therefore, always looking at his own work, wary of yielding to Satan's temptation and praying for God's help. This is indeed the point of difference between right and wrong, success and failure. It is a fine psychological point which the Quran describes in a few succinct words: *Then, who is there that was made to appear pleasing to him the direness of his actions so that, then, he saw it as fairer.* (35:8)

The Quranic sign adds a statement that can be taken as implying a reply: *Truly, God causes to go astray whomever He wills and guides whomever He wills.* (35:8) It is as if we are told that such a person is doomed to be in error as a result of Satan making his evil deeds seem fair to him. It is in the nature of error and guidance that the former makes an evil action seem fair and that the latter keeps a person on the alert ensuring good work.

Therefore: *Let not your soul be wasted in regret for them. Truly, God is Knowing of what they craft.* (35:8) This question of going astray or following guidance does not belong to any human being, not even God's Messenger. It belongs to God alone. It is He who changes hearts as He pleases. As He states this fact, God comforts His Messenger so that his tender heart does not sorrow too much for the ungrateful. The Prophet always grieved when he saw his people's persistence in going astray, knowing where that would lead them. Therefore, God tells him not to let his desire to make them follow guidance and recognize the truth overburden him with sorrow. God wanted him to know that this is none of his concern.

The same desire is felt by advocates of the Quranic message. The more sincere they are in their advocacy, and the more they appreciate the goodness and beauty of their way, the keener they are that other people should see the truth for what it is and follow it. These advocates, however, would be better advised to understand what God says here to His Messenger and to act on the same. They should do their best to present their message, but they must not grieve for those who remain blind to it.

Truly, God is Knowing of what they craft. (35:8) He sets them on the road to His guidance or lets them go astray according to what He knows of their work. He knows the truth about all their deeds and

what they involve even before they do them. He determines their lot in accordance with His absolute knowledge, but he does not hold people to account until they have actually done their deeds.

This third section takes us on several rounds in the great universe where the Quran depicts a variety of phenomena and imagery which all confirm faith and provide irrefutable proof in support of it. This follows from the earlier discussion about guidance and going astray, and comforting the Prophet so he would not grieve over the constant rejection of the ungrateful. Whoever wants to look for the truth, its evidence is available with glorious clarity everywhere in the universe. Anyone who chooses to go astray does so against such irrefutable evidence.

THE SOURCE OF ALL POWER

And it is God Who sent the winds so that they raise clouds and We drove them to a dead land and We gave life by them to the earth after its death. (35:9)

This phenomenon is frequently mentioned within the context of evidence to the truth derived from the universe. It shows the wind raising clouds. In fact hot winds make sea water evaporate, then cold winds in the atmosphere condense the vapor making clouds which are then driven in different directions by winds in the upper strata of the atmosphere. Then they arrive at the destination God has determined for them, which may be a dead land which He wants to quicken by means of the rain carried by these clouds. Indeed, water is the source of all life on this planet.*We drove them to a dead land and We gave life by them to the earth after its death.* (35:9) Thus the miracle occurs. It happens at every moment, but people are oblivious to its significance. Yet despite this miracle of life springing up at every moment, they continue to deny resurrection which they see happening in their world all about them. Simply and without argument, the Quran says: *Thus, will be the rising.* (35:9)

This scene is used frequently in the Quran for two reasons: first it provides tangible, undeniable evidence and secondly it has a strong influence on people's hearts and minds when they contemplate it without hindrance. Moreover, it is a beautiful image, particularly in the desert, which looks barren and lifeless today, and then gushes with life the next. In this way the Quran uses the inspiration of things people see all around them. They may ignore them because of familiarity, but when they contemplate them with an alert mind and heart, they appreciate just how miraculous they are.

There is here a sudden jolt as the section moves on to speak of might, power and dignity, linking this with good words that are wel-

come by God and good action that is blessed by Him. The opposite is also shown, whereby wicked scheming leads to ruin: *Whoever had been wanting great glory, great glory belongs to God altogether. To Him Words of what is good rise. He exalts the actions of one in accord with morality. But those who plan evil deeds, for them will be a severe punishment. And the planning of those, it will come to nothing.* (35:10)

Perhaps the link between life starting in what is lifeless and a good word and action is the fact that there is good life in all. The idolaters used their idolatry to retain their religious position in Makkah, one which gave them leadership of the Arabian tribes, and which facilitated various privileges. Needless to say, the most important of these were power and glory. Therefore, they used to say to the Prophet: *If we follow the guidance with you, we would be snatched away from our region.* (28:57) Therefore, God tells them: *Whoever had been wanting great glory, great glory belongs to God altogether.* (35:10)

When this fact is well established in people's hearts and minds, it ensures that values, standards, as well as means and methods undergo a complete change. The truth is that might and glory belong totally to God. No one else possesses a shred of either. Therefore, if anyone wants them, and they are incidentally expressed in one Arabic word, *izzah* (great glory), which combines both and adds connotations of dignity, then they should seek them from their only source: God Almighty. They cannot be found with anyone else.

The Quraysh sought to enjoy might and glory among the Arabs through idolatrous beliefs that lacked real substance. They feared to follow divine guidance, even though they acknowledged that it was guidance, because they feared for their own status. Yet those people, the Arabian tribes and clans, were not a source of might and glory. They could not give or deny these to anyone: *Whoever had been wanting great glory, great glory belongs to God altogether.* (35:10) If they enjoyed any measure of power and might, it was only because God gave them this. Therefore, anyone who wishes to have these should go to the original source, not to a recipient of that source. Recipients can only give what they have in excess. Besides, recipients are also weak and in need.

This is an essential truth of the Quranic message which establishes values, standards, judgment, behavior, ways and means. When this truth is firmly rooted in one's heart, one does not hesitate to stand up in dignity and glory to the rest of the world, knowing from whom one derives might and glory. Such a person does not bow before any despot, storm, calamity, state, or worldly force whatsoever. Why

would they when all might and glory belong to God alone, and when no one receives any portion of it without His leave?

This is the reason good words and right actions are mentioned here: *To Him Words of what is good rise and He exalts an action in accord with morality* (35:10) This is mentioned here for a purpose: It is a reference to the means by which might and glory are assured for those who seek it from God. Good words and good deeds which are allowed to ascend to God where they are received with honor that reflects on the speaker who says the good word and does the good work.

True *izzah*, combining all connotations of dignity and glory, is first established in one's heart before it takes any form in the outside world. When it is so established, the person concerned rises above all considerations that cause humiliation and prostration before anyone other than God. He rises first of all above his own fears, desires and ambitions that may be gratified by others. When he has done this, no one will ever be able to humiliate or subjugate him. People are only humbled by their desires, fears and ambitions. Should these be held in check, that person will retain his glory and dignity in all situations and with all people. This is indeed true might, glory and dignity.

True *izzah* is not stubbornness that seeks strength through falsehood, or tyranny that uses brutal force to silence others, or an overwhelming upsurge motivated by desire, or a blind force that pays no heed to right and justice. It is none of this. It is the ability to rise above one's own desires, rejecting fetters and humiliations, and refusing to submit to any other than God. It also means submitting only to God, fearing Him alone and obeying Him in all situations. It is through submission to God alone that our heads are raised high, and through fearing Him that we can stand up to whatever He disapproves of. Our watching Him also means that we care nothing for anything other than earning His pleasure. This then explains the relation between the good word and deed on the one hand and might, glory and dignity on the other.

The opposite picture is then given: *But those who plan evil deeds, for them will be a severe punishment. And the planning of those, it will come to nothing.* (35:10) Such people will see that their plots and schemes yield no fruit and end in failure, and that they will endure severe suffering as a result. We note here the contrasting image which brings life to a lifeless land.

These people plot evil because they are after false power and imagined glory. They may appear to have power at their command,

but it is the good word and deed that ascend to God and through which we receive *izzah* in its full sense. Evil schemes and plots cannot achieve this, even though they may occasionally be coupled with physical power. Their assured end, however, is ruin and severe suffering. This is God's promise that never fails.

THE CREATION OF THE HUMAN BEING

Having referred to the fact that all life starts with water, the section now refers to the start of our own life, beginning with pregnancy and followed by a term in this world, which can be long or short as God determines:

And God created you from earth dust: Again, from seminal fluid. Again, He made you pairs. And no female carries nor brings forth her burden but with His Knowledge. No one who is given a long life is given a long life, nor is anything reduced from his lifetime but it is in a Book. Truly, that is easy for God. (35:11)

Reference to our origin as a creature made from dust in the first place is often mentioned in the Quran, as is the first element in producing a pregnancy, namely the gamete. While a gamete is something that carries the potential of life, dust has no trace of life. The first miracle is life itself.

Nations and communities are the same as individuals: They may live long or have their lives cut short. Therefore, the Quranic statement includes them, as indeed it includes inanimate objects, such as rocks, caves and rivers which could have a long or short life span. Likewise, man-made things, such as buildings, machines and appliances, clothes, etc., may all live long or short lives. Every life duration, of every creature and everything, is recorded in God's book. This belongs to His absolute and infinite knowledge.

When we look at things in this light, we feel we want to contemplate the universe in a new way. Anyone who feels that God's hand and eye controls everything in such a meticulous manner will hardly ever forget or go astray. He will see God's hand, power and care in everything around him. This is the effect the Quran has on people's hearts and minds.

DIFFERENT WATERS

This section then focuses on a different phenomenon we all see, which is water and its varieties. One type of water is sweet and palatable while the other is bitter and salty. They go their separate ways, or meet together, by God's will, serving our needs:

The two bodies of water are not on the same level. This is agree-

able, water of the sweetest kind, that which is delicious to drink, and the other is salty, bitter. (35:12)

That God wanted water to be of different types is clear. That such variety serves a definite purpose is also something we should be clear about. We know some aspects of the wisdom behind providing sweet, palatable water, since we use it for different purposes. It is indeed essential for life.

The great balance wheel is that vast mass of water, the sea, from which have come life, food, rain, temperate climate, plants, animals, and ultimately the human being. Let him who comprehends this stand in awe before its majesty and gratefully acknowledge his obligations.

This is some of what we have been able to understand of the purpose behind the diversity of creation. It is clear that it is all done for a specific reason aiming to achieve harmony and balance, which allows the overall system of the universe to function. This can only be done by the Creator of the universe and everything that lives in it. Such a meticulously accurate system cannot come about by sheer coincidence. The reference to the difference in the two great bodies of water suggests that, like every other variation, it is done deliberately. Later on, the section refers to some aspects of this variety in the realm of feelings, values and standards.

The two different bodies of water are shown as united in being subjected to us. *But from each you eat succulent flesh and pull out glitter that you wear. And you will see the boats, that which plows through the waves on it that you be looking for His grace and so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (35:12)

This part concludes on another universal beat that mentions the alternation of day and night, arid the subjection of the sun and the moon to the divine system until their appointed time: *He causes the nighttime to be interposed in the daytime and He causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime and He caused the sun to be subservient and the moon. Each runs its course for a term, that is determined. That is God, your Lord. For Him is the dominion! And those whom you call to other than Him possess not even the white spot of a date stone.* (35:13)

LORDSHIP OF THE UNIVERSE

Concluding these inspiring scenes, the section states the truth of God's Lordship over the universe. It also states the falsehood of every claim of partnership with God, and its ultimate and miserable result on the Day of Judgement:

If you call to them, they would not hear your supplication. Even

if they heard, they would not respond to you. And on the Day of Resurrection they will disbelieve in your association with them. And none tells you like One Who is Aware. (35:14)

They are statues, idols, trees, stars, angels or jinn. None of them actually owns the skin of a date-stone. None of them can respond to those who worship them, but, *even if they heard, they would not respond to you.* (35:14) This applies, for example, to the jinn and the angels. The jinn cannot respond, while the angels do not respond to those who have gone astray. All this is relevant to this present life, but on the Day of Judgment they disassociate themselves from error and those who follow it: *And on the Day of Resurrection they will disbelieve in your association with them.* (35:14) This is stated by the One who knows everything in this life and beyond it, who overlooks nothing in the universe now or in the life to come: *And none tells you like One Who is Aware.* (35:14)

So does this passage conclude. It only remains to be said that it gives any human mind enough to last a lifetime. Indeed, it is sufficient for any human heart to listen carefully to a single passage of any section if he is seeking proof and searching for guidance.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:8-35:14

WHO IS GOD?

God originated the heavens and the earth. Whoever wants to see the truth of this need only look at the clarity and order in the universe.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet: Let not your soul be wasted in regret for the ungrateful. God knows what they devise against him.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?

4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message encourages the Prophet not to grieve over the denial of the message by the ungrateful Quraysh. What does great glory (*izzah*), that is repeated twice, mean? The ungrateful idolaters used their idolatry to retain their religious position in Makkah, one which gave them leadership of the Arabian tribes, and which facilitated various privileges. Needless to say, the most important of these were power and great glory (*izzah*).

True *izzah* is not stubbornness that seeks strength through falsehood, or tyranny that uses brutal force to silence others, or an overwhelming upsurge motivated by desire, or a blind force that pays no heed to right and justice. It is none of this. It is the ability to rise above one's own desires, rejecting fetters and humiliations, and refusing to submit to any other than God. It also means submitting only to God, fearing Him alone and obeying Him in all situations. It is through submission to God alone that our heads are raised high, and through fearing Him that we can stand up to whatever He disapproves of. Our watching Him also means that we care nothing for anything other than earning His pleasure. This then explains the relation between the good word and deed on the one hand and might, glory and dignity on the other. We do not know whether each of us is guided to glory or will be going astray. Each of us determine this for our "self."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.
I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

Those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them. We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin! For them is a despised punishment. (3:178)

LESSON 43(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

THE QURAN CAUTIONS:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior.

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

The Messenger had explored the thoughts underlying his feelings and his feelings underlying his thoughts when he realized that it may not be safe for his followers to remain in Makkah. He advised them to go to Abyssinia. Some went and returned quickly. Who was the ruler of Abyssinia?

The Negus grows up with his uncle, an intelligent and resolute young man. He attains an ascendancy over his uncle to such a degree that when the Abyssinians perceive how great his influence with the king is, they began to fear lest he might gain the crown, and would then put them all to death because he knows that they were the murderers of his father.

Accordingly they go to his uncle and say: Either you must kill this young man or you must exile him from among us, for we are in fear of our lives because of him.

He replies: You wretches, but yesterday I killed his father, and am I to kill him today? But I will put him out of your country.

So they take him to the market and sell him to a merchant for

six hundred dirhams. The latter throw him into a boat and go off with him, but on that very evening the autumn storm clouds mass, and his uncle goes out to pray for rain beneath the mass of cloud when he is struck by lightning and killed.

The Abyssinians hasten in fear to his sons, and lo! he is a begetter of fools. He has not one son who is any good at all. The situation of the Abyssinians become very unsettled. When they fear the pressure of events, they say to one another: Know, by God, that your king, the only one who can put us to rights, is the one you sold this morning, and if you care about your country go after him now.

So they go out in search of him and the man to whom they had sold him, until they overtake him and take the Negus from him. They then bring him home, put the crown on his head, sit him upon the throne, and proclaim him king.

The merchant to whom they had sold him comes and says: Either you give me my money or I shall tell him about this.

They said: We will not give you a penny.

He said: In that case, by God, I will speak to him.

They said: Well, there he is.

So he went and stood before him and said: O King, I bought a young slave from people in the market for six hundred dirhams. They gave me my slave and they took my money, yet when I had gone off with my slave they overtook me and seized my slave and kept my money.

The Negus said: You must either give him his money back or let the young man place his hand in his, and let him take him where he wishes.

They replied: No, but we will give him his money.

For this reason he said the words in question. This was the first thing that is reported about his firmness in his religion and his justice in judgment.

QURANIC CHAPTER 35: THE ORIGINATOR (AL-FATIR)
SIGNS 35:15-35:26

Makkah: *O humanity! It is you*
who are poor in relation to God.
And God—He is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise. (35:15)
If He wills, He would cause you to be put away
and bring a new creation. (35:16)
And that for God is not a great matter. (35:17)
And no burdened soul will bear another's load.

If one who is weighed down calls for help for his heavy load,
nothing of it is carried for him,
even if he had been possessor of kinship.
*Have **you** warned only those who dread their Lord*
in the unseen and performed the formal prayer?
And he who purified himself, then,
only purifies for himself.
And to God is the Homecoming. (35:18)
Not on the same level are the unwilling
to see and the seeing (35:19)
nor are shadows and light (35:20)
nor are the shade and the torrid heat. (35:21)
Nor are the living and the lifeless on the same level.
Truly, God causes to hear whom He wills.
*And **you** are not one who causes to hear*
whoever is in graves. (35:22)
***You** are but a warner.* (35:23)
*Truly, We sent **you** with The Truth,*
a bearer of good tidings and a warner.
And there is not any community, but a warner
passed away among them. (35:24)
*And if they deny **you**, so, surely,*
those who were before them denied.
Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents
and with the Psalms and the illuminating Book. (35:25)
Again, I took those who were ungrateful.
And how had My disapproval of them been! (35:26)

COMMENTARY°

REPLACEABLE CREATION

O humanity! It is you who are poor in relation to God. And God—He is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise. f He wills, He would cause you to be put away and bring a new creation. And that for God is not a great matter.(35:15-35:17)

We need to be reminded of this truth within the context of God's message, inviting us to accept and follow it, and urging us to abandon the darkness we are in to emerge into the light of His guidance. We need to be reminded that we are in need of God, while He has no need of us. When we are invited to believe in God, worship Him and praise Him for His bounty and favors, we must remember that He has no need for such worship and praise, because He is the Praised One. We are not immune to whatever God wishes of us. Should He wish, He can take us away and replace us by a new creation, either of our own type or of a totally different type. It is all so easy for Him.

EVERYONE ON THEIR OWN

The section then emphasizes individual responsibility, which means that everyone will have what they deserve. No one benefits anyone else in any way. The Prophet has no personal interest in guiding people to the truth. Everyone bears his or her own burden, alone, without help. Therefore a person who seeks to be pure will be the only one to benefit from this endeavor. The matter is ultimately left to God to determine:

And no burdened soul will bear another's load. If one who is weighed down calls for help for his heavy load, nothing of it is carried for him, even if he had been possessor of kinship. (35:18)

The fact of individual responsibility and reward has a decisive effect on morality and behavior. When people are fully aware that they are rewarded according to their own deeds, that none will be responsible for anyone else, and that none can escape responsibility, they realize the need to take stock of their actions before they have to answer for them. At the same time, this is reassuring, because no individual needs to worry about answering for the actions of his community. As long as he has done his duty, giving advice to his community to follow divine guidance, no further responsibility is laid on him. God Almighty does not hold humanity to account for their collective actions. They account to Him individually, each for their own work. It is the duty of the individual to advise others and try hard to bring them into line. Once he has done this, however, he bears no responsibility for their wickedness or corruption. He will he credited for his own good work. Similarly, if he lives in a good community, its goodness will not benefit him if he himself is wicked.

At this point, the section's address is directed to the Prophet: *Have you warned only those who dread their Lord in the unseen and performed the formal prayer.* (35:18) It is such people that can really appreciate the warning: They are the ones who fear God even though they have not seen Him, and who attend to their worship so as to maintain relations with Him. The Prophet is told that these are the ones to benefit by admonition. Others, who have no fear of God, need not worry him.

And he who purified himself, then, only purifies for himself. (35:18) No one receives the benefit of purification except the one who does it. Moreover, purification has pleasant and transparent connotations that apply to one's heart, thoughts, feelings, behavior and attitudes. *And to God is the Homecoming.* (35:18) He is the one who reckons people's actions and rewards them accordingly. Nothing

good or evil is overlooked.

Needless to say, with God belief and unbelief, good and evil, guidance and error cannot be treated on an equal basis. In the same way, blindness and sight, darkness and light, coolness and heat, life and death are unequal. All have essentially different qualities:

The blind and the seeing are not equal; nor are darkness and light; nor the cooling shade and the scorching heat; and neither are equal the living and the dead. *Not on the same level are the unwilling to see and the seeing nor are shadows and light nor are the shade and the torrid heat. Nor are the living and the lifeless on the same level. Truly, God causes to hear whom He wills. And you are not one who causes to hear whoever is in graves.* (35:19-35:22)

At this point the section addresses the Prophet, comforting him and outlining his terms of reference. He is to do what has been assigned to him and leave matters to God. It is He who will do whatever He determines: *Nor are the living and the lifeless on the same level. Truly, God causes to hear whom He wills. And you are not one who causes to hear whoever is in graves. You are but a warner. Truly, We sent you with The Truth, a bearer of good tidings and a warner. And there is not any community, but a warner passed away among them. And if they deny you, so, surely, those who were before them denied. Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents and with the Psalms and the illuminating Book. Again, I took those who were ungrateful. And how had My disapproval of them been!* (35:22-35:26)

Differences between opposites, whether in the universe or within the human soul, are clear and deeply rooted. Similarly genuine and firm are the differences between people and the way they receive God's message. It all refers to God's will, purpose, wisdom and power. God's Messenger, then, is no more than a warner. His human task is limited to this. He cannot make grave dwellers hear him. Those who live with dead hearts are in the same position: Cold and gravelike. It is God alone who can make hear whomever He wills, in the way He chooses. Why should the Prophet, then, worry about who chooses to go astray, about who turns away from divine guidance. All he has to do is to discharge the duties assigned to him to the best of his abilities. Once he has delivered his message, let people choose whether to respond or not.

In the previous section, God says to the Prophet: *So let not your soul be wasted in regret for them.* (35:8) God sent him, like his brothers the earlier messengers, with the truth. They were many, because: *Truly, We sent you with The Truth, a bearer of good tidings and a*

warner. And there is not any community, but a warner passed away among them. (35:24) If he is met with rejection and people accuse him of lying, this is all in the nature of things, and earlier messengers met the same type of reception, through no fault of theirs, or lack of supporting evidence: *And if they deny **you**, so, surely, those who were before them denied. Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents and with the Psalms and the illuminating Book.* (35:25) Such evidence could be of various types, including the miracles they demanded or were given to God's messengers in support of their messages. The books refer to whatever different prophets were given of wisdom, directives and admonition. The 'light-giving revelations' refer most probably to the Torah. Yet such communities denied it all.

There was thus nothing new in how the Prophet Muhammad was received. Therefore, the section mentions the fate of earlier communities to warn the new ungrateful: *Again, I took those who were ungrateful.* (35:26) This is followed by a question that gives a sense of gravity and intimates the most horrible of ends: *And how had My disapproval of them been!* (35:26) The condemnation was final, one whereby the ungrateful met their total destruction. Those latter day ungrateful should therefore take the warning seriously and make sure that they do not meet the same fate.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:15-35:26

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says to the Prophet: And **you**, Muhammad, are not one who causes to hear whoever is in graves. **You**, Muhammad, are but a warner. Truly, We sent **you**, Muhammad, with The Truth, a bearer of good tidings and a warner. And there is not any community, but a warner passed away among them. And if they deny **you**, Muhammad, so, surely, those who were before them denied. Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents and with the Psalms and the illuminating Book. Again, I took those who were ungrateful. And how had My disapproval of them been!

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message continues to comfort the Prophet, seeking to alleviate his distress at the rejection by the ungrateful Quraysh of the message. What is the role of the Prophet in the Quranic perspective? He is a warner and a bearer of good tidings. The Prophet cannot cause those who do not hear who is in the grave to hear. He is only to warn and bring good tidings. The Prophet has two duties: To warn and to bring good tidings. Those who accept the warning choose the good tidings. The Prophet both warned through the revelation that he received and brought good tidings.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING YOUR FEELINGS

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring your thoughts that underlie your feelings. You can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of your own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

LESSON 43(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment. They need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

The Quranic message to journey through the earth is clear, precise and relevant. It is accurate when there are remains of previous civilizations and what happened to them are to be seen. The verses recommending we do this are also worthy of following, logical and fair.

The Quran tells us in these signs to journey through the earth to see what happened to those who came before just as the early Muslims who had migrated to Abyssinia had done.

The first of the Muslims to go to Abyssinia (present day Ethiopia) were:

Abd al-Dar Clan:
Musab ibn Umayr

Abd Shams Clan:
Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah
Sahla bint Suhayl ibn Amr one of the Amir ibn Luayy clan, his wife

Adiyy ibn Kab Clan:
Amir ibn Rabiah of Anz ibn Wail, an ally of the al-Khattab family,
Layla bint Abu Hathma ibn Hudhayfah, his wife

Umayya Sub-clan of Abd Shams:
Uthman ibn Affan
Ruqayya, daughter of the Messenger, his wife

Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza clan:
Zubayr ibn al-Awwam

Amir ibn Luayy Clan:

Abu Sabrah ibn Abi Ruhm ibn Abd al-Uzza ibn Abu Qays. Others say it was Abu Hatib ibn Amr ibn Abdu Shams of the same descent. It is said that he was the first to arrive in Abyssinia.

Fihr ibn Malik Clan:
Suhayl ibn Bayda

Jumah Amr ibn Husayn Clan:
Uthman ibn Mazun

Makhzum ibn Yaqza Clan:
Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad
Hind bint Abi Umayya ibn al-Mughirah (Umm Salama), his wife

Zuhrah ibn Kilab Clan:
Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf

Zuhrah Confederate:
Abd Allah ibn Masud

QURANIC CHAPTER 35: THE ORIGINATOR (AL-FATIR)
SIGNS 35:27-35:37

Makkah: *Have you not considered that God*
caused water to descend from the heavens?
And, then, We brought out fruits,
the ones of varying hues.
Among the mountains are white and red streaks
—the ones of varying hues—and others raven black, (35:27)
and of humanity and moving creatures and flocks,
thus, they are likewise of hues, ones at variance.
Only His servants who dread God are knowing.
Truly, God is Almighty, Forgiving. (35:28)
Truly, those who recount the Book of God
and performed the formal prayer
and spent out of what We provided for them
secretly and in public,
they hope for a trade that will never come to nothing. (35:29)
He will, certainly, pay them their account in full
as their compensation
and increase them more out of His grace.
Truly, He is Forgiving, Ready to Appreciate. (35:30)

And what We revealed to you of the Book is The Truth,
that establishes as true what was in advance of it.
Truly, God is Aware, Seeing of His servants. (35:31)
Again, We gave the Book as an inheritance
to those whom We favored of Our servants.
Then, of them are ones who are unjust to themselves
and of them are ones who halt between two opinions
and some of them are ones who take the lead
with good deeds by permission of God.
That is the greater grace. (35:32)
Gardens of Eden—they will enter them.
They will be adorned in them
with bracelets of gold and pearls.
And their garments in them will be silk. (35:33)
And they would say: The Praise belongs to God
Who caused grief to be put away from us.
Truly, our Lord is Forgiving, Ready to Appreciate. (35:34)
He Who caused us to live
in the inhabited Abode out of His grace,
fatigue will not afflict us in it, nor will we be afflicted
with exhaustion in it. (35:35)
And those who were ungrateful,
for them will be the fire of hell:
Neither will it be decided a term for them so that they die
nor will its punishment be lightened for them.
Thus, We give recompense to every ungrateful one. (35:36)
And they will shout aloud in it:
Our Lord! Bring us out
and we shall do as ones in accord with morality,
not what we had been doing!
Give We not you a long enough life
so that whoever recollects would recollect there?
And the warner drew near you, so experience it
because there is no helper for ones who are unjust. (35:37)

COMMENTARY°

COLOR IN ALL CREATION

This section is a remarkable touch confirming the source of the Quran. It looks at the entire world with a special focus on color, pointing out its great variety in fruits, mountains, people, animals and cattle. It only takes a few words to group together animate and inanimate objects throughout the earth, leaving us in full amazement at this wonderful exhibition.

It all begins with water being sent down from the skies, and the fruits that it brings forth with their rich variety of hue. Because the exhibition intended here concentrates on visual imagery, the only quality given to the fruits is their color: *And, then, We brought out fruits, the ones of varying hues.* (35:27) The colors of these fruits combine a grading that cannot be reproduced, even partially, by any painter. No two types of fruits are of the same color. In fact, no two pieces of the same type of fruit are identical in color. Good scrutiny will reveal variation even on such a scale.

The section then switches, almost suddenly, to refer to the colors of mountains. A close palette study, however, shows that this is a perfectly natural switch. There is a close similarity between the richness of color in fruits and its richness in mountain rocks. Some rocks may even resemble fruit both in shape and in size, so that they can sometimes be mistaken for fruit. *Among the mountains are white and red streaks—the ones of varying hues—and others raven black.* (35:27) The 'streaks' refer to lines and courses in mountains.

The universe is thus shown as a splendidly colorful book which the Quran opens and looks through. It then says that scholars who read, appreciate and comprehend this book are the ones who have a true God-fearing sense: *Only His servants who dread God are knowing.* (35:28)

Truly, God is Almighty, Forgiving. (35:28) He is certainly able to create all sorts of fine and beautiful creatures, as also to requite people for their actions. At the same time, He forgives much, overlooking the mistakes of those who fall short of appreciating His beautiful work.

THE REVEALED BOOK

Having looked at these pages of the book of the universe, the section turns to the revealed book and those who recite it, their hopes and expected rewards.

Reciting God's book means something other than going through its words, vocalizing them or not; it means reading with reflection that leads to understanding, action and behavior. This also entails attending regularly to prayer, giving secretly and openly in charity, as well as entertaining the hope that what is so offered will never be a failed bargain. Those who do all this know that what God has in store is far more valuable than what they give away. As they give only for God's sake, dealing with Him directly, their bargain is especially .profitable. Ultimately, they will receive their reward in full, coupled with an increase of God's bounty. For, *truly, He is Forgiving, Ready to Appreciate.* (35:30)

This is followed by a reference to the nature of God's revealed book and the truth it contains, as a prelude to speaking about those who are the heirs to this book: *And what We revealed to you of the Book is The Truth, that establishes as true what was in advance of it.* (35:31)

The evidence of the truth in this book is clear in its make up. The Quran is an accurate translation of the universe in its true nature, or we can say that it is the spoken page while the universe is the silent page. Moreover, it confirms the books revealed earlier from the same source. The truth is one; it cannot be multiple. The One who revealed it to humanity knows them well, knows what suits them and improves their lot: *Truly, God is Aware, Seeing of His servants.* (35:31)

Such is this book, and God has given it to the Muslim community as its heritage. He has chosen this community to be its heir, as He states in His book: *Again, We gave the Book as an inheritance to those whom We favored of Our servants. Then, of them are ones who are unjust to themselves and of them are ones who halt between two opinions and some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32)

God has honored the community. He has chosen it to be the heir to His message, and He has graced it with a favorable reward, even for those who do not perform well. (35:32)

The group mentioned first, probably because it is the majority, are the ones who wrong their own souls, by doing more bad things than good, and the second have a balance between the two, following 'a middle course,' while the third are 'foremost in deeds of goodness,' having a preponderance of these. However, God's grace is bestowed on all three, leading them all to heaven where they experience the bliss described in the signs that follow. *Gardens of Eden—they will enter them. They will be adorned in them with bracelets of gold and pearls. And their garments in them will be silk.* (35:33)

The Praise belongs to God Who caused grief to be put away from us. (35:34) This present life, with all that it involves of worry about the future and all its struggles, counts as sorrow when it is compared to the enduring bliss in heaven. Moreover, the worry each individual experiences on the Day of Judgement concerning their fate is also a source of great sorrow. *Truly, our Lord is Forgiving, Ready to Appreciate.* (35:34) He has forgiven us our sins and appreciated our work, rewarding us well for it. He Who caused us to live in the inhabited Abode out of His grace. where we shall permanently reside. It is all 'out of His bounty'. We have no right to claim. It is He who gives it all by His grace: *Fatigue will not afflict us in it, nor will we be afflicted with exhaustion in it.* (35:35) There we have all we need:

comfort, bliss and reassurance.

On the other side we see the ungrateful wracked with worry, lacking confidence, and unable to see an end to their troubles: *And those who were ungrateful, for them will be the fire of hell: Neither will it be decided a term for them so that they die nor will its punishment be lightened for them.* (35:36) Not even the comfort of death is granted them. *Thus, We give recompense to every ungrateful one.* (35:36) Then we begin to hear loud, harsh voices. The echoes are mixed, the wailing confused, and it comes from those who have been thrown into hell: *And they will shout aloud in it: Our Lord! Bring us out and we shall do as ones in accord with morality, not what we had been doing!* (35:37) This is an expression of regret for what they did in the past, but it is all too late. Therefore, the reply carries a strong reproach: *Give We not you a long enough life so that whoever recollects would recollect there?* (35:37) You did not benefit from the duration of your lives on earth, which was enough for anyone who wished to heed the warnings. *And the warner drew near you, so experience it because there is no helper for ones who are unjust.* (35:37)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:27-35:37

WHO IS GOD?

God is the Originator of the heavens and the earth.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message asks the Prophet: Have **you**, Muhammad, considered that God caused water to descend from the heavens? What God revealed to **you**, Muhammad, of the Book is the Truth that establishes as true what was before it.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who recite the Quran and perform the formal prayer and spend out of what God has provided for them and hope for a trade that will provide them a livelihood, God will pay their account in full.

There are those who are unjust to themselves and ones who are halt between two opinions: right or wrong; and those who take the lead in doing good. Those who take the lead will be rewarded with the Gardens of Eden.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic messages says that God gave the Book as an inheritance to those whom God favored among his servants. Who are the servants of God who have inherited the Quran? They are of three types: Those who are unjust to themselves, that is, wrong their own souls; those who are moderate in choosing right and wrong, that is, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; their intentions are good, but they have much to learn of the true life and virtues mentioned in the Quranic message; and, finally, those who lead in good deeds; their intentions and conduct are sound; they form an example to other people; they are foremost in every good deed, by the grace of God. The great reward is for these as opposed to the punishment for the ungrateful. There are various dimensions of the servants of God. Those who are foremost by the grace of God will receive the highest rewards. None of the servants of God are perfect, but some are better than others in terms of following the Quranic message.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.

Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.

LESSON 43(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message and those of Prophet Muhammad as we study his life.

One of the characteristics of the Prophet was that he was from among common men. Though this is a term improper a more suitable term does not exist. He was absolutely and purely illiterate. What is training or education? To train means to mold and fashion a personality. What are the factors that are effective in training a human being?

There are five factors that participate in the formation of an individual: First, it is the mother who shapes the first dimensions of the personality of a child. Second, the father. Third; ideology, educational institutions and culture. Fourth: Civilization. Fifth: Essentially the spirit of the period in which you live.

The Prophet of Islam did not enjoy any of these five factors effective in molding an individual's personality. His father died before he was born. This factor is absent. Secondly, immediately after his birth, he was separated from his mother and taken to the desert to be nursed. He remained there for two years. He should have been brought back to his mother after that period, but on account of a plague, before his mother could embrace him he was again taken back to the desert. The plague prevented him from being brought up by his mother. Until the age of five, he neither saw his father nor his mother. At the age of five he was returned to his mother. The mother, who had lost her husband and he was her only child, for the first time took him under her care and intended to take him to Madinah so that he could visit his uncles, her father and her family. The mother of the Prophet belonged to the Najjar Clan of Madinah. But his mother died on the way to Madinah and the child, Muhammad, was left alone in the middle of the desert.

The third factor is civilization, and the Prophet was born among the crudest of the nomadic people of the age. The Arabian Peninsula was also a peninsula from the cultural as well as the geographical

points of view. Geographically it is a peninsula, a piece of land surrounded by water on three sides, but paradoxically not a single drop of water fell on this desert. A dry island. Culturally also it is a peninsula. On the one side Greek civilization, Palestine on the other. On this side Iran and Iraq, and India lies on that side all these civilizations surrounded it, but none of the signs of the surrounding cultures ever penetrated it. Thus, the Prophet grew up in a virgin desert land, bereft of culture and civilization, and was brought up in a virtual cultural vacuum.

The fifth factor time, was under the domination of the Roman culture, Alexandrian culture and Iranian culture. Time was controlled by these cultures. No age or time existed during the seventh century CE in the Arabian Peninsula.

You can see that the Prophet was an individual who was not influenced in the slightest manner by any one of the five factors that play an active role in the training of an individual. He grew up as a completely free being, independent of any influences. It is on account of this that he had an immense capacity to understand and accept new concepts, meanings and values that humanity could not have comprehended. It is for this very reason that he was able to defeat and demolish all the old values and cultures, all the systems of education and training, all the beliefs, and all that was sacred to them. Had he had an opportunity of being trained under any system, he would have been influenced by the existing values of the time.

According to these facts, the Prophet's being illiterate is an indication of the pureness of his being. Age, family, history, culture and moral molding, none of these had the slightest role in his development. For this reason, he could easily comprehend the concepts that were completely unprecedented and revolutionary.

POWER

There are really many peculiarities in the Prophet's life. He would go to the Kabah and offer formal prayer to God instead of to the gods and goddesses that the Quraysh and pilgrims of that time were doing. They wanted to tell him to go away, but did not as he was under the protection of his uncle, Abu Talib.

Later this same person was to write letters to all the superpowers of the age. He wrote to them: In the name of God. Surrender to me, otherwise, what will come to you will be of your own doing. What a tone and a manner! What a great bully! Well, Brother! With what strength? Just now you were turned back by Abu Sufyan and were forced to stop at the gate of Makkah, and you were so helpless that

you had to comply and turn back, as you had no other choice. And now that you have been turned back, on what authority do you write a letter? And in such a manner! It seems that he possesses the strength of a mountain. Otherwise, how could it be possible? He is not deranged. He is a sensible, reasonable man. He has calculated all the pros and cons and he knows very well that the emperor Khusrow Parviz does not need to send a company of soldiers to arrest him. He could have easily asked one of his slaves in Yemen to go and arrest that Arab! And that's what Khusrow did. He did not even send some of his soldiers to Madinah in order to bring him. He asks Bazan his protege in Yemen: Go and see what type of a dreamer is he who behaves so nonsensically. And wrote a letter to me asking me to surrender to him. He could have sent four persons to arrest him, and that would have been enough!

MUHAMMAD: THE FRIEND OF THE OPPRESSED

He is the only friend of the widows, the homeless and the strangers whom he saw in the streets of the city the persons whom nobody greets with a word of "peace", and nobody bothers to return greetings. Sometimes, when passing he sees that these strangers, shepherds and paupers who are seated on the ground have spread a cloth laying their humble meal upon it, consisting of bread suitable for a camel only, they invite him to join them, and he eagerly sits down and shares their food. He sits and chats with them amicably and makes friends with them. He invites them to honor him by coming to his home for supper that evening.

Even while some speak about our Prophet, they judge him by criteria that is contrary to the mission of his prophethood. The Prophet used to sit as a servant sits, used to take his meals as a servant eats; and indeed he regarded himself to be a servant of God. It was not a pretended appearance, but in reality he considered himself to be a servant of God. What a strange thing.

Besides being a social privilege, the Quraysh aristocracy has its own specific symbols. It has its own style of dressing, its own specific decorations, its own means of transportation, its own specific sources of livelihood, its own specific titles all these are the signs of aristocracy, whether it be a king or a sultan, for if you look at the titles of this class, the whole writing space will be filled or it may be the political or a privileged class elite. It makes no difference as to which kind of aristocracy a person belongs.

Whenever one reads the account of his life, the places where he lived, one realizes the one of the characteristics inherent to his nature

Then follows a reminder of individual responsibility. None will be made to bear any part of another person's burden; none will protect another in any way. This sign also refers to their persistent denial of the truth and its ultimate results: *So whoever was ungrateful, then, his ingratitude will be against him. And the ones who are ungrateful increase not their ingratitude to their Lord, but in repugnance.* (35:39) The Arabic word, *maqt*, which is translated here as 'repugnance', indicates the highest degree of hate. If a person incurs God's hate, his loss exceeds all that we can imagine.

Say: Considered you your ascribed associates to whom you call to other than God? Cause me to see what they created in the earth? (35:40)

Or have they any association in creation of the heavens? (35:40) This is even more evident. No one claims that such alleged deities have any part in the creation or ownership of the heavens. Not a single one makes such a claim, not even for the jinn or the angels. All that they can claim is that they sought the jinn's help to bring them news from on high. All they hope for is that the angels will intercede with God on their behalf. Yet at no time did they claim that their alleged deities had a portion of the heavens.

Or gave We them a Book so that they have a clear portent from there? (35:40) Their alleged partners cannot even reach this stage of having a book given them by God and of which they are certain to be true.

The Prophet has a book given him by God which he presents to them. Why, then, are they turning away from it when it is the only source of true faith? *Nay! The ones who are unjust promise nothing—some of them to some others—but delusion.* (35:40) The wrongdoers are quick to promise each other that their methods are the correct ones and that they will eventually prevail. They are indeed deluded. Moreover, they live in worthless delusion.

SUSTAINING THE UNIVERSE

The third round reveals the limitless nature of God's power as He is the One who holds the heavens and the earth and sustains them in place. No one else has any say or role in all this: *Truly, God holds back the heavens and the earth so that they are not displaced. And if they were displaced, there is none who held them back after Him.* (35:41)

The statement that God holds the universe in place ends with the comment: *Truly, He had been Forbearing, Forgiving.* (35:41) He forbears allowing people time. He does not put an end to their world

or hold them to account before the term He has appointed. He gives them chances to repent, begin the good work and prepare for their future lives. Nor does He make people account for everything they do. On the contrary, He forgives much of their wrongdoing when they show any inclination to do well. This statement, then, should make people seize the opportunity provided before it is too late.

The next round speaks about the Arab idolaters and the pledges they made to God, which they then breached, spreading corruption on earth. They are warned that God's laws will always operate, never fail:

The section then reveals what they did when God gave them what they wished for, sending them a messenger to warn them: *Yet when a warner drew near to them, it increased nothing in them but aversion, growing arrogant on the earth and planning evil deeds.* (35:42-35:43)

Needless to say, only a foul people would swear so strongly and then behave with such arrogance and evil. The section exposes them, recording their behavior, before adding to their disgrace a warning to all who emulate such actions: *The plan of bad deeds surround none but people themselves.* (35:43) Thus, their evil will harm none but themselves. It will engulf and ruin them.

This being the case, what are they waiting for? They cannot wait for anything other than the fate that engulfed those who rejected the truth in the past. They are well aware of that fate. Therefore, they can await for nothing other than the operation of God's law which will never change: Then, look they on but a custom of the ancient ones? ***You will never find in a custom of God any substitution. And you will never find in a custom of God any revision.*** (35:43)

IF ONLY...

While they are made to contemplate the fates of earlier communities, whose greater power availed them of nothing, they are reminded of God's might. It is He who sealed the fate of those communities, for nothing can withstand His power: *Journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those before them? They had been stronger than they are in strength. And God had not been weakened by anything in the heavens nor in or on the earth.* (35:44) This is a truism which is supported by clear explanation: *Truly, He had been Knowing, Powerful.* (35:44) His knowledge encompasses everything in the heavens and on earth. When His power is added to His perfect and absolute knowledge, nothing escapes Him or stands up to Him. Therefore, nothing in the

universe can foil His purpose. There is no way that anyone can escape His power or hide from His knowledge.

The last sign in the section speaks of God's forbearance and compassion, juxtaposing these with His power and knowledge. It emphasizes that people are given a chance, not punished immediately, but that this does not affect the eventual accurate reckoning of their deeds or the fairness of the results at the end. All this is an aspect of His grace: *And if God takes humanity to task for what they earned, He would not leave on the back of the earth any moving creature, but He postpones to a term, that is determined. And when their term drew near, then, truly, God had been Seeing of His servants.* (35:45)

This highlights the terrible nature of what people perpetrate as a destructive force that could end life in its entirety. However, God does not take people to task straightaway; He forbears and gives them chances: *And if God takes humanity to task for what they earned, He would not leave on the back of the earth any moving creature, but He postpones to a term, that is determined. And when their term drew near, then, truly, God had been Seeing of His servants.* (35:45)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:38-35:45

WHO IS GOD?

God knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth. He made us vicegerents on the earth. He holds back the heavens and the earth so that they are not displaced. God had not been weakened by anything in the heavens or in and on the earth. God takes humanity to task for what it has earned.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet had you, Muhammad, will never find in the custom of God any change nor any revision. The Prophet is to say to the ungrateful: Consider you the associates you call to other than God? Show me what they have created on the earth or in the heavens. Has God given you a Book so that they have a clear sign from there?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs tell the ungrateful that their ingratitude will be against them. They increase their ingratitude to their own loss. They swear an earnest oath that if a warner drew near them, they would follow him. Yet when a warner draws near them, they turn away in aversion. Journey through the earth to see what happened to previous communities.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message points out that gods that the ungrateful worship have created nothing and are themselves created. Do they have any authority from God to worship their ascribed associates? Some of ones who are unjust promise nothing to others but delusion. It is God who holds back the heavens and the earth so they are not displaced, not the gods that the ungrateful worship. Worshiping other than God increases the arrogance of the ungrateful. The plan of the ungrateful to commit bad deeds surround none but themselves. Only God knows the unseen and what is within our breasts.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?

LESSON 44(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

When we clarify the character of Prophet Muhammad, we see that one characteristic indicates that no personage has existed in the annals of history in whose being both strength of character and popularity, at such a high level, were combined together in this way. In a personage of such greatness, which inspires awe, fear, and another quality which fills the heart with a special kind of friendly love for him, has never been integrated with each other. The loveableness of the Prophet is separate from his prophethood. For instance Moses, Abraham and Jesus were also prophets and all of them were loved and respected by their people as prophets of God. But our Prophet Muhammad possessed an additional quality, and that was the compassion of all who came in contact with him. We who know and love the Prophet through his words alone can naturally imagine to what extent those who dealt with him personally, could love him. This dimension of his personality was, in itself such a great force that many of his Companions were greatly affected by his words in such a way that they feared that the Quranic signs reflecting the Prophet's utterances filled their hearts so full that even the words of the Quran might not fit. They were anxious to remember whatever he said. They loved him so much that they memorized his words by heart. His words, his reminiscences, his relics, his memoirs and all that belong to him are ever recounted by the people. All this greatness within all this simplicity seems to be impossible is a miracle in itself. Philosophically, it is to contain the whole world in an eggshell, but this actually became reality.

While sitting in the corner of the Prophet's Mosque, one can imagine the magnificence of the Prophet. What kind of a man was this person? Who was he? What was the extent of his might and strength? Those of you who have fortunately visited this mosque can envision it in your mind. The Prophet's Mosque, both the covered and uncovered area measured 2,100 square cubits. A few houses made of mud in one corner of the courtyard of the mosque, a pulpit

in another corner, a niche at the distance of two three meters. There a small house, here the site of the mosque and the place where he prayed, and in that corner he used to converse with the people. This was the center of his power, the entire domain of his strength, which served as the base of the Quranic message throughout the entire world. This was actually the whole administration he controlled until the time of his death.

When one views that history was made in this small space of ten to twelve meters and all the ancient magnificent powers were humbled to the ground, one has to believe that it was in fact an extraordinary phenomenon. One can feel this miracle and witness it with one's own eyes.

The other specific quality of the Prophet's personality is that in every place of the Arabian Peninsula, which the Prophet visited, we feel a sense of attachment to that land and is attracted to its soil, its pebbles and the mountains thereof. It attracts our heart like a magnet, as if one has entered a magnetic field.[5]

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:1-19:15

Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:1)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:2)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:3)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:4)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:5)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:6)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:7)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:8)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:9)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:10)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:11)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:12)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:13)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:14)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:15)

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:16-19:40

Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:16)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:17)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:18)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:19)

Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:20)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:21)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:22)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:23)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:24)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:25)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:26)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:27)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:28)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:29)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:31)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:32)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:33)
Makkah:Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:34)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:35)

Makkah: *And, truly, God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him.*
This is a straight path. (19:36)
There was variance among the confederates,
so woe to those who were ungrateful
from the scene of a tremendous Day! (19:37)
*How well **you** hear! How well will they hear!*
*How well **you** perceive on that Day they will approach Us,*
but today the ones who are unjust
are in a clear wandering astray! (19:38)
*And warn **you** them of the Day of Regret*
When the command would be decided. (19:39)
Truly, We will inherit the earth and whatever is in and on it
and to Us they will be returned. (19:40)

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:41-19:50

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:41)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:42)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:43)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:44)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:45)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:46)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:47)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:48)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:49)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:50)

Quranic Chapter 19: Mary (Maryam)
Signs 19:51-19:57

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (19:51)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (19:52)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Aaron (19:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael (19:54)
Makkah: Book 25: Enoch (19:55)
Makkah: Book 25: Enoch (19:56)
Makkah: Book 25: Enoch (19:57)
Madinah (19:58)

Makkah: *Then, after them succeeded a succession*
who wasted the formal prayer and followed their lusts.
So they will meet error, (19:59)
but the ones who repented and believed
and did as ones in accord with morality.
For those will enter the Garden
and they will not be wronged at all, (19:60)
Gardens of Eden which The Merciful
promised His servants in the unseen.
Truly, He, His promise had been that which is kept. (19:61)
They will not hear in them idle talk,
nothing but: Peace.
And they will have their provision in them
in the early morning dawn and evening. (19:62)
This is the Garden which We will give as inheritance
to whomever of Our servants who had been devout. (19:63)
And we come forth not but by the command of ***your*** *Lord.*
To Him belongs whatever is in advance of us
and whatever is behind us and whatever is in between that.
And ***your*** *Lord had not been forgetful,* (19:64)
the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them!
So worship Him and maintain ***you*** *patience in His worship.*
Have ***you*** *known any namesake for Him?* (19:65)

Commentary°

In this scene: *Then, after them succeeded a succession who wasted the formal prayer and followed their lusts. So they will meet error* (19:59) we see only the main features of the role of prophethood delineated.

The previous prophets together with those from among their offspring whom God guided and chose of pious people share a main quality in common: *When are recounted to them the signs of the Mer-*

ciful they fell down, crying, ones who prostrate themselves. (19:58) They are truly God-conscious, very sensitive to what pleases or displeases God. They shudder when His revelations are recited. This sensation is so strong that they cannot express their inner feelings in words. Their eyes are tearful and they fall down prostrating themselves before God and weep.

The section warns those who turned away from the path followed by their God-conscious forefathers, and shows them that they are bound to lose their way and end in ruin. Indeed, their end looms large: *Then, after them succeeded a succession who wasted the formal prayer and followed their lusts. So they will meet error.* (19:59) Disillusion will lead them into error, and error will take them to utter destruction.

The section makes it clear that the door remains wide open for all who wish to repent and mend their ways. Through that door comes the scent of God's mercy and the aura of abounding grace: *but the ones who repented and believed and did as ones in accord with morality. For those will enter the Garden and they will not be wronged at all, Gardens of Eden which The Merciful promised His servants in the unseen. Truly, He, His promise had been that which is kept.* (19:60-19:61)

The section then draws an image of heaven and its dwellers: *They will not hear in them idle talk, nothing but: Peace.* (19:62) Their talk is free of idle remarks, loud noise, futile argument. It is a conversation when only one type of voice is heard. It is the type that fits in with this pleasant atmosphere, full of contentment. That is the voice of peace. Provisions are certain to come in this heaven, without the need for hard work, worry or anxiety. They will never be exhausted: *And they will have their provision in them in the early morning dawn and evening.* (19:62) In such a blissful atmosphere, requests, demands and worries are out of place.

This is the Garden which We will give as inheritance to whomever of Our servants who had been devout. (19:63) Anyone who wishes to share in this inheritance is aware of the way to ensure it: repentance, firm belief and good works. Descent and ancestry are of no avail. Certain people descended from those God-fearing prophets and the goodly people who followed divine guidance and whom God selected for honor, but their descendants neglected their prayers and followed their own wanton desires. Their descent benefited them nothing. They are certain to end in disillusion.

Reports are unanimous that the angel Gabriel was ordered to say the first statement to the Prophet: *And we come forth not but by the*

command of your Lord. (19:64) This was in reply to the Prophet when he felt that revelation was slow in coming. In fact Gabriel had not come to see him for some time, and he experienced a feeling of loneliness, keenly missing the angel whom he loved. Gabriel was then ordered by God to tell him: *And we come forth not but by the command of your Lord. To Him belongs whatever is in advance of us and whatever is behind us and whatever is in between that.* (19:64) He forgets nothing. Revelations are bestowed when He in His wisdom wills that they be bestowed.

The sign ends with the statement: *And your Lord had not been forgetful.* (19:64) It is fitting that this comment should be followed with the injunction to worship God alone and remain steadfast, declaring at the same time His Lordship over all things: *The Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them!* (19:65) No one else has any share in this Lordship.

So worship Him and maintain you patience in His worship. Have you known any namesake for Him?(19:65) and persevere in shouldering the responsibilities that such worship entails.

The command is given to us all that we must *worship Him and maintain you patience in His worship.* He is the only One in the universe who deserves to be the recipient of our worship. The passage concludes with the rhetorical question:*Have you known any namesake for Him?* (19:65) This question also asks whether we know any equal to God. Supreme is He above all things!

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 19:51-19:65

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

It is the command of **your** Lord, Muhammad, that the Gabriel comes forth with the revelation. **Your** Lord, Muhammad, has not forgotten so worship **your** Lord, Muhammad, and be patient in **your** worship of him. Then it asks him: Have **you,** Muhammad, known any namesake for Him?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

After the previous prophets, there followed a succession of people who wasted their formal prayer and followed their lusts so they met error except those who repented and believed and acted in accord with morality. They will enter the Garden and not be wronged in the least.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message confirms for the Prophet that Gabriel has been sent by the command of God. What did the Quran tell the Prophet when he felt that revelation was slow in coming? The message says: And we (Gabriel) come forth only by the command of **your** Lord. The revelation only comes with the command of God to Gabriel. The word "we" refers to the command of God and the unseen world. Otherwise, it is clear that God is One and the subject would not be "we." The Prophet is reassured that the command is from God because the Prophet would sometime feel that the revelation may not come again

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

LESSON 44(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept.

On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjusted off the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... *so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

> The elders of the Quraysh at the time of the Prophet used to listen to God's revelations being recited to them, but they failed to "hear" the meaning of the words as they would say to the believers who lacked all riches: *Which of the two groups of people is best in station and fairer in alliance?* (19:73) Which side? The elders who denied Muhammad's message, or the humble who responded to him?
>
> Al-Nadr ibn al-Harith, Amr ibn Hisham, al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrath and their powerful clique, or Bilal, Ammar, Khabbab and their brothers, poor and deprived as they were? Had the message preached by Muhammad been any good, would his followers be those who had no power or influence in the Quraysh society? Would they have met in a humble place such as al-Arqam's house? Would his opponents be those who enjoyed all the luxuries and social prominence?

The immediate cause of the revelation of these signs is reported by Khabbab ibn al-Aratt who said: I was an ironmonger, and I had money due to be paid to me by al-Aas ibn Wail. I went to him to demand payment. He said: By God! I am not going to repay you until you reject Muhammad and his message.

I said: I shall not reject Muhammad until you have died and been resurrected.

He said to me: Well! Wait then. For, when I have been resurrected after my death, I will have wealth and children. You can come to me then and I will pay you what I owe you.' God then revealed these signs.

Al-As's words serve merely as an example of the ridicule with which the ungrateful responded to the call of the Quranic message and their derision of the whole concept of resurrection. The Quran highlights the singularity of his claims: *Perused he the unseen or took he to himself a compact from The Merciful?* (19:78)

That would be a good source of information, giving him knowledge of what may happen in that world. *Perused he the unseen or took he to himself a compact from The Merciful?* (19:78) In such a case, he would be certain that God's covenant will be fulfilled. This is followed by an expression of categorical negation which, in Arabic, adds connotations of a prohibition: *No indeed! We will write down what he says. We will cause the punishment to increase for him, prolonging it.* (19:79) He neither attained to any such realm, nor made any covenant with God. He merely rejects the truth and derides its promise.

A further image of warning is added: *And We will inherit from him all that he says and he will approach Us individually.* (19:80) Thus, everything that he speaks about of his wealth and children will be taken away from him, so that he is left with nothing. The Arabic text here gives an image of inheritance, in order to make the deprivation total, just as when an heir takes away all that a deceased person has left behind, discarding nothing. *And We will inherit from him all that he says and he will approach Us individually.* (19:80) He will have nothing of what gave him his standing in society. Thus, he will have no money, property, relatives, followers or supporters as he appears before God all alone, a powerless individual.

Have you, then, considered this person who denies God's revelation, yet speaks about his fortunes on a day when he has no position or influence? It is a day when he will be deprived of all that gave him power in this life. This is just one type of unbelief, false claims and ridicule of the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:66-19:82

Makkah: *And the human being says:*
When I am dead, will I be brought out living? (19:66)
Will the human being not remember that We created him
before when he be of nothing? (19:67)
*So by **your** Lord, certainly,*
We will assemble them and the satans.
Again, We will parade them around hell,
ones who crawl on their knees. (19:68)
Again, We will tear out every partisan,
whoever of them was more severe in stubborn rebellion against
The Merciful. (19:69)
After that We are greater in knowledge of those,
they who are most deserving of roasting in it. (19:70)
Madinah (19:71)
Makkah: *Again, We will deliver those who were God-conscious*
and We will forsake the ones who are unjust, in it,
ones who crawl on their knees. (19:72)
And when are recounted to them Our signs,
clear portents, those who were ungrateful
would say to those who believed:
Which of the two groups of people
is best in station and fairer in alliance? (19:73)
How many before them We caused to perish
whose generation was fairer in furnishing
and outward show? (19:74)
Say: Whoever had been in fallacy,
The Merciful will prolong his prolonging for him.
Until when they would see what they are promised,
either the punishment or the Hour,
then, they will know whose place is worse
and whose army is weak. (19:75)
And God increases in guidance those who were truly guided
and endure in accord with morality.
*They are better with **your** Lord in reward*
for good deeds and better for turning back. (19:76)
*Had **you** seen him who was ungrateful for Our signs,*
who said: Will I be given wealth and children? (19:77)
Perused he the unseen or took he to himself
a compact from The Merciful? (19:78)
No indeed! We will write down what he says.

We will cause the punishment to increase for him,
prolonging it. (19:79)
And We will inherit from him all that he says
and he will approach Us individually. (19:80)
And they took to themselves gods other than God
that there be a triumph for them. (19:81)
No indeed! They will disbelieve in what they worship
and they will be taking a stand against them. (19:82)

COMMENTARY°

The passage begins with a scene in which a person is shown to be astonished about the reality of resurrection: *And the human being says: When I am dead, will I be brought out living?* (19:66)

The first point here is that this surprise is attributed to humanity in general. In fact, this same comment was expressed by many peoples during different periods of history. Therefore, it is only normal that it should be attributed to the human kind in general. The surprise, or the objection results from a person's being oblivious of how he came into being. Where and what was he before entering this life? The fact is that he had no existence and then he began to exist. Had the human being remembered this fact, it would have been easier for him to visualize his return to life after death. Therefore, the answer comes in the form of a rhetorical question: *Will the human being not remember that We created him before when he be of nothing?* (19:67)

This denial of the truth of resurrection is followed by an oath implying a stern warning. God, in His glory, swears by Himself, which makes this the most solemn and serious oath, that they will all be resurrected and gathered together. This is, then, a forgone conclusion: *So by your Lord, certainly, We will assemble them and the satans. Again, We will parade them around hell, ones who crawl on their knees.* (19:68) This shows them to be one category with the evil ones who always incite them to deny the truth of faith. Thus the two groups are leaders and followers.

God certainly knows best which people are more deserving of punishment in hell. No one is taken at random, or by chance from that huge multitude. It is God who has brought them here and He knows them all, one by one. He knows what each and every one of them deserves: *After that We are greater in knowledge of those, they who are most deserving of roasting in it.* (19:70) Those, then, are the ones who will be chosen first for the fire.

The believers witness this fearful scene as they too are brought near to it: *There is none of you, but ones who go down to it. This had*

*been a thing decreed, that decreed by **your** Lord.* (19:71) They arrive there, look at hell as it burns fiercely, asking for more feed. They also see the tyrants and the hardened sinners as they are made to enter into it. The believers, however, have a different end: *Again, We will deliver those who were God-conscious and We will forsake the ones who are unjust, in it, ones who crawl on their knees.* (19:72)

Now the section leaves with us this scene of the Day of Judgment to paint an image of this world in which the ungrateful are shown behaving arrogantly towards the believers, branding them as poor and weak, and boasting about their own wealth and petty social values.

These people: *And when are recounted to them Our signs, clear portents, those who were ungrateful would say to those who believed: Which of the two groups of people is best in station and fairer in alliance?* (19:73) have their own social clubs demonstrating all the material values which the wealthy and powerful are keen to emphasize in their corrupt world. By contrast, we see humble gatherings where there are no such material riches or adornments. Instead, there are only the values of faith which unite people in these other groups. The two are juxtaposed so as to fully demonstrate their contrast.

The elders of the Quraysh at the time of the Prophet used to listen to God's revelations being recited to them, but then they would say to the believers who lacked all riches: *And when are recounted to them Our signs, clear portents, those who were ungrateful would say to those who believed: Which of the two groups of people is best in station and fairer in alliance?* (19:73)

The section comments on the boasts of those arrogant ungrateful, speaking proudly about what they enjoy in this life of pleasures and luxuries. The comment draws their attention to how earlier peoples were destroyed, despite the great riches they enjoyed: *How many before them We caused to perish whose generation was fairer in furnishing and outward show?* (19:74) They benefited nothing by all their show, nor were their material privileges of any avail to them when God visited His punishment upon them.

The section then picks up on another type of boast and decries it also: *Had **you** seen him who was ungrateful for Our signs, who said: Will I be given wealth and children? Perused he the unseen or took he to himself a compact from The Merciful? No indeed! We will write down what he says. We will cause the punishment to increase for him, prolonging it. And We will inherit from him all that he says and he will approach Us individually. And they took to themselves gods other than God that there be a triumph for them.* (19:77-19:81)

No indeed! They will disbelieve in what they worship and they will be taking a stand against them. (19:82)

Summary of Signs 19:66-19:82

Who is God?

God delivers those who are God-conscious and forsakes the ones who are unjust. God caused many of those who were ungrateful before to perish. God increases in guidance those who were truly guided and who endure in accord with morality.

How are the signs directed towards the Prophet Muhammad?

Those who are increased in guidance so that they were truly guided and endure in accord with morality are better with your Lord, Muhammad, in reward for good deeds and are better for turning back to God. It asks: Had you, Muhammad, seen those who are ungrateful for God's signs who asked: Will I be given wealth and children? It answers with a question: Did they peruse the unseen or take a compact from The Merciful? It then answers: No, indeed. What they say will be written down and the punishment will be increased for them.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

The ungrateful ask how it is that when they are dead, they will be brought out living. The message responds: Will they not remember that we created them before when they were of nothing.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?

8. What is its **Point of View?**

The signs leave the scenes of the Day of Judgment to paint an image of this world in which the ungrateful are shown behaving arrogantly towards the believers, branding them as poor and weak, and boasting about their own wealth and petty social values. The ungrateful ask: *Which of the two groups of people is best in station and fairer in alliance?* That is, the poor who follow the Prophet or they, the wealthy Quraysh who have their own social clubs demonstrating all the material values which the wealthy and powerful are keen to emphasize in their corrupt world. We see humble gatherings where there are no such material riches or adornments. Instead, there are only the values of faith which unite people in these other groups. The two are juxtaposed so as to fully demonstrate their contrast. The wealthy, ungrateful Quraysh are resorting to tribal honor and the importance of wealth and lineage in the leadership of the community. Faith and belief in God and His signs is more important than wealth and family history. Those who are poor and without patrons are praised by God and the Quran. The Quraysh who remain ungrateful for God's signs are trying to hold onto their system of tribal honor whereas the Prophet is bringing a new social order based on faith.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 44(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

KNOWLEDGE

According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.

Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word kitab, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ AS A CRITICAL QURANIC THINKER?

As can be seen from the writings of al-Ghazzali here, critical thinkers do not doubt or deny until they understand.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.
Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.
Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.
Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.
Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.
Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:83-19:98

Makkah: *Have you not considered*
that We sent the satans
against the ones who were ungrateful
to confound them with confusion? (19:83)
So hasten you not against them.
We only number for them a sum. (19:84)
On the Day We will assemble

the ones who are God-conscious to The Merciful
like an entourage. (19:85)
And We will drive the ones who sin to hell, herding them. (19:86)
None of them will possess the power of intercession
but such a one who took to himself
a compact with The Merciful. (19:87)
And they said: The Merciful took to Himself a son! (19:88)
Certainly, you brought about a disastrous thing (19:89)
whereby the heavens are almost split asunder
and the earth is split
and the mountains fall crashing down (19:90)
that they attributed a son to The Merciful. (19:91)
It is not fit and proper for The Merciful
that He should take a son to Himself! (19:92)
There is none at all in the heavens and the earth
but he be one who arrives to The Merciful as a servant. (19:93)
Certainly, He counted for them and numbered up a sum! (19:94)
And everyone of them will be ones who arrive to Him
individually on the Day of Resurrection. (19:95)
Truly, those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
The Merciful will assign ardor for them. (19:96)
So, truly, We made this easy on ***your*** *tongue.*
Certainly, ***you*** *will give good tidings with it*
to the ones who are God-conscious
and ***you*** *will warn a most stubborn folk with it.* (19:97)
How many a generation caused We to perish before them?
Are ***you*** *conscious of anyone of them*
or hear you so much as a whisper from them? (19:98)

COMMENTARY°

The very sound of these signs and their rhythm add to the air of anger at this false claim. In fact the whole universe rejects this claim most vehemently. It shudders and quivers with abhorrence as it hears this falsehood against God Almighty. It is a reaction similar to that of a person who feels that his very integrity is attacked, or that the honesty of someone he loves is assailed. The shudder is common to the heavens, the earth and the mountains. In their beat, the words here show the movement of a violent quake.

As soon as the offensive word is uttered: *Certainly, you brought about a disastrous thing.* (19:89) Everything that is settled and stable is thus shaken. The whole universe is in anger at this false allegation

against God, the Creator. The statement is shocking to everything in nature. The universe is created and functions on the basis of the basic principle of God's Oneness: *Certainly, you brought about a disastrous thing whereby the heavens are almost split asunder and the earth is split and the mountains fall crashing down that they attributed a son to The Merciful.* (19:89-19:92)

In the midst of this universal anger, a clear and definitive statement is issued: *It is not fit and proper for The Merciful that He should take a son to Himself!*

There is none at all in the heavens and the earth but he be one who arrives to The Merciful as a servant. Certainly, He counted for them and numbered up a sum! (19:93-19:95)

Fear creeps into our hearts as we contemplate the significance of this statement by God, the Most High: *Certainly, He counted for them and numbered up a sum!* (19:94) None is forgotten and none will be able to escape. *And everyone of them will be ones who arrive to Him individually on the Day of Resurrection.* (19:95) God watches everyone. They will all come to Him on the Day of Resurrection, each on his or her own. None will have the support or encouragement of anyone else. Indeed, all community feeling is gone, for in front of God, everyone speaks for oneself.

In contrast with this loneliness and isolation, the believers are given a comforting, friendly surrounding: Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, *The Merciful will assign ardor for them.* (19:96) The mention of love in this context is bound to comfort and penetrate people's hearts. It is a type of love that spreads in heaven and spills over to fill the earth and comfort people. The whole universe is given a full share of it.

This happy news to the believers and this warning to those who deny the truth and argue against it are the message the Quran gives. God has made the Quran easy for the Arabs to read and understand, as He has put it in His Messenger's own language: *So, truly, We made this easy on **your** tongue. Certainly, **you** will give good tidings with it to the ones who are God-conscious and **you** will warn a most stubborn folk with it.* (19:97)

The section concludes with a scene that we contemplate in our minds for a long time, hardly able to shift our gaze: *How many a generation caused We to perish before them? Are **you** conscious of anyone of them or hear you so much as a whisper from them?* (19:98)

This scene begins with a violent shock before overwhelming us with a total and deep silence. It is as though it takes us to the valley of death to show us how earlier people met their fate. In that great

valley which stretches much further than the eyes can see, our minds imagine the life that used to prosper on earth, the people that moved about everywhere, their feelings, hopes and aspirations. But all that is gone.

Complete silence pervades. For death has overtaken all, leaving only a host of rotting cadavers. Not a single one stirs, not a single sound, not even a breath. *Are you conscious of anyone of them or hear you so much as a whisper from them?* (19:98) Listen as much as you wish. There is nothing but a deadly silence. None remain except the One who never dies. Eternal He is and limitless in His glory.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 19:83-19:98

WHO IS GOD?

God will assemble the God-conscious to The Merciful and will drive ones who sin to hell. None of them have the power of intercession without a compact with The Merciful. It is not fit that The Merciful take a son to Himself. There is nothing in the heavens and the earth but are servants of The Merciful.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message asks: Have **you**, Muhammad, considered that satans were sent against the ones who are ungrateful to confound and confuse them with further confusion. In regard to the recitation, it says: We made the recitation easy on **your** tongue, Muhammad. **You**, Muhammad, will give good tidings to the ones who are God-conscious and **you**, Muhammad, will warn the stubborn folk with it. How many a generation We caused to perish before them? Are **you**, Muhammad, conscious of anyone of them or do **you** hear so much as a whisper from them?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

There are those who said: The Merciful took to Himself a son! It is not fit that The Merciful should take a son to Himself. Each person will arrive individually to God on the Day of Resurrection.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

In contrast with this loneliness and isolation, the believers are given a comforting, friendly surrounding: Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, *The Merciful will assign ardor for them.* Is the mention of love (ardor) in this context to comfort and penetrate people's hearts? It is a type of love that spreads in heaven and spills over to fill the earth and comfort people. The whole universe is given a full share of it. This happy news to the believers and this warning to those who deny the truth and argue against it are the message the Quran gives. God has made the Quran easy for the Arabs to read and understand. God has put the Quran in His Messenger's own language: *So, truly, We made this easy on your tongue. Certainly, you will give good tidings with it to the ones who are God-conscious and you will warn a most stubborn folk with it.* That the believers are comforted by this sign.

Make a list of new vocabulary in these signs. Define them. Look up their Arabic on the internet to include in the list you make.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

You should feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs you read.

You can discuss your interpretations of what you read.

Small groups of you and your classmates can compare their paraphrases and interpretations and write better ones.

LESSON 45(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own.

When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. We have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS ARE SUCH AS:

QUESTIONS: LISTENING CRITICALLY

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying.

Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

> The Prophet was a man who wielded so much power and might that even when his enemies wanted to abuse him, they would say: He is a Prophet equipped with great morality. People came to him with their smallest problems. A woman opened her heart to him complaining that her husband does not sleep with her. He was so accessible to the people that she comes to the Prophet without having the

slightest idea of his superiority. To whom can you speak to in this manner? You dare not speak of; such trifle matters to the clergy in your neighborhood.

This woman comes and detains the Prophet for an hour. She recounts to him the habits of her husband. She tells him how he is when he comes home; how bad is his mood, what she says, and how he answers; what he said the last night; how many nights he has not slept with her; how he behaves with her; how he supports her, doesn't support her.

He sits patiently, and listens to her in such a manner that she is encouraged to return the next day again. Tomorrow her neighbors also come. The day after tomorrow all the other women come to him. It is obvious that he does not behave in a way that the very first day a person feels that he or she was mistaken, should not have come to him. Till his death no one felt that he or she was mistaken to behave with him in this manner. His firmness, grandeur, greatness and his worldly prestige overwhelmed all those, irrespective of friend or foe who did not see him. But those who saw him, they found in him an intimate, lovable friendly person unlike the great worldly personages who appear little and humble from a distance and dreadful and terrible from near.

An old woman wanted to speak with him. She saw the Prophet emerging from his quarters and came face to face with her. The Prophet felt that she wanted to tell him something. She stopped and waited, when he saw that she would not come forward, he himself went to her. He noticed that she was trembling and tongue-tied. She was over-awed by the Prophet's personality. He came and held her by the shoulders like a child and said: Mother whom are you afraid of ? I am the son of that Qurayshi woman who used to milk sheep. Whom do you fear? This is the new value system that was created by him as he broke the old value system.

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:1-20:24

Makkah: *Ta Ha* (20:1)
We caused not the Quran to descend to you
that you be in despair, (20:2)
but as an admonition to him who dreads (20:3)
a sending down successively from Him
Who created the earth and the lofty heavens. (20:4)

The Merciful turned His attention to the Throne. (20:5)
To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is between them
and whatever is beneath the soil. (20:6)
And if you are to publish a saying, yet, truly,
He knows the secret and what is more secret. (20:7)
There is no god but He. To Him belongs the Fairer Names. (20:8)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:9)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:10)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:11)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:12)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:13)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:14)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:15)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:16)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:18)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:21)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:24)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:25-20:54

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:27)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:28)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:29)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:30)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:31)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:32)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:33)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:34)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:35)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:36)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:37)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:40)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:42)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:43)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:49)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:50)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:51)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:52)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:53)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:54)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:55-20:76

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:55)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:56)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:57)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:58)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:59)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:60)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:61)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:62)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:63)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:64)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:65)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:66)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:67)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:68)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:69)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:70)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:71)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:72)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:73)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:74)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:75)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:76)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:77-20:89

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:79)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:80)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:81)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:82)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:83)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:84)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:85)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:86)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:87)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:88)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:89)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:90-20:104

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:90)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:91)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:92)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:93)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:94)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:95)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:96)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:97)

Makkah: *Your God is only God Whom there is no god but He.*
He encompassed everything in His knowledge. (20:98)
Thus We relate to you some tiding of what preceded.
*And surely We gave **you***
from that which proceeds from Our Presence
a Remembrance. (20:99)
Whoever turned aside from it,
then truly he will carry a heavy load
on the Day of Resurrection,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
How evil for them on the Day of Resurrection (20:100)
ones who will dwell in it forever;
how evil for them on the Day of Resurrection
will be the load (20:101)
on the Day the trumpet will be blown.
We will assemble the ones who sin,
white eyed on that Day. (20:102)

They will whisper among themselves:
You lingered in expectation but ten days. (20:103)
We are greater in knowledge
of what they will say
when the most ideal of them in tradition says:
You lingered in expectation not but a day! (20:104)

COMMENTARY°

The signs continue with fine touches aiming to comfort the Prophet so that he is not afflicted by those who deny the truth of his message or those who turn away from it. They have their appointed term. He should not attach any importance to the worldly riches they may have been given, because this is all a test which they have to pass.

The Quran is described here as 'a Remembrance', because it reminds us of God, His signs and messages, as well as other signs given to people of old. Those who turn away from this reminder are described here as guilty, and they are shown in a scene from the Day of Judgment. We see them carrying their burdens like a traveler carries his luggage, but theirs are foul, troublesome burdens. When the trumpet is blown to gather all creatures, the guilty come forward with blue faces showing their grief and worry. Terrified, they speak to one another in whispers. They cannot raise their voices. All this describes the fear that overwhelms them at that moment when all the dead are raised. But what is the subject of their whispers? They simply try to guess the duration of their life on earth, for that life has become so short in their view that they imagine it to have lasted only a few days. Some of them say: *They will whisper among themselves: You lingered in expectation but ten days.* (20:103)

However, those with a better judgement and a more accurate view feel life on earth to have been much shorter than that. They tell the others: *You lingered in expectation not but a day.* (20:104) Thus, their life on earth, with all its pleasures, comforts, grief and worries, shrinks into insignificance. It lasted only a brief period of time, and was of little value to anyone. For what is the value of ten days, even when they bring all sorts of happiness and enjoyment? And what price may be attached to one night, even though its every minute was one of pleasure and happiness? How could these compare with the endless time which awaits them after the Day of Resurrection?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 20:90-20:104

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The signs give fine touches aiming to comfort the Prophet so that he is not afflicted by those who deny the truth of his message or those who turn away from it. They have their appointed term. He should not attach any importance to the worldly riches they may have been given, because this is all a test which they have to pass.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quran is described here as 'a reminder', because it reminds us of God, His signs and messages, as well as other signs given to people of old. Those who turn away from this reminder are described here as guilty, and they are shown in a scene from the Day of Judgment. We see them carrying their burdens like a traveler carries his luggage, but theirs are foul, troublesome burdens. When the trumpet is blown to gather all creatures, the guilty come forward with blue faces showing their grief and worry. Terrified, they speak to one another in whispers. They cannot raise their voices. All this describes the fear that overwhelms them at that moment when all the dead are raised. But what is the subject of their whispers? They simply try to guess the duration of their life on earth, for that life has become so short in their view that they imagine it to have lasted only a few days.

GUIDE TO LISTENING CRITICALLY

Listen carefully to what the Quranic signs are saying.
Take them seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence among them.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.
Seek examples and analogies to them.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of others.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.
Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic signs comfort the Prophet so that he is not afflicted by those who deny the truth and turn away from it. How long will it seem this life lasted on the Day of Resurrection? Those with a better judgement and a more accurate view feel life on earth to have been short. They tell the others: *You lingered in expectation not but a day.* (20:104) Thus, their life on earth, with all its pleasures, comforts, grief and worries, shrinks into insignificance. Life on earth lasted only a brief period of time, and was of little value to anyone. What is the value of ten days? There is no value to life on this earth even if it brings all sorts of happiness and enjoyment. What price may be attached to one night, even though its every minute was one of pleasure and happiness in comparison with the endless time which awaits them after the Day of Resurrection?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills

LESSON 45(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error*:

So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.

Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake —his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!

I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.

I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?

With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow

and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. There are many issues that end with a question, many rhetorical, the answer to which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to reflect on the Quranic questions and understand the questions that the Quran asks.[6]

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA (TA HA) SIGNS 20:105-20:115

Makkah: *And they will ask you*
about the mountains.
Then, say: My Lord will scatter them
a scattering. (20:105)
Then, He will forsake it as a leveled spacious plain. (20:106)
Then, you will see not in it any crookedness
nor unevenness. (20:107)
On that Day they will follow one who calls.
There will be no crookedness in him.
And voices will be hushed for
The Merciful so you will hear nothing
but a murmuring. (20:108)
On a Day intercession will not profit anyone
but him to whom gave permission The Merciful
and with whose saying He was well-pleased. (20:109)
He knows what is in advance of them and what is behind them
and they will not comprehend Him in knowledge. (20:110)
And faces will be humbled before The Living, The Eternal
while, surely, will be frustrated whoever
was burdened by doing injustice. (20:111)
Whoever does as the one in accord with morality
and he is one who
believes, then, he will neither fear injustice
nor unfairness. (20:112)
And, thus, We caused it to descend as an Arabic Recitation.

And We diversified the threats in it
so that perhaps they will be God-conscious or cause
the Remembrance to be evoked by them. (20:113)
Then, exalted be God, The True King,
and hasten not the Recitation
before its revelation is decreed to you.
And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge! (20:1114)
And, certainly, We made a compact with Adam before.
Then, he forgot and We find no constancy in him. (20:115)

COMMENTARY°

This section begins and ends with an address to the Prophet explaining his task and outlining the limits of his duties. It is not a mission of distress that has been imposed on him, nor is it an affliction which he has to endure. It is a mission of advocacy and admonition, giving good news and warning against wrongdoing. The ultimate judgement over people is exercised by God, the One, who has no partners, and who controls the whole universe, with all that appears of it and what remains hidden. God is the One who is fully aware of all hearts' secrets, and to whom all people prostrate. It is to Him that all people, obedient and sinners, refer. Therefore, the Prophet should not be bothered by whoever chooses the path of unbelief. He should not be distressed over their denial of the truth.

The section started with a discussion on the Quran, making it clear that the purpose of its revelation to the Prophet Muhammad was not that he might be afflicted by it. Part of the Quran covers the story of Moses and how it reflects the care God took of Moses, his brother Aaron and their people. Now that the story has been told, the section resumes speaking about the Quran, the role it is intended to play and the fate which is bound to be suffered by those who turn their backs to it. This fate is shown in a scene of the Day of Judgment in which the days of this present life are seen to be infinitesimal, the earth loses its mountains and is seen flat and bare; sounds are hushed before God the Merciful; and faces are humbled before God, the Ever-Living. This scene, and the warnings made in the Quran, are intended to arouse feelings of God-consciousness, reminding people of their relationship with God. This passage concludes by giving the Prophet renewed comfort with respect to the Quran which was being revealed to him. He must not hasten to repeat its words during the process of receiving it as he used to do fearing that he might forget some parts of it. He need not entertain any such fear, because God has taken it upon Himself to preserve the Quran and make it easy for

recitation and study. In this context, the Prophet is instructed to pray to God to give him more knowledge.

Since the Prophet was keen to repeat the Quranic revelations as they were given to him, for fear of forgetting them, the section mentions how Adam forgot God's covenant. This is followed by the declaration of hostility between him and Satan, stating the different ends of the people who remember their covenant with God and those who forget it. These two different ends are shown in one of the scenes of the Day of Resurrection the Quran portrays, as though the Day gives the end of the journey which started in heaven and aims to return there.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 20:105-20:115

WHO IS GOD?

The only intercession that will be accepted is with the permission of The Merciful. God knows what is in advance of us, what is behind us and we cannot comprehend Him in knowledge. True knowledge is imported by God. It is a knowledge that lingers, bringing benefits, yielding good fruits and is never wasted.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet need not hasten to repeat the words of the revelation because God has sent it down for a specific purpose and He will not allow it to be lost. The Prophet just needs to continue to pray to God to increase him in knowledge, reassured that what he is given will not be taken away.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Faces on that Day will be humbled before The Living, The Eternal. Whoever was burned by injustice will be burdened on that Day by what he has done. Whoever acted in accord with morality and is one who believes will neither fear injustice nor unfairness.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet that he does not have to hasten to repeat the words of the revelation to him. Was some of the signs of the Quran left out or forgotten by the Prophet? The Quran assures the Prophet that God will not allow any of the revelation to be forgotten. God has sent down the Quranic revelation for a specific purpose and He will not allow it to be lost. The Quran is an Arabic recitation sent originally to Arabic-speaking people. The revelation tells the Prophet that all he needs to do is to pray to God to increase him in knowledge, reassured that what God has given him will not be taken away. There were times when the Prophet was concerned that some of the revelation may be lost if he did not continuously repeat it to himself.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

LESSON 45(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

> Thinking about God's purpose in sending Prophet Muhammad extremely difficult and awe inspiring. A great personage like Ali ibn Abi Talib said: Whenever we found the situation to be grave, we used to take refuge in the Prophet of God and sought the shelter of his presence in order to feel safe and protected in his loving company. How sublime and lofty was the personality of this great man. It is quite natural that our limited and little minds are unable to realize this greatness. The tools and criteria that we have to evaluate and measure men by, fail to assess and understand such a great being. Hence, we are compelled to understand him within the limits imposed on our intellects.

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:116-20:128

Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:116)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:117)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:118)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:119)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:120)

Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:121)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:122)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:123)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:124)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:125)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:126)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:127)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:128)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:129-20:135

Makkah: *And if a Word preceded not from your Lord*
for a term that was determined,
it would be close at hand. (20:129)
Madinah (20:130)
Madinah (20:131)
Makkah: *And command **you** people*
to the formal prayer,
and to maintain patience in it.
*We ask not of **you** for any provision.*
*We provide for **you***
and the Ultimate End will be
for the God-conscious. (20:132)
And they said: Why brings he not to us
a sign from his Lord?
Approaches them not clear portents
that were in the first scrolls? (20:133)
And if We caused them to perish with a punishment before this,
certainly, they would have said:
*Our Lord! Why had **You** not sent to us*
*a Messenger so that we follow **Your** signs before we are*
degraded and humiliated! (20:134)
Say: Each is one who is waiting so watch.
Then, you will know
who are the Companions of the Path without fault
and who were truly guided. (20:135)

COMMENTARY°

The section now moves us along to look at how earlier communities met their fate, which is much closer to us than the Day of Judgment. Moreover, we can see their destruction and what is left of them

with our own eyes, while we cannot see resurrection.

When we look with our eyes and minds at the fate of earlier communities; when we look closely at the lands were they lived and prospered; when we imagine their dwellings and how they became empty with no one living in them; when we stretch our imagination to see them walking through their lands, going here and there, moving along, taking rest, looking to their futures, dealing with their worries, and then open our eyes to see nothing but emptiness, we realize that we are at the edge of a precipice that threatens to engulf us like it did earlier communities. We know that the great power that overwhelmed earlier generations is able to overwhelm the present ones as well. We understand then the meaning of the warning given to us, because the lesson is there for us to see. How come, then, that people do not recognize divine guidance when the fate of earlier generations provides every guiding indication to anyone who has a mind to use: *Truly, in this are signs for the people imbued with sense.* (20:128)

Divine wisdom has willed that God will not eliminate them by a calamity that befalls them in this present world. This is the reason why they do not meet a similar fate. This is a situation God has decreed, giving them respite up to a term appointed for them. Otherwise they too would have been punished for their rejection of the truth: *And if a Word preceded not from your Lord for a term that was determined, it would be close at hand* (20:129)

And command your people to the formal prayer. (20:132) The first duty of a Muslim is to make his home a Muslim home, enjoining his family to attend to their prayers so that they all maintain their ties with God. Thus, they are united in their approach to life. Life in a home where all members turn to God for worship is certainly a happy one. *And maintain patience in it.* (20:132) Be diligent so that you offer your prayers complete and its effect becomes a reality. Formal prayer restrains us from loathsome deeds and indecency. This is its true effect. To attain the level where prayer provides such restraint requires diligence in its observance. Unless we reach the stage that our prayer yields this fruit, it remains a mere sequence of phrases and movements.

Prayer and worship generally are duties assigned to the Prophet and believers. God does not gain anything by them. He is in need of no one: *We ask not of you for any provision.* (20:132) Worship nurtures God-consciousness within the worshipper. Therefore: *We provide for you and the Ultimate End will be for the God-conscious.* (20:132)

As the section draws to its close, it refers again to those people

who, enjoying position and power, reject God's revelations and demand that the Prophet deliver a miracle. They make such demands even after the Prophet has given them the Quran which explains in all clarity what previous messages from God were like. *And they said: Why brings he not to us a sign from his Lord? Approaches them not clear portents that were in the first scrolls?* (20:133) They need no physical miracle. Therefore, their demands betray their arrogance. The Quran is more than sufficient as proof. It links the new message with God's previous messages, uniting them all and clarifying what was left in general terms in previous messages. God has given those who deny the truth everything they need to recognize the truth and believe in it when He sent them His last Messenger: *And if We caused them to perish with a punishment before this, certainly, they would have said: Our Lord! Why had **You** not sent to us a Messenger so that we follow **Your** signs before we are degraded and humiliated!* (20:134)

At the time when this sign was recited, they had been neither humiliated nor disgraced. The sign describes their inevitable end which will bring them humiliation and disgrace. It may be that they will then say: *Our Lord! Why had **You** not sent to us a Messenger so that we follow **Your** signs before we are degraded and humiliated!* (20:134). As the section describes their end, the Prophet is commanded to leave them alone, without grieving for them. He should announce to them that he will await the end, and let them await it as they wish: *Say: Each is one who is waiting so watch. Then, you will know who are the Companions of the Path without fault and who were truly guided.* (Verse 135) Thus the section ends.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 20:129-20:135

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quran tells the Prophet to command people to the formal prayer (*al-salat*) and maintain patience in it. God asks of **you**, Muhammad, no provision, but God provides for **you**, Muhammad. He is told to say to the ungrateful who refuse to accept the message and who asked why God had not sent a Messenger to them with clear signs before they were degraded and humiliated on the Day that each is one that is waiting, so watch. Then you will know who are the Companions of the Path without fault and who were truly guided.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message says that the ungrateful will ask on the Day of Judgment why a Messenger was not sent to them with clear signs before they were humiliated and debased. Do not clear signs approach them that were also in the first scrolls? The Messenger is before them giving them the message, but they deny it. They will have no cause to ask this question on the Day of Judgment as they have been denying what they were asking for. The Quran is a reminder and an admonition for those who may benefit from it. The Quran is being revealed from the Messenger of God to the people. When the Prophet completes conveying the message, the only thing that remains is to wait for the end which is determined by God. The ungrateful continue to deny the message.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities: I am able to do the following:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what we are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.

LESSON 46(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

> When we compare the points of view between a king and our beloved Prophet, we see that with all his greatness, while he enters his house, his wife sees in his countenance an ordinary good husband alone. What kind of a person he is that outside his home, tribal chieftains are afraid of him, he is tough and wields so much power and has such a great spirit. But, as he enters his house, his wife, the same woman who used to fear their husbands and fathers used to see his great compassion
>
> According to the narrations of Abu Hurayrah, month after month passes and no smoke rises out of his kitchen. When they wished to be indulged in luxury, they used to take seeds of the dates and knead them with dates (even then no cooking!) till they were softened. He too liked them very much, and whenever he wanted to fill his stomach lavishly, he ate them. This was the kind of life, house, and furniture he had.
>
> What kind of a home did the Prophet have? It was a room made of mud, which he built himself. Half of the room was covered by a mat and the remaining by sand. The sand was brought from the desert and changed every few days, so that it would not become dirty. This all the furniture that this great man, chosen by God to deliver His message, possessed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 56: THE INEVITABLE (AL-WAQIAH) SIGNS 56:1-56:38

Makkah: *When The Inevitable came to pass,* (56:1)
its descent is not like that which lies. (56:2)
It will be one that abases, one that exalts. (56:3)
When the earth will rock with a rocking (56:4)
and the mountains be crumbled to dust, crumbling, (56:5)
then, they had been dust scattered about. (56:6)
And you had been of three diverse pairs. (56:7)
Then, the Companions of the Right—
who are the Companions of the Right? (56:8)
And the Companions of the Left—
who are Companions of the Left? (56:9)
Ones who take the lead are the ones who take the lead. (56:10)
Those are the ones who are brought near (56:11)
in the Gardens of Bliss. (56:12)
A throng of the ancient ones (56:13)
and a few of the later ones (56:14)
are on lined couches, (56:15)
ones who are reclining on them,
ones who are facing one another. (56:16)
Immortal children go around them (56:17)
with cups and ewers and goblets from a spring of water. (56:18)
Neither will they suffer headaches
nor will they be intoxicated, (56:19)
and sweet fruit of what they specify (56:20)
and the flesh of birds for which they lust (56:21)
and most beautiful eyed ones, (56:22)
like the parable of the well-guarded pearls, (56:23)
a recompense for what they had been doing. (56:24)
They will not hear any idle talk in it
nor accusation of sinfulness, (56:25)
but the saying of: Peace! Peace! (56:26)
And the Companions of the Right
—who are the Companions of the Right? (56:27)
They will be among thornless lote-trees (56:28)
and acacias, one on another, (56:29)
and spread out shade (56:30)
and outpoured water (56:31)
and many sweet fruit. (56:32)
There will be neither that which is severed

nor that which is inaccessible. (56:33)
And it is an exalted place of restfulness. (56:34)
Truly, We caused them (f) to grow, a good forming, (56:35)
and made them (f) virgins, (56:36)
full of love, of the same age, (56:37)
for the Companions of the Right. (56:38)

COMMENTARY°

UNFINISHED CONDITIONAL

This opening is clearly intended to add suspense to its presentation of this awesome but inevitable event. It employs a special style that clearly indicates this. Twice, it begins a conditional sentence, employing the word when, without finishing what the result or the outcome will be. It first says: *When The Inevitable came to pass, its descent is not like that which lies. It will be one that abases, one that exalts.* (56:1-56:3)

But it does not say what will take place when this inevitable event comes to pass. It simply says there can be no denying that it will happen. Without saying what comes next, the section commences a new beginning with another conditional sentence: *When the earth will rock with a rocking and the mountains be crumbled to dust, crumbling, then, they had been dust scattered about.* (56:4-56:6)

This special style particularly suits the extremely frightening image the section opens with. The section denotes the event of resurrection by the term *al-waqiah*, which primarily refers to something that falls hard. The very sound of the word gives the impression of a heavy object dropping from a high position and then settling where it cannot be moved or removed: *Its descent is not like that which lies.* (56:2) This expectation is fulfilled as the event is described as abasing [some] exalting [others]. *It will be one that abases, one that exalts.* (56:3)

THREE GROUPS

As this strongly shaking scene concludes, we are then introduced to the effects of this inevitable event as some people are elevated while others are abased. This takes place when everyone faces their different fate: *And you had been of three diverse pairs. Then, the Companions of the Right—who are the Companions of the Right? And the Companions of the Left—who are Companions of the Left? Ones who take the lead are the ones who take the lead.* (56:7-56:10)

Here, people are divided into three groups, unlike in most other Quranic statements where they are shown to be in two groups. The

section first mentions the people of the right side, but does not give us any details about them. Instead, a question is asked about them, enhancing the feeling of expectation: *Then, the Companions of the Right—who are the Companions of the Right?* (56:8) The same method is used for the opposite group: *And the Companions of the Left—who are Companions of the Left?* (56:9) The third group is then mentioned, and these are the ones to the fore. They are described by the same quality of being ahead of all:

Ones who take the lead are the ones who take the lead. (56:10) It is as if the section says these are the ones, and this is enough. No further description is necessary, it would add nothing.

The section then mentions their position with their Lord and describes in detail what blessings He has prepared for them. This is all described in a way that the addressees can understand, in light of their own knowledge and experience.

The section begins this detailed account by mentioning the greatest aspect of their elevated position, the bliss of being close to their Lord: *Those are the ones who are brought near in the Gardens of Bliss.* (56:11-56:12) The gardens of bliss, with all that they contain, is nothing compared to that topmost favor of being nearest to God.

The section takes a short pause here to say who achieves this grade. Thus, we are told: *A throng of the ancient ones and a few of the later ones.* (56:13-56:14) They are, then, the chosen ones, constituting a limited number.

Now the section begins to enumerate the types of luxuries they will enjoy in heaven. These are of course of the types they can imagine and visualize. Beyond these there are other luxuries and aspects of happiness and bliss, which they will recognize when they are ready to appreciate them in their future lives. These are things no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of and no mind has ever imagined.

[They] *are on lined couches, ones who are reclining on them, ones who are facing one another.* (56:15-56:16) They are comfortable, free of all worries and preoccupations, reassured as to the continuity of their happiness, knowing that it will never end. *Ones who are reclining on them, ones who are facing one another.* (56:15-56:16) Therefore, they come together, in an atmosphere of mutual love. *Immortal children go around them.* (56:17) These youths are unaffected by the passage of time; they retain their youthful looks. They go round carrying goblets .... *with cups and ewers and goblets from a spring of water.* (56:18) Their drink is made of pure wine that causes no intoxication. *Neither will they suffer headaches nor will*

they be intoxicated. (56:19) They are not turned away from it, nor will it ever be used up. Everything here is always plentiful; nothing is ever out of stock. *And sweet fruit of what they specify and the flesh of birds for which they lust and most beautiful eyed ones, like the parable of the well-guarded pearls.* (56:20-56:23)

Hidden pearls are those that are carefully treasured. No hand has ever put a needle through them, and no eye has ever cast a piercing look at them. A host of gentle connotations, both mental and physical, are implied in this description of these companions with their large beautiful eyes. All this is a reward for what they used to do. *A recompense for what they had been doing.* (56:24) It is a reward for what is done during that stage of life where action is required. In that life, nothing people do attains perfection, but here in this life, in heaven, the reward is absolutely perfect.

Moreover, they are greeted gently in a way that disdains all idle talk: *They will not hear any idle talk in it nor accusation of sinfulness, but the saying of: Peace! Peace!* (56:25-56:26) Their lives are peaceful; peace that spreads all around them. They are saluted by the angels with a greeting of peace, and they exchange the same greeting with one another, and an even better greeting of peace is extended to them from the Lord of Grace. It is all then a life of peace.

THE OTHER GROUPS

The section follows this account of the superior group with a similarly detailed one of the second group, to which a quick reference was made in the opening of the section. The details of their situation in the life to come are now provided at the right point, beginning with a repetition of the same question posed at the outset that gives a sense of seriousness and awe: *And the Companions of the Right—who are the Companions of the Right?* (56:27),

This group are also enjoying a luxurious and happy life, but its description gives a sense of nomadic roughness. It answers all the needs of a nomadic people as they can best imagine a life of comfort and bliss. Thus: *They will be among thornless lote-trees.* (56:28) The lote tree is known for its thorns, but here it is thornless. *And acacias, one on another.* (56:29) The acacia is a thorny type of leguminous tree well known in the Hijaz region of Arabia. However, the acacia trees in heaven are without thorns, have abundant fruit and are so situated as to enable real comfort. *And spread out shade and outpoured water.* (56:30-56:31) These are all types of comfort dreamt of by the bedouin. *And many sweet fruit. There will be neither that which is severed nor that which is inaccessible. And it is an exalted place of*

restfulness (56:32-56:34) These couches are not described as gold-encrusted, nor as having fine embroidery. They are merely 'raised high'. Raising high contains a double meaning, physical and mental, both of which complement each other. As they are raised high, both meanings converge. In position, they are far removed from all types of impurity, kept clean. Mental elevation, on the other hand, is also far removed from all that stains. Therefore, the next aspect of their blessing describes the companions they have in heaven: *Truly, We caused them (f) to grow, a good forming.* (56:35) These mates are either new ones, referring to the mates God assigns them from among the creatures that originally dwell in heaven, or they are their wives in this world, after they have been resurrected as virgins in the prime of youth. *And made them (f) virgins.* (56:36) They are full of love, of matching age. *Full of love, of the same age.* (56:37) And they are specially assigned and devoted for those on the right: *For the Companions of the Right.* (56:38)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 56:1-56:38

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

This section describes the fates of the three classes, the ones to the fore, those to the right and those to the left. It gives us a very detailed description of what they receive of favors and blessings, or misery and suffering. This makes us feel that it will all undoubtedly happen, and especially as every detail is set before our eyes. The ungrateful are made to see their fate and that of the believers and hear what is said about them after detailing their misery. The description gives the impression that the punishment is being meted out now and that life on earth is long gone, mentioned only to show how hideous and repugnant some people's way of life is.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?

4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)?**
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)?**
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)?**
8. What is its **Point of View?**

The Quranic message informs the people that there will be an Inevitable Day. What will happen on the Day of the Inevitable? The Inevitable will come to pass, one that abases and one that exalts when the earth will rock with a rocking and the mountains will crumble to dust and they will be scattered about. The Inevitable is the Day that the earth falls apart. The earth as we know it will not last forever. Among the three groups of people, those who are foremost and those who are the Companions of the Right will be exalted and those who are among the Companions of the Left will be abased. Those who will be exalted will rest in peace for eternity.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialogical reasoning after studying these verses.
The positions of Moses and those of Pharaoh were clear to me.
I understood the difference between a monotheist and a tyrant (*taghut*).

LESSON 46(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

TWO DISTINCT STYLES OF QURANIC STORYTELLING

One can speak about two distinct manners of story telling in the Quran: reporting the incidents from the beginning of the tale to the end, and role-play, where each player in the story plays his or her part in a transparent style. Interaction between the players then ensues.

The first approach deals with minor incidents of history. The storyteller here plays the role of guiding the listener to the fundamental points in a man ner that borders on the instructive in filling the gaps.

The importance of the dialog style of storytelling lies in its attempt tc simplify and make understandable the concept all round, so that no aspect should remain ambiguous. This is because each party to the dialog does their best to put across their point of view.

However, there is another point that distinguishes the dialog style. It paints a live and dynamic picture of the scene. Thus, the reader lives the situations, one after the other, trying to visualize the climate of the historical occurrences through the activity of the heroes of the story as though he were living then. The reader does not only experience the narrative and its connotations, but also the dynamism and atmosphere that govern the entire story. It is obvious, therefore, that recounting the facts of the story per se cannot serve this purpose, although it should provide a detailed account of the situation.

This has been the reason why the Quran has concentrated more on dialog in telling a story in order to portray a lively picture of the history of the Message in its vitality in real life situations, which the Quran has desired to relate to the present, stressing the common denominator between all the Divine Messages. It may be said too that the Quran has desired to raise the vital issues that relate to people's lives in order to give them that extra dimension in their minds.

QURANIC CHAPTER 56: THE INEVITABLE (AL-WAQIAH)
SIGNS 56:39-56:74

Makkah: *A throng of the ancient ones* (56:39)
and a throng from the later ones, (56:40)
and the Companions of the Left
—who are the Companions of the Left? (56:41)
Those who are in burning wind and scalding water (56:42)
and shade of black smoke (56:43)
neither that which is cool nor generous. (56:44)
Truly, they had been before that ones who are given ease (56:45)
and they had been persisting in tremendous wickedness. (56:46)
And they had been saying:
When we died and had been earth dust and bones,
will we, then, be ones who are raised up? (56:47)
And our ancient fathers? (56:48)
Say: Truly, the ancient ones and the later ones (56:49)
will be ones who will be gathered
to a time appointed on a known Day. (56:50)
Again, you, O ones who go astray, are the ones who deny. (56:51)
Certainly, you will be ones who eat from the Zaqqum tree. (56:52)
Then, you will be ones who fill your bellies from it, (56:53)
then, ones who drink scalding water after it. (56:54)
So you will be ones who drink
like the drinking of thirsty camels. (56:55)
This will be their hospitality on the Day of Judgment! (56:56)
We, We created you. Why establish it not as true? (56:57)
Considered you what you spill of human seed? (56:58)
Is it you who create it?
Or are We the ones who are the creators? (56:59)
We ordained death among you
and We will not be ones who will be outrun (56:60)
in that We will substitute your likeness
and We caused you to grow in a way you know not. (56:61)
And, certainly, you knew the first growth.
Will you not, then, recollect? (56:62)
Considered you the soil that you till? (56:63)
Is it you who sows it?
Or are We the ones who sow? (56:64)
If We will, We would make it into chaff
and you would continue to joke saying: (56:65)
We are ones who are debt-loaded! (56:66)
Nay! We are ones who are deprived. (56:67)
Considered you the water that you drink? (56:68)

Is it you who caused it to descend from the cloud vapors?
Or are We the ones who caused it to descend? (56:69)
If We will, We would make it bitter.
Why, then, give you not thanks? (56:70)
Considered you the fire which you strike? (56:71)
Is it you who caused the tree to grow?
Or are We the ones who cause it to grow? (56:72)
We made it an admonition and sustenance
for ones who are desert people. (56:73)
*Then, glorify with the name of **your** Lord, The Sublime.* (56:74)

COMMENTARY°

The section specifically refutes the argument of those who doubt it, denying the Quran and associating partners with God. They always wonder: *And they had been saying: When we died and had been earth dust and bones, will we, then, be ones who are raised up? And our ancient fathers?* (56:47-56:48)

These people on the right consist: *A throng of the ancient ones and a throng from the later ones.* (56:39-56:40) This means that they are greater in number than the first group of people to the fore, taking into account the two views we explained in reference to earlier and later generations.

The section now speaks about the third group, the people on the left, to whom a general reference was made earlier on. (56:41-56:56)

While the people on the right enjoy extended shade and constantly flowing water, these on the left: *Those who are in burning wind and scalding water and shade of black smoke neither that which is cool nor generous.* (56:42-56:44) The whole atmosphere is of a scorching heat that penetrates and burns the skin. The water they have to drink is also scalding, giving no refreshment. They also have shade, but it is no more than the shadows of black smoke. It is a shade painted in irony, for such shade is devoid of coolness, inviting no rest, and giving no sensation other than that produced by suffocating heat. Such hardship is a fitting requital: *Truly, they had been before that ones who are given ease.* (56:45) The absence of comfort for those who are used to indulging and excessing in luxury is hard indeed. They also persisted in heinous sin, associating partners with God.

The Arabic word used here for sin is *hinth* that means breach, violation. It implies, thus, a reference to the pledge given by human nature to maintain faith in God's Oneness and not to associate partners with Him. They are certainly in breach of that pledge. They used to say: *And they had been saying: When we died and had been earth*

dust and bones, will we, then, be ones who are raised up? And our ancient fathers? (56:47-56:48)

The section clearly uses the past tense in these last two points, saying that they persisted in sin and denied the resurrection, thus treating this present life of the addressees as though it has already ended. In other words, this scene of suffering is made to appear as though it is presently occurring After all, this whole life is no more than a twinkling of the eye, whilst the life to come is ultimate and permanent.

The section seizes this appropriate moment to answer their question, which they unfold in an exaggerated sense of incredulity: *Say: Truly, the ancient ones and the later ones will be ones who will be gathered to a time appointed on a known Day.* (56:49-56:50) The specific day is the one that has just been painted. It has been shown as though they are enduring it right now.

The section resumes the description of the suffering that awaits those who deny the truth of God's Oneness: *Again, you, O ones who go astray, are the ones who deny. Certainly, you will be ones who eat from the Zaqqum tree.* (56:51-56:52)

Again no one has ever seen devils' heads, but the very phrase gives us a clear sense. Besides, the very name, Zaqqum, implies a hard, rough surface with thorns that pierce hands and throats. This is in contrast to the thornless lote trees and flower-clad acacias that the people on the right enjoy. Although the fruit of the Zaqqum tree looks like devils' heads, these people will eat it filling your bellies with it. *Then, you will be ones who fill your bellies from it.* (56:53) Hunger is overpowering. Hard and thorny food will inevitably require a drink to ease its swallowing and refresh the stomach. They, however, will drink scalding water. *Then, ones who drink scalding water after it.* (56:54) Such a drink can never refresh or satisfy a thirsty person. Yet these people: *So you will be ones who drink like the drinking of thirsty camels.* (56:55) These camels have a well known illness making them always thirsty. *This will be their hospitality on the Day of Judgment!* (56:56)

THE BEGINNING AND THE END

This whole issue of faith is the same as the first instance of creation and the end, the giving of life and inevitable death. It is familiar, seen at all times. How come, then, that people do not believe that it is God who creates them? The weight of this truth on human nature is too heavy for anyone to challenge: *We, We created you. Why establish it not as true? Considered you what you spill of human seed?*

Is it you who create it? Or are We the ones who are the creators? (56:57-59)

Such is the beginning; but the end is in no way less miraculous or amazing, even though it is so familiar a sight: *We ordained death among you and We will not be ones who will be outrun.* (56:60) What is death, the inevitable end of every living thing? What is it? How does it occur? How come it overpowers all? It is nothing less than God's decree. Therefore, no one can escape it. No one can spring ahead of it so as to miss it. It is a stage in the chain of existence that must be completed: To be in charge of the earth after you have gone. God who has decreed death has also decreed life. He has decreed that people shall die, and that He will replace them with others like them, until the time span decreed for this stage of life comes to its end. Once it is over, then the second life begins: *In that We will substitute your likeness and We caused you to grow in a way you know not.* (56:61) This is in the realm that lies beyond the reach of our perception. It is a great realm about which humans know nothing other than what God is pleased to tell them. At that point, the journey comes to its end.

Such is how people are brought into being a second time: *And, certainly, you knew the first growth. Will you not, then, recollect?* (56:62) The two are not dissimilar in nature. There is nothing strange about it.

In such a simple approach, and with such ease the Quran portrays the two great events of bringing humans into being. With such ease and simplicity, it makes human nature face the logic it knows well. It cannot dispute this logic because it is based on its own basic facts and on what people see in their own lives. It is an approach that is free of complication, abstraction and sophistication. It is the approach of God, the Creator of the human being and the universe who bestowed the Quran from on high.

PLANT, WATER AND FIRE

Once more the Quran, in perfect ease and simplicity, puts before people something which is well known to them and which they repeatedly see. It shows how God's hand works to bring it about, showing them the miracle they overlook when it is always happening in front of their very own eyes:

Such is the first time life comes into being. Why should a second time be thought strange?

Consider the water you drink: *Nay! We are ones who are deprived. Considered you the water that you drink? Is it you who caused it to descend from the cloud vapors? Or are We the ones who*

caused it to descend? If We will, We would make it bitter. Why, then, give you not thanks? (56:68-56:70)

Consider the fire you kindle: *Considered you the fire which you strike? Is it you who caused the tree to grow? Or are We the ones who cause it to grow? We made it an admonition and sustenance for ones who are desert people.* (56:71-56:73)

The section now points to the ultimate truth that all these facts lead to: God's Lordship of the universe and His ultimate power that now manifests itself, in all its glory, to human nature. It instructs the Prophet to recognize this truth, give it its due, and bring it to the forefront so that it exercises its profound influence on peoples hearts: *Then, glorify with the name of your Lord, The Sublime.*(56:74)

Had any of this not taken place, people would say: *We are ones who are debt-loaded! Nay! We are ones who are deprived.* (56:66-56:67) It is God who, in His grace, grants them the fruits of their plants, allowing the plant to complete its cycle of life, which is similar to that which a human seed goes through from the moment it is discharged. Both are pictures of life as God makes it.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 56:39-56:74

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic signs here ask several questions of the Companions of the Left who say: When we have died and become earth dust and bones, will be ones who are raised up and our ancient fathers? The response said by the Prophet: The ancient ones and the later ones will be ones who are gathered. The Quran asks the ungrateful: We created you. Why not establish it as true? Have you considered what you have spilt of human seed? Is it you who create it? Or are We the ones who are the creators? Will you not, then, recollect? Do you consider the soil that you till? Is it you who sows it? Or are We the ones who sow? Have you considered the water that you drink? Is it you who have caused it to descend from cloud vapors? Or are We the ones who caused it to descend? Why, then, give not thanks? Have you considered the fire that you strike? Is it you who caused the tree to grow? Or are We the ones who cause it to grow?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message questions the ungrateful as to why they do not give thanks. We created you. Why not establish it as true? Have you considered what you have spilt of human seed? Is it you who create it? Or are We the ones who are the creators? Will you not, then, recollect? Do you consider the soil that you till? Is it you who sows it? Or are We the ones who sow? Have you considered the water that you drink? Is it you who have caused it to descend from cloud vapors? Or are We the ones who caused it to descend? Why, then, give not thanks? Have you considered the fire that you strike? Is it you who caused the tree to grow? Or are We the ones who cause it to grow? The questions are rhetorical. Clearly all was created by God. To think about our blessings which we did not create. One who is not grateful will be among the Companions of the Left. The ungrateful are not thankful to God for His creation.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear Proof (*bayyinatun*, *nazar*)...

LESSON 46(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, ayah), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge as the following passage regarding Prophet Muhammad and his disciplining of himself and his life.

> Despite saying that he was a simple person, there are still other such qualities that are specific to his and his personality alone. One of these qualities is his discipline. Three rooms made of mud and thatched with the leaves of the date palm (this is what his entire organization consisted of) are organized and coordinated in such a way the same administration, the same life that the greatest of all bureaucracy of the world cannot be compared to. He is like a phenomenon, a natural phenomenon like a small fragment of the world. Have a look at his mosque
>
> His life was very simple and at the same time very regular and exact. Throughout his whole lifetime he did not commit a single act of discrimination.
>
> There are three columns, the columns on which the roof of his rooms rests, three trunks of the date tree. It is written on one of them, the column of rings, on the other, the column of guards and the column of the meditation or the sleeping column on the third column. What does all this mean?
>
> Whenever the Prophet closed his prayers he used to stand beside the pulpit, so that anybody who wished to discuss their problems could come forward. A person cheated in a certain deal, would come and give an account of his difficulties. A woman unhappy about her husband, would come and discuss her problems. Two people who have quarreled, come and explain their dispute. Someone has used abusive language, the aggrieved party comes to him. Whoever wants to come, comes and says whatever he or she wants to say. But sometimes he needs to hold a commission meeting. The chiefs of the tribes have come to discuss with him something that is related to the destiny of the Quranic message. He ought to take an account of the matter. But still he does not go behind closed doors; he sits beside a pillar. While he is seated beside a particular pillar, all the Muslims who enter the mosque understand that the Prophet is holding a commis-

sion meeting, and that it is not the time for them to sit beside him. It is obvious that he has foreign visitors. That he is busy in important political talks, and therefore it is not a proper time to interrupt him. They can do so later on. They leave the place, for when the Prophet is busy with important discussions, order should be maintained. But his simplicity is still evident. No line is drawn and no walls are raised, but discipline is observed and everybody knows the nature of this business.

When the person, who is in politics, who is being intimidated, reviled, who listens to the problems of every so and so, and has attained such lofty heights of spiritual glory that the inhabitants of the heavenly spheres gaze at him with awe, needs silence and seclusion for contemplation and meditation. Whenever he wishes to be alone to with draw to himself, drown himself in thought, he goes to the pillar named the column of meditation. When he is there, no one goes to him. His family should not try to have any contact with him, his wife should not speak to him, nor the Companions nearest to him should approach him. The people have no business to disturb him either. He remains aloof and alone there. If delegations arrive, they have to wait for him. As long as he is seated near the column of meditation, everyone understands that he wishes to meditate in seclusion and is offering his prayers. When he says liturgical prayers, he does it with the people. But when he offers midnight prayers, he is in a special spiritual state. On such occasions, when he wishes to offer formal prayer all alone, no one is supposed to offer their formal prayers with him or disturb him.

This order and discipline reached such proportions that the household goods acquired specific names, whose list is given in the *Life of Muhammad* (*sirah*) written by Ibn Hisham. He had several donkeys and mules, each of whom was given a name. He did not say: Bring the black-tailed mule. It had a name. He had several caps. He had two or three turbans which he used to wear on Fridays, and on the occasion of peace talks and other important social ceremonies. Each of these turbans had a certain name. This naming of the caps is indicative of his keenness to have order in every matter. His bodily functions were exactly like nature. It was not something cultivated and acquired, as in the case of the behavior of other human beings.

One of the characteristics of the Prophet is described by Ali ibn Abi Talib who has minutely portrayed him and has given such exact physiognomic details about him that one can paint a portrait of the Prophet according to them. He has portrayed his inner reflection and characteristics with words. How modern it is! What a psychological

insight! What a vivid portrait! He says: He was neither so tall that he could be regarded tall, nor so short that he could appear slight and puny. He was square-shouldered and of sturdy build. His eyes were sharp and he had a bass voice. He walked with a fast pace, a bit inclined forward. He was prominently visible from a long distance and caught the eyes like a roaring stream gushing onwards or like a rock rolling down the mountain as if he was striding over a steep slope. From one shoulder to the other his chest was covered with thick growth of hair, a line of which reached his navel. He was so particular about cleanliness that he never used the same towel twice in his life.

Today a revolutionary is supposed to be a dirty person. In fact these are the values cherished by a revolutionary today. If anyone keeps himself neat and clean, it is said that he has adopted the bourgeoisie way of life. But this fellow, who was a revolutionary to the core of his being, whose entire paraphernalia consisted of four mats, ate date flour and date stone, transformed the whole world, and despite growing up as a shepherd in the desert, where water was scarce and hygienic conditions bad, had such a high sense of hygiene and cleanliness that he did not use a towel twice during his entire lifetime. It is written in *al-Kamisi* that he had no riches, but one third of all he possessed he spent on the articles of toilet and cosmetics. One-third of all his expenditure was for articles of dressing up, toilet and perfumes, what can I say, it seems to be unbelievable![7]

QURANIC CHAPTER 56: THE INEVITABLE (AL-WAQIAH) SIGNS 56:75-56:96

Makkah: *But no! I swear*
by the orbit of the stars (56:75)
and, truly, that is an oath
to be sworn if you know, sublime. (56:76)
Truly, it is a generous Recitation (56:77)
in a well-guarded Book. (56:78)
None touches it but the ones who are purified, (56:79)
Madinah (56:80)
Madinah (56:81)
And you make it your provision that you,
you deny the Recitation. (56:82)
Then, why not intervene when it reached the wind-pipe (56:83)
and you are looking on at the time? (56:84)
And We are nearer to him than you, yet you perceive not.(56:85)
Then, why had you not been—

if you are not ones to be judged—(56:86)
returning the soul to the body,
if you had been ones who are sincere? (56:87)
If he had been among the ones who are brought near, (56:88)
there is solace and fragrant herbs and a Garden of Bliss. (56:89)
And if he had been of the Companions of the Right, (56:90)
*then: Peace for **you** from the Companions of the Right.* (56:91)
And yet if he had been
of the ones who go astray, ones who deny, (56:92)
then, a hospitality of scalding water (56:93)
and broiling in hellfire. (56:94)
Truly, this is The Truth of certainty. (56:95)
*So glorify the Name of **your** Lord, The Almighty.* (56:96)

COMMENTARY°

A GREAT OATH

The Quran is indeed a most honorable discourse. It is unlike anything the ungrateful allege about it, claiming that it is the work of a monk or a madman or that it is fabricated, or a host of ancient legends, or that it is delivered by devils, or whatever. It is most honorable by its source, by itself and by the message and teachings it imparts.

Further description of the Quran is added in the next two signs, the second of which provides an explanation of the first: *In a well-guarded Book. None touches it but the ones who are purified.* (56:78-56:79) The ungrateful allege that the Quran was given to the Prophet by satans. This sign refutes this. No satan can touch this record, which is well-guarded, kept safe under God's care. It is purified by angels that bring it down to the Prophet. This is the better explanation of the sign that says that only the purified can touch the Quran. The negation here is a statement, not a command. In this life on earth anyone can handle the Quran: Someone who is purified or someone who is contaminated, a believer or an ungrateful. To take the negation as applying to the book containing the Quran would be erroneous. It can only be true when we take it as refuting the allegations of the ungrateful. The divine record containing the Quran in heaven is untouchable by anyone other than purified angels. This is further confirmed by the statement that follows, confirming that the Quran is: *A sending down successively from the Lord of the worlds.* (56:80)

Now the section directs its address to those who denied the truth of the Quran in another way, providing a relationship between it and the universe in a great oath by God, the Lord of all the worlds.

These signs: *But no! I swear by the orbit of the stars and, truly, that is an oath to be sworn if you know, sublime* (56:75-56:76) make an oath which is correctly rendered in the translation here. This stylistic feature mentions an oath, then appears to turn away from it. The Arabic original is far more powerful in its deliverance of what is intended. Therefore, the emphasis on the oath in the way it is rendered in English. The point is that this great truth does not need an oath to establish it, as it is already clear and well confirmed: *Truly, it is a generous Recitation.* (56: 77)

Further description of the Quran is added in the next two signs, the second of which provides an explanation of the first: *In a well-guarded Book. None touches it but the ones who are purified.* (56:78-56:79) The ungrateful alleged that the Quran was given to the Prophet by devils. This sign refutes this. No devil can touch this record, which is well-guarded, kept safe under God's care. It is purified by angels that bring it down to the Prophet. This is the better explanation of the sign that says that only the purified can touch the Quran. The negation here is a statement, not a command. In this life on earth anyone can handle the Quran: Someone who is purified or someone who is contaminated, a believer or an unbeliever. To take the negation as applying to the book containing the Quran would be erroneous. It can only be true when we take it as refuting the allegations of the ungrateful. The divine record containing the Quran in heaven is untouchable by anyone other than purified angels. This is further confirmed by the statement that follows, confirming that the Quran is a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds. *A sending down successively from the Lord of the worlds.* (56:80)

AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH

The final passage in the section speaks of the moment of death, which sends a shudder of fear into everyone. This is the moment when all argument stops, when a person stands at the end of one road and the beginning of another. It is a point of no return.

Are you in doubt about what you are told concerning a second life, denying the truth of the Quran and what it tells you about the Day of Judgment, or the principles of faith it lays down for you? *And you make it your provision that you, you deny the Recitation.* (56:82) Your denial is all that you earn and save in this life for your second life. How miserable a livelihood! What will you do when your soul is in your throat, standing on a road that leads you to the unknown?

The section paints this situation in an inspiring way, drawing all its aspects in quick touches: *Then, why not intervene when it reached*

the wind-pipe and you are looking on at the time? And We are nearer to him than you, yet you perceive not. (56:83-56:85) We almost hear a rattling sound in the throat, see the features decline and sense the distress: *Then, why not intervene when it reached the wind-pipe.* (56:83) We almost see the despair on the faces of those attending the dying person: *And you are looking on at the time?* (56:84)

At this point, when the soul is no longer concerned with anything in this world; when it has put the whole earthly world behind it; when it is about to see a world totally unknown and for which it has no provisions other than its deeds in this life; when it sees a new world and cannot say anything about it; when it has separated from all around it who only see a dying body but who stand helpless, then human power and knowledge are at their end. At this point, people realize that they are absolutely helpless. They see nothing, know nothing and can do nothing. All power and knowledge belong to God alone, with no one able to cast any doubt about this truth: *And We are nearer to him than you, yet you perceive not.* (56:85)

At this point Gods majesty is clearly felt, and people experience a sense of awe resulting from His presence. He is no doubt present at all times, but the Quranic statement reawakens the feeling of this truth which people often overlook. Therefore, the scene of death is overshadowed by feelings of God's majesty and awe, in addition to peoples own helplessness.

The section now puts forward a challenge that ends all argument: *Then, why had you not been—if you are not ones to be judged—returning the soul to the body, if you had been ones who are sincere?* (56:86-56:87) If it is true that there will be no reckoning of deed and no requital for them and you are free, with no accounting to make, then try, if you can, to restore this soul that has come up to the throat and put it back in place. Try, if you can, to prevent its march towards that reckoning while you helplessly look on. Thus all excuses, arguments and disputes end. This truth is felt to be so weighty that no person can stand up to it, except through stubborn and baseless denial.

THE FINAL DESTINATION

The section now explains the fate of our soul that has turned its back on this world to begin its new and permanent life. In the early part of the section we saw images of the blessings granted to those who are close to God. The soul of such a person will now see what awaits it: Repose, fulfilment and a garden of bliss. The very sound of these words overflows with comfort, ease and happiness.

If he had been among the ones who are brought near, there is solace and fragrant herbs and a Garden of Bliss. And if he had been of the Companions of the Right, then: Peace for you from the Companions of the Right. (56:88-56:91) This person is now directly addressed with a greeting sent to him by his brethren who are on the right. It is a gentle and delightful greeting, giving him reassurance. He begins to look forward to his forthcoming life with the people on the right. *And yet if he had been of the ones who go astray, ones who deny, then, a hospitality of scalding water and broiling in hellfire.* (56:92-94) How miserable a welcome! How terrible is the suffering of scalding water and blazing fire! It all appears before such a person and he knows that he will have to experience it.

Now that this climax has been reached, the conclusion is profound and serious in its tone:*Truly, this is The Truth of certainty. So glorify the Name of your Lord, The Almighty.* (56:95-56:96) The great weight assigned to this absolute truth in God s scales thus combines with the inevitable event mentioned at the beginning of the section. The final feeling reflects the effect of this firm belief with glorification of God, the Supreme.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 56:75-56:96

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Glorify the Name of **your** Lord, The Almighty, Muhammad.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Again, the Quran asks the Companions of the Left, those who deny the Inevitable Day and the Recitation (the Quran): Why when death approaches you and you are looking at time, do you not intervene? If you, the ungrateful, are not to be judged, then why do you not return the soul to the body at death if you had been ones who are sincere?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

If the Recitation is denied by the ungrateful, it is because they do not accept it as the revelation from God. Why, then, when death approaches you and you are looking at time, do you not intervene? If you, the ungrateful, are not to be judged, then why do you not return the soul to the body at death if you had been ones who are sincere? No person can intervene for himself or herself at the time of death. No person can return the soul to the body at death but God. If we do not have these powers, why not acknowledge and give thanks to the One that has this power? The ungrateful in their arrogance do not recognize the powers that they lack. No person can prevent his or her death or return his or her soul to the body.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 47(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, OBSERVATIONS

HOW DO I USE INFORMATION?

How to use information will become clear by answering the following questions:

Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed ot have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. Does my thinking have a goal, agenda, purpose?
2. Are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
3. How is the information being used?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated

by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions• that are drawn from them as we learn the hard facts of life of the blessed Prophet and his family.

The house of Prophet Muhammad is like the Kabah in which the children and the inheritors of Abraham reside. It is a sign and a symbol. It is Real. It is made of stone whereas they are human beings. The Kabah is the place of circumambulation for Muslims; whereas, the house of Prophet Muhammad is the destination of every heart that understands beauty, majesty, freedom, justice, love, sincerity, and strength. It is the destination of those who encourage inner struggle and sacrifice to preserve the lives and freedom of the people.

From another point of view, the palaces of the kings (from which, historians say, waft culture, civilization, religion, thought, discipline and art) are turned around. Our intelligent, loyal, lovers of virtue who have known this household—luckless and quiet—have always been sacrificed. Our people have tied eternal links to them. All their faith, longing, thought and feelings have been devoted to them. Their hearts beat for them. Their eyes cry with their sorrow. They sacrifice themselves and their possessions in their way. They withhold nothing.

Look at these poverty-stricken, starving people who show their feelings and the faith that they have in each individual member of this beloved family. What things have they not done and what things will they not do for them?

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:1-26:9

Makkah: *Ta Sin Mim.* (26:1)
That are the signs of the clear Book. (26:2)
Perhaps you would be
one who consumes yourself in grief because
they become not ones who believe. (26:3)
If We will, We send down to them from heaven a sign
so that perhaps their necks would stay to it,
ones that are bent in humility. (26:4)
And there approaches them not any renewed Remembrance
from The Merciful but that they had been
ones who turn aside from it. (26:5)
Surely, they denied it. So soon the tiding will approach them about
what they had been ridiculing. (26:6)

Consider they the earth,
how much We caused to develop in and on it
of every generous pair? (26:7)
Truly, in that is a sign.
Yet most of them had not been ones who believe. (26:8)
Truly, your Lord, He is, certainly,
The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:9)

COMMENTARY°

THE PROPHET'S UNNECESSARY CONCERN

Ta Sin Mim. That are the signs of the clear Book. (26:1-26:2) The section begins with three separate Arabic letters, *Ta Sin Mim*, indicating that the signs of the Quran, the book that sets things in full clarity, including the present section, are made out of such letters. These letters are available to those who deny divine revelation, and they cannot produce out of them anything similar to this clear book. The nature of the book is discussed at the beginning and end of the section, just as it is discussed in every section which has a similar beginning employing separate letters.

The section then addresses the Prophet who is concerned about the idolaters and saddened by their rejection of his message and the Quran. It comforts the Prophet telling him that the whole matter is not worth his concern. God could easily have forced them to believe by showing them a clear sign they would not have been able to resist.

There is here a note of remonstration with the Prophet for showing too much concern for the ungrateful and their attitudes: *Perhaps you would be one who consumes yourself in grief because they become not ones who believe.* (26:3) The Prophet is shown to be suffering because of his certainty that their rejection will inevitably incur punishment. Since these people belonged to his own clan and community, he took the matter to heart, feeling heavy at the inevitable prospect. God, however, is too caring to leave him to his grief. The section tells him that his responsibility does not include bringing these people into the fold of believers. Had it been God's will, He would have sent down a miraculous, overpowering sign that would have rendered all their arguments meaningless. They would then have had no option but to declare their belief in God and submit to Him. The sign gives a graphic picture of their submission to such a sign: *If We will, We send down to them from heaven a sign so that perhaps their necks would stay to it, ones that are bent in humility.* (26:4) This image depicts them with their necks permanently bent,

unable ever to look up. But God Almighty has not chosen to provide such a compelling sign with His last message. Instead, He has made the Quran, a complete and perfect code of living, His miraculous and overpowering sign.

The Quranic message is designed by God to remain open to all communities and all generations. It is not meant for any particular group or location. Therefore, its miracle should also remain available to all regardless of their community and generation. God made the Quran His miracle, rather than providing a physical miracle that leaves its onlookers speechless, having no counter argument. Physical miracles silence only those who see them, but they subsequently become no more than a piece of history.

Conversely, the Quran remains today, more than fourteen centuries after its revelation, an open book outlining a code for life. People today find in it all that they need to put their lives on the right course, should they but determine to implement it. It leads them to a better world, higher horizons and an infinitely superior destiny. Future generations will find in the Quran much that we have not been able to discover, because the Quran gives every seeker what that seeker needs, while its treasures remain self-renewing, limitless. The ungrateful were unaware of this central issue. Therefore, they continued to turn a deaf ear whenever Quranic revelations were read out to them.*And there approaches them not any renewed Remembrance from The Merciful but that they had been ones who turn aside from it.* (26:5)

We note that God's attribute mentioned here is 'the Most Merciful' indicating His great act of mercy, namely the revelation of the Quran. Thus, their turning away from it appears in its reality: it is an abhorrent act that rejects God's care and grace. They deprive themselves of such mercy when they are the ones who need it most. Their rejection of God's mercy merits the incurrence of God's punishment: *Surely, they denied it. So soon the tiding will approach them about what they had been ridiculing.* (26:6) The threat is expressed in general, unspecified terms, with a touch of sarcasm that suits their derision of God's warnings. A more literal translation of this sign is: They will in time receive the news of what it was they were wont to deride. Needless to say, they will not receive any piece of news; rather, they will endure the punishment they have derided, and they, themselves will provide the news as people relate what happens to them.

They demand a miracle while ignoring the numerous miraculous signs God has placed all around them. These are sufficient for anyone with an open heart and mind. Indeed, in every aspect of this marvel-

lous universe there is a great sign providing people with all the reassurance they need: *Consider they the earth, how much We caused to develop in and on it of every generous pair? Truly, in that is a sign. Yet most of them had not been ones who believe.* (26:7-26:8)

We feel His presence at every moment of the day and night. We also realize that we are only one type of God's creatures, subject to the same natural laws that shape existence. We also recognize that we have a special role in the universe that must be fulfilled on earth, the planet which we have been placed in charge of. *Consider they the earth, how much We caused to develop in and on it of every generous pair?* (26:7) This nobility is imparted through life that is given by God, who is most noble and most generous. The phraseology of this sign suggests that we should look at God's creation with honor and respect, and not ignore or belittle it: *Truly, in that is a sign.* (26:8) The ungrateful had been demanding a sign while in all this there is a great sign, but few are those who take heed of it: *Yet most of them had not been ones who believe.* (26:8)

The section's introduction ends with a comment that is repeated every time a point is concluded: *Truly, **your** Lord, He is, certainly, The Almighty, The Compassionate.* (26:9) He is able to provide all signs and to inflict punishment on those who deny the truth. He is also 'the Merciful' who shows His signs to those who are willing to believe.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 26:1-26:9

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The signs are to give comfort to the Prophet not to grieve for the ungrateful who deny his message. Truly, **your** Lord, Muhammad, is certainly The Almighty, The Compassionate.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Even a sign from heaven does not convince the ungrateful.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message comforts the Prophet. Will the ungrateful give thanks if another sign were to come from heaven? Even if another sign were sent to the ungrateful, they would not believe. Therefore, Muhammad should not grieve for them. If there are those who do not accept the revelation as a sign from God, they will not give thanks even if another sign were sent to them from heaven. Arrogance prevents one from being grateful for blessings. Gratitude only comes from ones who are humble and recognize the limits to their powers. Those who are arrogant and refuse to be grateful will continue to ridicule the signs.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

LESSON 47(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN?

THE CRITERIA INCLUDE:

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* (6:104)

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* (6:80)

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* (30:21)

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* (6:125-6:126)

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* (21:24)

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* (27:64)

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* (16:10-16:11)

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely,*

We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. (6:97-6:98)

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (16:12)

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)[8]

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

In studying criteria and their development for evaluation in regard to problem-solving, we know that there are three well-known methods of problem-solving.

Conservatism is the method used by the guardians of Traditions—as interpreted by culture. It is used by leaders who guard and preserve society so that the guardians have something to guard.

The logic of the conservative is this: If we change the customs of the past, it is as if we had separated the roots from the trunk of a tree. The cultural relationships which are preserved in custom are connected to the body of society like a hierarchy of nerves. If the

roots are destroyed, so is the rest of the tree.

It is exactly because of this that after a great revolution, anguish, confusion and/or dictators come into being. Hastily digging out the roots of social and cultural phenomena in a quick, revolutionary manner will cause society to face a sudden void. The unfortunate results of this void will be made apparent after the revolution subsides.

Revolutionism is a method used by leaders who tear out things by the roots, believing that all custom is based only on old superstitions and, is, therefore, reactionary and rotten. The reasoning of the revolutionary runs like this: by retaining outdated cultural customs, we keep society outdated and living in the past. We stagnate. Thus a revolutionary leader says that all forms inherited from the past should be eliminated because these forms are like chains around our wrists, feet, spirit, thoughts, will and vision. All of our relationships to the past should be done away with. New rules should replace old. Otherwise society remains behind, fanatic, stagnant, and bound to the past.

Reformism is a method used by people who believe in gradual change. These people lay the groundwork for gradual change in social conditions. Reformism is the middle way between the other two. The reasoning of the returner is just as weak as that of the other two methods. He takes a third way, believing change should be quiet and gradual so that the different factions do not oppose each other. If change is gradual, reformers reason, the foundation of society will not take on a revolutionary form but rather change over a long period of time. Thus, programs should be graduated to reach this end.

But the method of reformism or gradual evolution usually faces negative, strong reactions from internal and external enemies during the long time period this method requires. These forces either stop it or destroy it.

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:10-26:33

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:10)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:11)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:12)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:13)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:14)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:15)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:16)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:18)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:20)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:21)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:27)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:28)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:29)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:30)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:31)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:32)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:33)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA) SIGNS 26:34-26:51

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:34)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:35)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:36)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:37)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:40)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:42)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:43)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:49)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:50)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:51)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA) SIGNS 26:52-26:68

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:52)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:53)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:54)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:55)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:56)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:57)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:58)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:59)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:60)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:61)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:62)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:63)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:64)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:65)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:66)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:67)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:68)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:69-26:104

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:71)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:72)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:74)
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Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:95)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:95)
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Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:97)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:98)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:99)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:100)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:101)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:102)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:103)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:104)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA) SIGNS 26:105-26:122

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:105)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:106)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:107)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:108)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:109)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:110)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:111)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:112)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:113)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:114)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:115)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:116)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:117)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:118)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:119)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:120)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:121)
Makkah: Noah (26:122)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA) SIGNS 26:123-26:140

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:123)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:124)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:126)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:127)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:128)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:129)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:130)

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:131)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:132)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:133)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:134)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:135)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:136)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:137)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:138)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:139)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:140)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:141-26:159

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:141)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:142)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:143)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:144)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:145)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:146)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:147)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:148)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:149)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:150)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:151)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:152)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:153)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:154)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:155)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:156)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:157)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:158)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:159)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:160-26:175

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:160)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:161)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:162)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:163)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:164)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:165)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:166)

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:167)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:168)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:169)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:170)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:171)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:172)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:173)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:174)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:175)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:176-26:191

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:176)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:177)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:178)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:179)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:180)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:181)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:182)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:183)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:184)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:185)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:186)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:187)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:188)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:189)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:190)

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:191)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:192-26:227

Makkah: *And this, truly,*
is the sending down successively
of the Lord of the worlds (26:192)
that the Trustworthy Spirit brought down (26:193)
*on **your** heart that **you** be among the one who warn* (26:194)
in a clear Arabic tongue. (26:195)
And, truly, it is in the ancient scrolls
of the ancient ones. (26:196)
Madinah (26:197)
And if We sent it down to some of the non-Arabs, (26:198)
and he recited it to them, they had not been
ones who believe in it. (26:199)
Thus, We thrust it into the hearts of the ones who sin. (26:200)
They will not believe in it
until they see the painful punishment. (26:201)
Then, it will approach them suddenly
while they are not aware. (26:202)
Then, they will say: Are we ones who are given respite? (26:203)
Seek they to hasten Our punishment? (26:204)
*Had **you** considered that*
if We gave them enjoyment for years (26:205)
and, again, there drew near them
what they had been promised, (26:206)
they would not be availed by what
they had been given of enjoyment? (26:207)
We caused no town to perish
but that it had ones who warn (26:208)
as a reminder.
And We had not been ones who are unjust. (26:209)
It came not forth by the satans (26:210)
and neither is it fit and proper
for them nor are they able. (26:211)
Truly, they, from having the ability to hear,
are the ones who are set aside. (26:212)
*So call **you** not to any god with God*
*so that **you** be among the ones who are punished.* (26:213)
[*And warn **your** nearest kin, the kinspeople.* (26:214)]
(Revealed in the 3rd year)
*And make low **your** wing to whoever followed **you***

among the ones who believe. (26:215)
Then, if they rebelled against ***you****, then, say:*
Truly, I am free of what you do. (26:216)
And put ***your*** *trust in The Almighty, The Compassionate,* (26:217)
Who sees ***you*** *at the time* ***you*** *stand up* (26:218)
and ***your*** *going to and fro*
of the ones who prostrate themselves? (26:219)
Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (26:220)
Will I tell you in whom the satans come forth? (26:221)
They come forth in every sinful false one
who gives listen, (26:222)
but most of them are ones who lie. (26:223)
Madinah (26:224)
Madinah (26:225)
Madinah (26:226)
But those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
remembered God frequently
and helped themselves after they were wronged.
And those who did wrong will know
by which overturning they will be turned about! (26:227)

COMMENTARY°

This evidence came from within the Quran itself. The section, however, also provides further evidence, but this time it is external: *And, truly, it is in the ancient scrolls of the ancient ones.* (26:196)

Those idolaters were knowingly stubborn in their opposition. They did not lack the evidence or the proof. Had a non-Arab come to them and recited the Quran in its superb Arabic style, they would still have refused to believe: *And if We sent it down to some of the non-Arabs, and he recited it to them, they had not been ones who believe in it.* (26:198-26:199) This was meant to comfort the Prophet, presenting to him their stubborn refusal despite the clearest form of evidence. The section then states that such denial of the truth, despite its clarity and certainty, was second nature to them. They would not depart from this stance until they suffered God's punishment, which would take them by surprise: *Thus, We thrust it into the hearts of the ones who sin. They will not believe in it until they see the painful punishment. Then, it will approach them suddenly while they are not aware.* (26:200-26:202)

Thus the section provides a physical image of their unbudging denial of the revelation of the Quran, saying that it has been made to

pass through their constitution in denial form. *Then, they will say: Are we ones who are given respite?* (26:203) Can we have another chance to rectify what has passed? That, however, will never be given.

They hastened God's punishment with their careless ridicule, believing that the comforts they enjoyed would last: *Seek they to hasten Our punishment? Had you considered that if We gave them enjoyment for years and, again, there drew near them what they had been promised, they would not be availed by what they had been given of enjoyment?* (26:204-26:207) The section puts the image of hastening punishment to one side, and raises the prospect of the fulfilment of the warnings. We see the years of pleasure dwindling, as though they had never been. They benefit them in no way.

We caused no town to perish but that it had ones who warn as a reminder. And We had not been ones who are unjust. (26:208-26:209)

God took a pledge from all humanity that they would worship Him alone. This is the pledge of nature which makes human nature feel the presence of the One God, unless it grows corrupt and deviates. He placed countless indications in the world around us pointing to the right faith. All these confirm the presence of the One Creator. When people forget the pledge of their own nature, and overlook the pointers to faith, God sends them a warner to remind them of what they have forgotten and puts before their eyes what they have overlooked. Thus, the divine message is meant as a reminder and an act of perfect justice and total mercy: *As a reminder. And We had not been ones who are unjust.* (26:209) This is true even with the destruction of unbelieving communities. Such destruction is fair requital for deviating from proper guidance.

The section has more to say about the Quran making the method of its revelation very clear: *It came not forth by the satans and neither is it fit and proper for them nor are they able. Truly, they, from having the ability to hear, are the ones who are set aside.* (26:210-26:212)

At this juncture, the section addresses the Prophet, warning him against associating partners with God, even though he was always far from so doing. Yet the warning is given to him so that he could be more careful. **The Prophet is assigned the task of warning his closest kinsmen (revealed previously),** and ordered to place his trust in God who takes care of him in all situations: *So call **you** not to any god with God so that **you** be among the ones who are punished. **And warn your nearest kin, the kinspeople.** And make low **your** wing to whoever followed **you** among the ones who believe. Then, if they rebelled against **you**, then, say: Truly, I am free of what you do. And*

*put **your** trust in The Almighty, The Compassionate, Who sees **you** at the time **you** have stood up and **your** going to and fro of the ones who prostrate themselves? Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (26:213, **214,** 215-220)

Once more in this final passage of the section, the Quran is brought into focus. The first comment emphasized that it was a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds, brought to Muhammad through the trusted Spirit, Gabriel. Secondly, it made clear that no evil spirit could deliver it. Now the section asserts that such evil ones do not come to a person like Muhammad, who is honest, truthful and advocates a sound system. They go only to a liar, such as a wicked fortune-teller. Such people receive whatever evil spirits give them and circulate their dis-information widely after they themselves have further exaggerated it: *Will I tell you in whom the satans come forth? They come forth in every sinful false one who gives listen, but most of them are ones who lie.* (26:221-26:223)

The section then concludes with a general implicit warning: *But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality remembered God frequently and helped themselves after they were wronged. And those who did wrong will know by which overturning they will be turned about!* (26:227)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 26:192-26:227

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The signs address the Prophet: The Quran was revealed to **your** heart by the Trustworthy Spirit (Gabriel) in a clear Arabic tongue repeating what had been in the previous sacred scriptures. Had you, Muhammad, considered tha if we gave the ungrateful enjoyment for years, and again, there drew near them what they had been promised, they would not be availed by what they had been given of enjoyment? Call **you**, Muhammad, not upon any god with God so that **you**, Muhammad, be among the ones who are punished. And make low **your** wing, Muhammad, to whoever follows **you** among the ones who believe. However, if they rebel against **you**, then say: Truly, I am free of what you do. Put **your** trust, Muhammad, in The Almighty, The Compassionate who sees **you** when you stand up and **your** going to and fro among the ones who prostrate themselves.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quran says that the ungrateful will ask: Are we ones who are given respite? And, do they seek to hasten the punishment? God has not been unjust. The Quran has not been given by the satans. They are not able.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message speaks about the ungrateful and their stubborn rejection of the Quranic message. Why do they continue to deny the message and the warnings? The ungrateful are heedless of the approach to warnings, the hastening of their punishment, as well as scenes of the destruction of past communities. The first comment emphasized that it was a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds, brought to Muhammad through the trusted Spirit, Gabriel. Secondly, it made clear that no evil spirit could deliver it. Such evil ones do not come to a person like Muhammad, who is honest, truthful and advocates a sound system. They go only to a liar. Such people receive whatever evil spirits give them and circulate their dis-information widely after they themselves have further exaggerated it: *Will I tell you in whom the satans come forth? They come forth in every sinful false one who gives listen, but most of them are ones who lie.* Evil persons do not come to a person like Muhammad. The Quranic signs are from God, not from any evil spirits. The ungrateful are saying that the satans brought the Quran to the Prophet.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 48(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

Analyzing actions revealed in the Quran, one of the peculiarities of the Quranic message is that it accepts both beliefs which are identical to it as well as coercive beliefs of society. It admits to the existence of both. Here the perception of Islam is special.

The idealistic schools of thought embrace the highest values, the absolute and most desirable ideologies. Each and every fact is categorically rejected if it does not suit them. They have no patience. They deny unpleasant realities and dig out the roots of anger. Anger, violence, pleasure-seeking and greed are realities which do exist. Moral idealism or religious idealism (i.e. Christianity) ignores these vices and denies their existence.

On the other hand, schools of thought which are based on realism accept all things as the basis of reality. For instance, sodomy is not accepted in England or in Christianity due to religious idealism, not reality. Divorce among Catholics is prohibited to preserve the family and to reinforce the sacred nature of marriage.

But reality is other than this. Some human beings cannot preserve the first, sacred marriage and remain loyal to each other. It so often happens that human beings grow apart during their lifetime. They become strangers. They live together like two pitiful people. That which has joined them is not love; it is only the ties of law. They are afflicted. One might even become lucky with someone else. This reality has existed in the past, exists in the present and will exist in the future. Civilized and uncivilized people, the religious and the nonreligious, have felt it and continue to feel it. Statistics show it, but some Christian groups deny this reality. They bind marriage to the sacred. They force a family to stay together even when a real hell is behind the doors, and the family has become a center of murder, adultery and corruption. The door of divorce has been closed, but thousands of windows of swindle and illegality have been opened.

NEITHER IDEALISM NOR REALISM: BOTH

Islam is a pure tree which belongs neither to the East nor the West but has its roots in the heavens and its branches reaching towards the earth. Contrary to idealism, Islam recognizes the realities of life (in both body and spirit) of the individual, as well as the realities of community relationships and of the depths of a society seen only in the motion of history.

Islam like realism only admits to the existence of life's harsher realities, but unlike realism, Islam does not accept the *status quo* but seeks to change. It changes essence in a revolutionary way. It carries the common idea of 'reality' along with its ideals. It uses such realities as a means to reach its idealistic goals, its real desires, which are without form by themselves. Unlike realism, Islam does not submit to realities, but rather, it causes the realities to submit to it. Islam does not turn away from realities as idealists do. It seeks them out. It tames them. Through this means, Islam uses that which hinders the idealists as raw material for its own ideals.

Islam accepts divorce in certain social circumstances. If it did not accept divorce, divorce would still exist, but it would be outside its control. By accepting an unavoidable, natural reality, it makes it into a legal form. As a result, one can conquer the sense of guilt one has in the eyes of God and society. Thus, divorce is based upon ethical principles and religion is preserved. Such people can nourish their environment. Society does not look upon them as sinners or on their children as illegal and impure.

Islam succeeded the day it admitted the existence of these social and human realities. Because of this, it can control its results. It can give realities a corrected legal form. It can bestow an ethical and religiously accepted form upon amorphous 'facts'. By confirming and admitting the existence of reality, Islam gains strength. It can then control, guide and dominate any reality within its framework.

If we deny realities, they will dominate us. Without knowing it, we will be pulled wherever they want us to go, and we, like the realists, will be drowned in existing realities, whether good or bad. On the other hand, idealists make the mistake of imprisoning themselves in the chains of useless customs. Realists move along with realities and accept them. Idealists who do not recognize such realities, deny them through their ignorance and their attachment to imaginary ideals. Idealists are then attacked by realities. The idealists fall on their knees because they are defenseless, inexperienced and weak. They are destroyed.

We don't see the form that girls who are raised in very strict religious homes take. We don't see how she covers her face so that, God forbid, the fish in the courtyard pool do not see her. What happens when she enters the ocean of society? She vigorously swims, but she is so afraid that she loses control of herself and drowns. In order to make up for what she lacks now, she pays her fine a thousand times over.

The same is true for young men who grow up in a pious society.

The *nouveau riche* have just moved from the former world of their idealistic pseudo-religious environment in which they were prohibited from learning physics or chemistry, and in which women were forbidden to have a high school or college education. The men did not shave their beards. They sat in coaches instead of in buses or in taxis. They wore no neck-tie. They did not let their hair grow long. They did not change the form of their clothes or their hair-style. They neither bought radios nor did they spread the word of the Koran through a microphone! Suddenly, these young people faced the new world of realities, full of twists and turns.

You see what confusion it has caused. The newly rich young person sees the pretense. He has learned certain airs through watching Western films and TV. He has learned about showing off luxury and being silly. He has seen the exaggeration of it all. It is so exaggerated that even foreigners laugh about it. Why? Because these pretenses exist side by side with reality whereas we deny the realities before we even come to know them. This is why we have been captured by our imagination.

This new civilization has attacked all boundaries toppled all the watchtowers of the world. The new generation has been caught in the whirling wind of the Renaissance, the 17th century intellectual movements, the French revolution and the industrialized life style. These historical events changed the weather of the world. The change of atmosphere of our country is also a reality. It is a most certain reality. It is clear that sooner or later lightening will strike. When i does, machines, printing presses, books, newspapers, democracy electronic media, movies, schools, women's education, new industrial techniques, new sciences, and many other new things will come and will change us.

The leaders of the people, those responsible for ethics, those who have been given the responsibility of guiding lives and thoughts, those who stand face to face with unavoidable realities have closed their eyes. They have given their hearts to mental ideologies and to their ancient thoughts. They have tried to preserve their horse drawn carriages side by side with taxis.

They still light lamps when they have electricity. They correctly predict the rush to the inferior world. They know it will bring about the decline of much belief, faith, piety, health and independence. They know that corruption will find a home deep within people's brains. But face to face with this rush towards modernity (and knowing the relationship which it imposes on the furthermost points and on the most backward tribes of society—even those in the depths of

the desert) they only say one thing and one thing only: Forbidden! Radio? Don't buy one. Movies? Don't see them. Television? Don't watch. Loudspeaker? Don't listen. University? Don't go. The new science? Don't study it. Newspapers? Don't read them. Vote? Don't do it. Office work? Don't do it and..woman? Shhh...Don't mention that word!

Face to face with the flood of new technology covering the globe, face to face with civilization which sells refrigerators to the Eskimos, they attempt to completely defend the past. Their total army and strategy consists of only two words: 'Forbidden!' and 'No!'.

What is the result? What we see is what happens. Contemporary events and realities break the barriers and tear down the watch-towers. Realities tears down the bricks of the walls and destroys the defenders of the past who hide with their eyes closed and faces averted in disapproval..

The force of these modern consumerist realities ruins everything at once. They attack the city's inhabited areas, its bazaars, mosques and even our homes like wild bulls, wolves or chained dogs. They plunder everything. But they do not leave. They come, they kill, they burn and they take, but they do not leave as the army of Genghis Khan left. Why?

Because no one even sees them. Our border guards, our watchmen, don't like them. They are so exasperated that they don't even bother to look at them. They don't want to go and separate the good from the bad and correct them. They don't want to adapt them to the climate and the people of our country. They don't want to choose among them. They don't want to shame, control and dominate them. They stand in the middle of the road facing a driverless car. They are run over and crushed.

This is why the veiled woman who wants to give birth to her children, screams, "Why men physicians? Why should women not be treated by women physicians?" She wants her child to go to school and to the university. Her cries increase—is this the faculty of literature or a fashion show? Is this an Islamic university? Is this an Islamic society? Does this school smell just a bit of Islam? Does it contain a bit of ethics and meaning? Is this the radio of a religious country or just a noise box? What kind of a translation is this of one culture by another—this full-scale importation of television, publications, laws, and banks? What film is this? What theater? What art? What craft? Really, what kind of a civilization is this?

It takes great effort to effectively interfere in events which unfold. Yet it is only through this effort that one can guide the deter-

mined motion of society. People who believe we should preserve that which is incapable of being preserved which is dying (and who are in a position to advise those who inspire, those who appease and those who give condolences) do not recognize the dangers. They create believers from among those who accept the unacceptable. They delude the majority of society. They keep them in an unholy state of prostration—silent, weak and submissive.

Those who seek a flowing, active society and want a better human life, acknowledge realities. They know pain. They take their strength from pain in order to heal their wounds. This group does not include those who, as demigods, defend that which is incapable of being defended, or those who take the public into their own hands, or those who follow the styles of the day, or those who praise according to what is fashionable, or those who try to attach themselves to something.

Those who acknowledge realities are people who know time moves. They know that society has a skin which it sheds. They feel that the strong forces of the world have turned to us to make us change. Neither are they sufficiently without pain to sit down and watch, nor are they, without shame, able to take whatever job is handed to them. They are not so stupid as one who sees a flood covering his town but protects only his wife and children, pulls only his own carpet from the water. They know that today is not like the pa when families were living in a closed society. Now, even if you hi your daughter in the back room of your house, national and intern tional television will follow her, find her and show her the attraction of the outside world.[9]

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)

SIGNS 27:1-27:14

Makkah: *The signs of the Quran and a clear Book,* (27:1)
a guidance and good tidings for the ones who believe, (27:2)
those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms
so that they of the world to come, they are certain. (27:3)
Truly, as for those who believe not in the world to come,
We made their actions appear pleasing to them
so that they wander unwilling to see. (27:4)
Those are those for whom is the dire punishment
and they, in the world to come,
they are the ones who are the losers. (27:5)
*And, truly, **you**, **you** are in receipt of the Quran, that which proceeds*
from the Presence of One who is Wise, Knowing. (27:6)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:7)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:8)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:9)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:10)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:11)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:12)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:13)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:14)

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:15-27:31

Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:15)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:16)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:17)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:18)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:19)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:20)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:21)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:22)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:23)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:24)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:25)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:26)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:27)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:28)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:29)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:30)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:31)

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:32-27:44

Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:32)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:33)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:34)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:35)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:36)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:37)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:38)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:39)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:40)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:41)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:42)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:43)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:44)

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:45-27:58

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:45)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:46)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:47)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:48)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:49)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:50)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:51)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:52)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:54)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:55)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:56)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:57)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:58)

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:59-27:66

Makkah: *Say: The Praise belongs to God*
and peace be on His servants,
those whom He favored. Is God better or
what they ascribe as partner with God? (27:59)
Who created the heavens and the earth
and caused to descend for you from the heavens, water?
With it We caused joyous, fertile gardens to develop.
It had not been for you to cause their trees to develop.
Is there any god besides God? Nay!
They are a folk who equate others with God. (27:60)
Who made the earth a stopping place and made rivers in the midst
and made firm mountains for it
and made between the two sees that which hinders?
Is there a god besides God?
Nay! But most of them know not! (27:61)
Is not He better Who answers one who is constrained
when he called to Him
and He removes the evil and assigns you
as vice-regents on the earth?
Is there a god besides God?
Little is what you recollect! (27:62)
Is not He better Who guides you
in the shadows of the dry land and the sea

and Who sends the winds, bearer of good news
in advance of His mercy?
Is there a god besides God?
Exalted is God above partners
they ascribe with Him. (27:63)
Is not He better Who begins creation, again,
will cause it to return
and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth.
Is there a god besides God?
Say: Prepare your proof if you had been
ones who are sincere! (27:64)
Say: None knows who is in the heaven and the earth,
nor the unseen but God.
Nor are they aware when they will be raised up. (27:65)
Nay! Their knowledge of the world to come failed.
Nay! They are in uncertainty about it.
Nay! They are in the dark about it. (27:66)

COMMENTARY°

The Quran then takes us on a descriptive round of some great universal scenes: *Say: The Praise belongs to God and peace be on His servants, those whom He favored. Is God better or what they ascribe as partner with Him?* (27:59), as also some of the deeper aspects of the human soul. In this way, the section shows us the work of the great Maker, Planner, Creator and Sustainer who alone knows what lies beyond the reach of any created being's perception, and to whom we shall all return. It then tells us about one of the aspects that signal the coming of the Last Hour, adding some images of the Day of Judgment and the fate that awaits those who deny it.

The Quran directs people's attentions to the fine effects of sending rain in suitable measure to meet their needs: *Is not He better Who created the heavens and the earth and caused to descend for you from the heavens, water? With it We caused joyous, fertile gardens to develop. It had not been for you to cause their trees to develop. Is there any god besides God? Nay! They are a folk who equate others with God.* (27:60)

Or, who is it that made the earth a stable abode and caused rivers to run in its midst, and has set upon it firm mountains, and has placed a barrier between the two great bodies of water? Could there be any deity alongside God? Nay, most of them are devoid of knowledge. *Is not He better Who made the earth a stopping place and made rivers in the midst and made firm mountains for it and made between*

the two sees that which hinders? Is there a god besides God? Nay! But most of them know not! (27:61)

Who has done all this? Knowledge is mentioned here because this universal fact needs knowledge to be properly contemplated and for its meticulous aspects to be made clearly apparent to all. Moreover, knowledge is emphasized throughout the section, as we have already explained.

Next, the section tells them about themselves: *Is not He better Who answers one who is constrained when he called to Him and He removes the evil and assigns you as vice-regents on the earth? Is there a god besides God? Little is what you recollect!* (27:62)

The section continues to direct their feelings to realities in their life: *And makes you inherit the earth?* Who is it that allows people to take charge of the earth? It is God who initially placed humanity in charge of the earth, and then made them succeed one another, generation after generation. It is He who created them in accordance with laws of nature that allow their existence on earth, and granted them talents and abilities that prepare them for their great task of building life on earth.

All these are facts we find within the human soul, in the same way as the facts mentioned earlier exist in the universe. Who brought about their existence? *Is not He better Who answers one who is constrained when he called to Him and He removes the evil and assigns you as vice-regents on the earth?* (27:62) They certainly forget or choose to be oblivious. *Is there a god besides God? Little is what you recollect!* (27:62) Had we reflected on such facts, we would maintain our bond with God as it was originally. We would not have been oblivious of it, and we would never have associated partners with God.

Or, who is it that guides you in the midst of the deep darkness of land and sea, and sends forth the winds as heralds of His forthcoming grace? Could there be any deity alongside God? Sublimely exalted is God above anything they associate with Him. *Is not He better Who guides you in the shadows of the dry land the sea and* (27:63)

Or, who is it that guides you in the midst of the deep darkness of land and sea, and sends forth the winds as heralds of His forthcoming grace? Could there be any deity alongside God? Sublimely exalted is God above anything they associate with Him. *Who sends the winds, bearer of good news in advance of His mercy? Is there a god besides God? Exalted is God above partners they ascribe with God.* (27:63)

With the acknowledgement of God as the originator of creation and the One who brings the dead back to life, the section asks the

same question again: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* (27:64)

Having taken us on this round of universal imagery and facts about our lives to establish the truth of God's Oneness and the falsehood of polytheism, the section begins a new passage citing aspects of what lies beyond the reach of human perception, known only to God. These signs discuss the life to come, which human nature and logic accept as essential, but the timing of which our knowledge cannot determine: *Say: None knows who is in the heaven and the earth, nor the unseen but God. Nor are they aware when they will be raised up. Nay! Their knowledge of the world to come failed.Nay! They are in uncertainty about it. Nay! They are in the dark about it.* (27:65-27:66)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 27:59-27:66

WHO IS GOD?

The question asked four times: Is there any god besides God? and answer serve to prove the Unity or Oneness of God. *We caused joyous, fertile gardens to develop. It had not been for you,* ungrateful, *to cause their trees to develop. Is there any god besides God?*

God made the *earth a stopping place and made rivers in the midst and made firm mountains for it and made between the two seas that which hinders. Is there a god besides God?*

Is not He better Who guides you in the shadows of the dry land and the sea and Who sends the winds, bearer of good news in advance of His mercy? Is there a god besides God?

Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth? Is there a god besides God?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet is told to say: *None knows who is in the heaven and the earth nor the unseen but God. Nor are they aware when they will be raised up. Nay! Their knowledge of the world to come failed. Nay! They are in uncertainty about it. Nay! They are in the dark about it.*

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful that there is no god besides God. Is there a god besides God? God created the heavens and the earth and caused water to descend from heaven. The One God caused fertile gardens and trees to develop. The One God created earth as a stopping place, made rivers and firm mountains and a barrier between sweet and salty water. The One God guides us in the shadows of the dry land and the sea and sends the winds. The One God began creation and will cause it to return. There can only be One God, Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. Otherwise, there would be chaos in the heavens and the earth instead of harmony and order. There can only be One God, One Creator who maintains harmony and order. There is only One God to worship and not many gods as the ungrateful Quraysh were insisting. The order in the universe is because there is just One God who created it..

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).

LESSON 48(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting their remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

WHAT INFORMATION IN THESE FOLLOWING SIGNS ARE RELEVANT TO ME?
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is relevant:

How does what you say relate to the problem?
How does this information relate to the question we are asking?
What will help us solve the problem?
How does what you say relate to what we are talking about?
How does this relate to our purpose?

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:67-27:82

Makkah: *And those who were ungrateful said:*
When we had been earth dust like our fathers
will we, truly, be ones who are brought out? (27:67)
Certainly, we were promised this, we and our fathers before.
Truly, this is nothing but fables of the ancient ones. (27:68)
Say: Journey through the earth;
then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who sin. (27:69)
And feel you not remorse for them,
nor be troubled by what they plan. (27:70)

And they say: When is the promise if you had been
ones who are sincere? (27:71)
Say: Perhaps coming close behind you be some
of that which you seek to hasten. (27:72)
*And, truly, **your** Lord is Possessor of Grace for humanity,*
but most of them give not thanks. (27:73)
*And, truly, **your** Lord knows what their breasts hide*
and what they speak openly. (27:74)
Not is that which is absent in the heaven and the earth,
but that it is in the clear Book. (27:75)
Truly, this, the Quran, relates about the Children of Jacob and
most of what they are at variance in it. (27:76)
And, truly, it is a guidance
and a mercy for the ones who believe. (27:77)
*Truly, **your** Lord will decree between them*
with His determination.
And He is The Almighty, The Knowing. (27:78)
*So put **your** trust in God.*
*Truly, **you** are on The Clear Truth.* (27:79)
*Truly, **you** will not cause the dead to hear*
*nor will **you** cause to hear the unwilling to hear*
the calling to them when they turned
as ones who draw back. (27:80)
*Nor will **you** be one who guide*
the unwilling to see out of their fallacy.
***You** will not cause to hear, but whoever believes in Our signs*
and so they are ones who submit to God. (27:81)
And when the saying fell on them,
We will bring out a moving creature for them from the earth
that will speak to them, that:
Humanity had not been certain of Our signs. (27:82)

COMMENTARY°

This: *And those who were ungrateful said: When we had been earth dust like our fathers will we, truly, be ones who are brought out?* (27:67) has always been the most difficult point for the ungrateful to accept. Could it be true that after life has departed from us, and our bodies have decomposed and been reduced to dust and ashes, which happens to all people within a certain period of their burial apart from some exceptional cases, we will be brought back to life? Is it true that we and our forefathers, who died long before us, will be raised up from the earth when we have become part of its dust?

The ungrateful followed this absurdity with ridicule: *Certainly, we were promised this, we and our fathers before. Truly, this is nothing but fables of the ancient ones.* (27:68) They were fully aware that earlier messengers had warned their forefathers in the past, which indicates that those Arabs were not totally unaware of faith. Rather, they thought that such promises had not been fulfilled. Therefore, they discarded the new promise, describing it as fables circulated among ancient people which Muhammad then revived. They forget that the Day of Judgment arrives at the time appointed for it, and it will neither be put forward because people hasten it, nor delayed to fulfil their hopes.

At this point, the section directs the ungrateful to turn their minds to the end met by earlier communities which, like them, denied the warnings given by God's messengers. These are described here as the guilty ones: *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who sin.* (27:69)

Having given this directive to the ungrateful, the section spells out God's order to the Prophet to leave them to their destinies. He was not to feel distressed at what they might be scheming. They would not be able to cause him any harm. Nor was he to grieve for them, because he had already done his duty, delivering God's message and warning them against what fate awaits them: *And feel you not remorse for them, nor be troubled by what they plan.* (27:70) This sign tells us of the Prophet's compassion. He grieved over what could happen to his people, because he knew what had happened to earlier communities that rejected God's messages. The sign also tells us how wicked their scheming was against the Prophet, his message and followers.

The section continues its discussion of what the ungrateful said about resurrection and their refusal to take the warnings of God's impending punishment seriously: *And they say: When is the promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (27:71)

In a short sign, the section gives the impression of the forthcoming horror, imparting a touch of ridicule to their attitude: *Say: Perhaps coming close behind you be some of that which you seek to hasten.* (27:72) Thus the section strikes fear in their hearts and makes them worry about the impending punishment.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of God's bounty is that He allows people respite when they do wrong or fail to do what is required of them. *And, truly, your Lord is Possessor of Grace for humanity, but most of them give not thanks.* (27:73) He does not hasten His punishment, giving them chance after chance to reflect on

their positions, repent of their mistakes, and turn back to the right path. Nevertheless, most of them are ungrateful for the grace God bestows on them. Rather, they ridicule the whole idea and hasten their own punishment, or continue in their erring ways, refusing to reflect and take heed. *And, truly, **your** Lord knows what their breasts hide and what they speak openly.* (27:74) He gives them this respite although He is fully aware of the feelings they harbour in their hearts as also what they declare by word and deed. This means that respite is given them in the full knowledge of their actions and feelings. Yet they will inevitably have to face the reckoning of all this.

This round concludes with a statement emphasizing God's perfect knowledge that overlooks nothing anywhere in the universe: *Not is that which is absent in the heaven and the earth, but that it is in the clear Book.* (27:75)

Having emphasized the point of God's perfect knowledge, the section moves on to speak about the Children of Jacob's differences on fundamental issues. What the Quran states about these is part of God's knowledge, and it provides the final, indisputable word on them. It is an example of how God judges between people in dispute. This is stated so as to provide some comfort to the Prophet for he is instructed to leave them to God, who will judge between them as He pleases: *Truly, this, the Quran, relates about the Children of Jacob and most of what they are at variance in it. And, truly, it is a guidance and a mercy for the ones who believe. Truly, **your** Lord will decree between them with His determination. And He is The Almighty, The Knowing. So put **your** trust in God. Truly, **you** are on The Clear Truth. Truly, **you** will not cause the dead to hear nor will **you** cause to hear the unwilling to hear the calling to them when they turned as ones who draw back. Nor will **you** be one who guides the unwilling to see out of their fallacy. **You** will not cause to hear, but whoever believes in Our signs and so they are ones who submit to God.* (27:76-27:81)

This Quran which supersedes all books revealed before it provides the final word on all disputes between their followers. Still the idolaters in Arabia argued about it. It is as God describes it: *And, truly, it is a guidance and a mercy for the ones who believe.* (27:77)

The Quranic method of remoulding hearts and souls in accordance with pure, undistorted nature is indeed unique. It establishes harmony between human life, the universe and the major laws of nature operating in it. This enables us to live in peace and reassurance because we realize that we live in a world whose laws and forces are at peace with us. We know that the overall law that runs the universe

is the same as that which controls our life. With such harmony and peace between our soul and the great existence around us, peace is generated within the community and among humanity at large. Reassurance and stability become a reality in human life. This is "mercy" in its most comprehensive form. This quick reference to God's grace represented in the revelation of the Quran is followed by an assurance to the Prophet that God will judge between him and his community on the basis of His perfect knowledge: *Truly, **your** Lord will decree between them with His determination. And He is The Almighty, The Knowing.* (27:78)

God has made the triumph of the truth a natural law similar to that of the creation of the heavens and the earth and the succession of night and day. It never fails. It may be slow in coming, but this will only be because of a particular purpose known to God which will ensure the fulfilment of certain goals known to Him. Yet still the law remains in operation, and God's promise is certain to be fulfilled. Indeed, no one's faith is complete unless one believes in its certainty. What we need to know is that God's promise will come to pass at the moment appointed for it, and it will neither be hastened nor delayed: *So put **your** trust in God. Truly, **you** are on The Clear Truth.* (27:79)

The section continues to comfort the Prophet so that he bears with patience the stubborn rejection by the ungrateful, despite his strenuous efforts giving them sound advice and addressing them with the Quran. He is told that he has not slackened in his duty, but he can make only those with beating hearts hear. These are the ones who listen attentively, and their hearts are moved so as to respond to the Prophet who gives them honest and sound counsel. By contrast, those whose hearts are dead and who are blind to all the pointers to the truth of faith are a lost case. There is simply no access to their hearts. Therefore, the Prophet should not worry about their persistent error: (27:80-27:81)

In contrast to the dead, unhearing and unseeing, we see the Prophet and those who follow him alive: *Nor will **you** be one who guides the unwilling to see out of their fallacy. **You** will not cause to hear, but whoever believes in Our signs and so they are ones who submit to God.* (27:81) These are the ones whose hearts are ready to receive God's revelations. They have life and they warm to it, feeling its presence. They benefit by what they hear and see. Such are the believers and the Prophet's duty is to make them hear, pointing to the signs God has placed all around us. They will then accept what he tells them and submit themselves to God.

And when the saying fell on them, We will bring out a moving creature for them from the earth that will speak to them, that: Humanity had not been certain of Our signs. (27:82) The same is mentioned in many hadith, some of which are authentic, but these do not give any description of it. There are descriptions of it in other hadith which do not aspire to any reasonable degree of authenticity. Therefore, they should be discarded. It is better by far to limit ourselves to the text of the Quran and the authentic hadith which tell us that the appearance of the beast is a presage of the Day of Resurrection. It is when the time for repentance has expired and judgment is due on those who rejected the faith that God will bring forth this beast to speak to them. Beasts normally do not speak, or rather their languages are not understood by humans. However, at this point people will understand what this beast says, and they will know that it is a miracle that heralds the Last Hour. But they were keen to deny God's signs and the Day of Resurrection.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 27:67-27:82

WHO IS GOD?

God is the Possessor of Grace for humanity.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet is told to ask if the ungrateful have not journeyed throug the earth to see the end of those who sin. He is told not to feel remorse f them nor to be troubled by their plan. He is told to say that perhaps the punishment which they seek to hasten is close at hand. He is told: **Your** Lord, Muhammad, knows what is in their breasts and what they hide. **Your** Lord, Muhammad will decree between them so put your trust, Muhammad, in God. **You**, Muhammad, are on The Clear Truth. **You**, Muhammad, will not cause the dead to hear nor the unwilling to see, to see, nor the unwilling to hear, to hear. **You**, Muhammad, will not be one who guides the unwilling to see out of their fallacy. **You**, Muhammad, will not cause to hear except those who believe in Our signs and they are ones who submit to God (*muslim*).

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful say: Will we be resurrected when we are earth dust like our fathers? We and our fathers were promised this before, but it is nothing but fables of the ancient ones. They ask: When is the promise of the Day of Resurrection if you are sincere? When the Day comes, God will bring out a moving creature from the earth who will speak to them saying: Humanity had not been certain of Our signs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message explains that a moving creature will speak to them. What will this moving creature say? It will say that humanity had not been certain of God's signs. This is a sign of the Last Days. A moving creature will speak to humanity. This will be a time when repentance has expired and judgment will be due on all including those who rejected God's signs. There will be a Day of Reckoning.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understand what a rhetorical question is.
I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.
It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 48(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QUESTIONS THAT EXPLORE REASONS AND EVIDENCE (INFORMATION)•

On what evidence is this conclusion based?
Where did we get the evidence?
How could we find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do we need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?
Why do you think that is true?
Do you have any evidence for that?
What difference does that make?
What are your reasons for saying that?

While there are those who wish to discredit the Prophet and his relationship to his wives, the evidence of his character can be evaluated by his relationship with Khadija.

The Prophet was a man who showed great strength of will and speech, whose sword was feared by all the caesars, kings and powerful rulers of that time. His enemies trembled before his anger. At the same time, he was a most sensitive person. His heart beat with kindness. His spirit was excited by the slightest touch of truth, sincerity and kindness.

The Prophet never tried to show himself different from others. Rather, it was the opposite. He would say, "I am a human being like you. The only difference is the revelation which I receive." He always declared that he did not know the hidden world and other than that which was told him, he knew nothing. He always tried not to stand out or seem peculiar and, as far as possible, not to call attention to himself.

One day an old woman approached him to ask him something. All the things that she had heard about him and the greatness she knew he had, so affected her that when she found herself in his presence, she trembled and stuttered. The Prophet, who sensed that she had been struck by his presence, moved simply and quietly forward. He placed his hand kindly upon her shoulder and in a gentle and in-

timate tone, said, "Mother. What is it? I am the son of that Quraysh woman who milked sheep."

The depth of his sensitivity, sympathy and the softness of his heart was most amazing. Sometimes, inside the house, he would so humble himself that the hands of little Ayisha easily reached him.

The first woman, whom he met at the height of his youth and whom he married was Khadija, a widow aged forty, married twice previously and twice widowed, with children the same age as the Prophet. The Prophet spent his youth and even maturity with her. In the twenty-five years that he spent with her, no other woman entered his life. It should not be forgotten here that the Prophet during this interval was a young man. He, like the other youths of the Quraysh, was not constrained by social prestige, moral impediment, the burden of political and military responsibilities, old age, or the especially momentous responsibility of prophethood. All of these assailed him later on, tied him down, and made him a stranger to passion. It is astonishing that the son of Abd Allah who was a normal youth without responsibility, a man who until the age of fifty remained with a widow fifteen years his senior, did not even once during this span nourish the thought of another woman.

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:83-27:93

Makkah: *And on a Day We will assemble a unit out*
of every community
of whoever denies Our signs
and they will be marching in rank. (27:83)
Until when they drew near, He will say:
Denied you My signs without comprehending them in knowledge,
or what is it that you had been doing? (27:84)
And the saying will fall on them because they did wrong.
And they will speak nothing for themselves. (27:85)
Considered they not?
We made the nighttime for them to rest in it
and the daytime for ones who perceive.
Truly, in that are signs for a folk who believe. (27:86)
On a Day on which the trumpet will be blown,
whoever is in the heavens will be terrified
and whoever is on the earth, but him whom God willed.
And all will approach Him
as ones who are in a state of lowliness. (27:87)

And you will see the mountains you assume
to be that which are fixed.
But they will pass by as the passing of the clouds.
This is the handiwork of God Who created everything very well.
Truly, He is Aware of what you accomplish. (27:88)
Whoever drew near with benevolence,
for him will be better than it
and they would be from the terror
ones who are safe on that Day. (27:89)
And whoever drew near with evil deeds,
they would be slung on their faces in the fire:
Are you given recompense
but for what you had been doing? (27:90)
Truly, I was commanded to worship the Lord of this land
which He made sacred and to Whom everything belongs.
And I was commanded that I be
among the ones who submit to God (27:91)
and to recount the Recitation. So whoever was truly guided, then,
he is truly guided only for himself.
And to whoever went astray say:
Truly, I am among the ones who warn. (27:92)
And say: The Praise belongs to God.
He will cause you to see His signs and you will recognize them
Your Lord is not One Who is Heedless of what you do. (27:93)

COMMENTARY°

The section proceeds from this forerunner of the Day of Judgment to the scene of resurrection and gathering: *And on a Day We will assemble a unit out of every community of whoever denies Our signs and they will be marching in rank.* (27:83) All humanity will be gathered on that day, but the section highlights here the position of those denying revelations. It shows them as they are driven in ranks, altogether, having no say or choice in the direction they have to go.

The first question is one of reproach, because it is already known that they denied God's revelations, while the second is sarcastic. *Until when they drew near, He will say: Denied you My signs without comprehending them in knowledge, or what is it that you had been doing?* (27:84) This combination is used in spoken language making the second question imply that they took no particularly noticeable action in their lives, apart from their denial of God's revelations. Such a question receives no answer; those to whom it is put stand speech-

less: *And the saying will fall on them because they did wrong. And they will speak nothing for themselves.* (27:85) They deserve such a fate because of the wrongdoing in their lives on earth. They are unable to speak, while the beast has already spoken. What a contrast drawn in the Quranic expression and also in the great signs being described in the Quran.

The presentation in this round follows a special pattern, setting scenes from this life against those from the life to come, moving from one to the other at the moment when it is particularly effective. Here the section leaves those who denied God's revelations as they stand speechless on the Day of Resurrection to draw a scene of this world which should have awakened their consciences and invited them to reflect on the universe and its creation. They should have thought of this and realized that God takes care of them, providing them with what enables them to have comfortable lives, making the universe around them suitable for life, not hostile to it: *Considered they not? We made the nighttime for them to rest in it and the daytime for ones who perceive. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who believe.* (27:86)

Then the trumpet is blown a second time bringing them all back to life. It is then blown again to gather them all together: *On a Day on which the trumpet will be blown, whoever is in the heavens will be terrified and whoever is on the earth, but him whom God willed. And all will approach Him as ones who are in a state of lowliness.* (27:87)

This is now the day of reckoning when all that you have done is reckoned. It is the day set by God who has ordered all things to perfection: it has come at the time set for it, with no hastening or delay. It fulfils its role in God's method of creation and planning. It brings harmony between action and reward in the two closely linked lives. *And **you** will see the mountains **you** have assumed to be that which are fixed. But they will pass by as the passing of the clouds. This is the handiwork of God Who created everything very well. Truly, He is Aware of what you accomplish.* (27:88)

On this fearsome day, security and reassurance are granted only to those who did well in their first life on earth. This is in addition to their reward which exceeds by far everything they did: *Whoever drew near with benevolence, for him will be better than it and they would be from the terror ones who are safe on that Day.* (27:89) To be in security when all are in terror is in itself a great reward. What comes after that is granted by God's grace. These believers feared God in their first life, so He willed that they would have no fear on the Day of Judgment.

This: *And whoever drew near with evil deeds, they would be slung on their faces in the fire* (27:90) is a terrible scene as such people are thrown on their faces into hell. They also suffer further rebuke: *Are you given recompense but for what you had been doing?* (27: 90) They had turned their back on God's guidance, which was presented to them as clearly as night and day; so now their faces are the first to face the fire.

At the end the Prophet is instructed to sum up his call and his method in calling on people to believe. He leaves them to their destiny, which they have chosen for themselves after the issues have been clearly put in front of them. The section concludes, as it started, with praising God, leaving it to Him to show them His signs and to hold them to account for their deeds. (27:91-27:93)

The Arab idolaters used to believe in the sanctity of Makkah and the Sacred House, i.e. the Kabah. Indeed they based their supremacy in Arabia on belief in the sanctity of this House. Yet they did not believe in the Oneness of God who made it sacred and also made it the focus of their lives. Therefore, God's Messenger gives faith its proper value, declaring that he is commanded to worship the Lord of this sacred city, who has no partners. He states the Quranic concept of God's Oneness: the Lord of this city is the Lord of everything: *Truly, I was commanded to worship the Lord of this land which He made sacred and to Whom everything belongs. And I was commanded that I be among the ones who submit to God* (27:91) He also declares that he is bidden to be one of those who surrender themselves totally tc God. No one else has any claim on them. They are a group of their own stretching over countless generations, sharing their belief in God and surrendering themselves to Him.

Such is the essence of his message, while its essential means is the recitation of the Quran: *And to whoever went astray say: Truly, I am among the ones who warn.* (27:92) The Quran is the book of this message, and also its constitution and method. The Prophet has been ordered to strive against the ungrateful by means of the Quran, because it is sufficient as a means to address hearts, minds and souls. It contains what overpowers souls, influences feelings, and violently shakes hearts. Fighting was permitted at a later stage to defend believers, ensure the freedom for God's message to address people with the Quran, and to implement the divine law. As for calling people to faith, the Quran itself is sufficient: *And to whoever went astray say: Truly, I am among the ones who warn.*(27:92)

This: *And say: The Praise belongs to God. He will cause you to see His signs and you will recognize them.* (27:93) is by way of in-

troducing what is to come concerning God's own making. *Your Lord is not One Who is Heedless of what you do.*(27:93) God certainly says the truth. Every day He shows His servants some of His signs within themselves and in the great expanse of the universe. He reveals to them some of the secrets at work in the universe.

This is the final note in the section, expressed gently yet imparting an awesome sense. They are then left to do what they want, prompted by the profound note: Your Lord is never heedless of what you do.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 27:83-27:93

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet says: I was commanded to worship the Lord of this land which He made sacred and to Whom everything belongs. I was commanded that I be among the ones who submit to God (muslim) and to recount the Recitation (Quran). Whoever is truly guided is guided for himself. He was told to say to whoever goes astray: Truly, I am among the ones who warn. The Praise belongs to God. He will cause members of community to see His signs and those members will recognize them. **Your** Lord, Muhammad, is not heedless of what you do. On the Day when the trumpet is blown, **you**, Muhammad, will see the mountains you, Muhammad, assume to be fixed, passing by like clouds.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who deny the signs of God will be gathered on that Day, marching in rank. They will be asked: Did you deny My signs without understanding them in knowledge or what is it that you had been doing? They will not be able to respond because of the wrong they had done. The message asks: Did they not consider how the nighttime was made as a time of rest and the daytime for ones who perceive. Whoever draws near the Day with good deeds will be rewarded and free from terror on that Day. Those who did evil deeds will be slung on their faces into the fire.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message shows what the Prophet is commanded to do. What was the Prophet commanded in these signs? He was commanded to worship the Lord of this land which He made sacred and to Whom everything belongs. He was commanded that he be among the ones who submit to God (*muslim*) and to recount the Recitation (Quran). Those who do good follow what the Prophet was commanded to do. To receive the reward for good deeds, worship the Lord, be among the ones who submit and recount the Quran. These are the ones who will be rewarded with what is better. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.
I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.
I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

Appendix 1: Correlation between the Present Order of Chapters in the Quran and their Chronological Order

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
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44 = 19
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46 = 56
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49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
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59 = 39
60 = 40
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62 = 42
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64 = 44
65 = 45
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67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

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1. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, p 65.
2. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 202 1/2.
3. *Tarikh al-Tabari*, p 127.
4. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 39.
5. Ali Shariati, *The Countenance of Muhammad.*
6. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance of Error.*
7. Ali Shariati, ibid.
8. See Introduction.
9. Ali Shariati, ibid.

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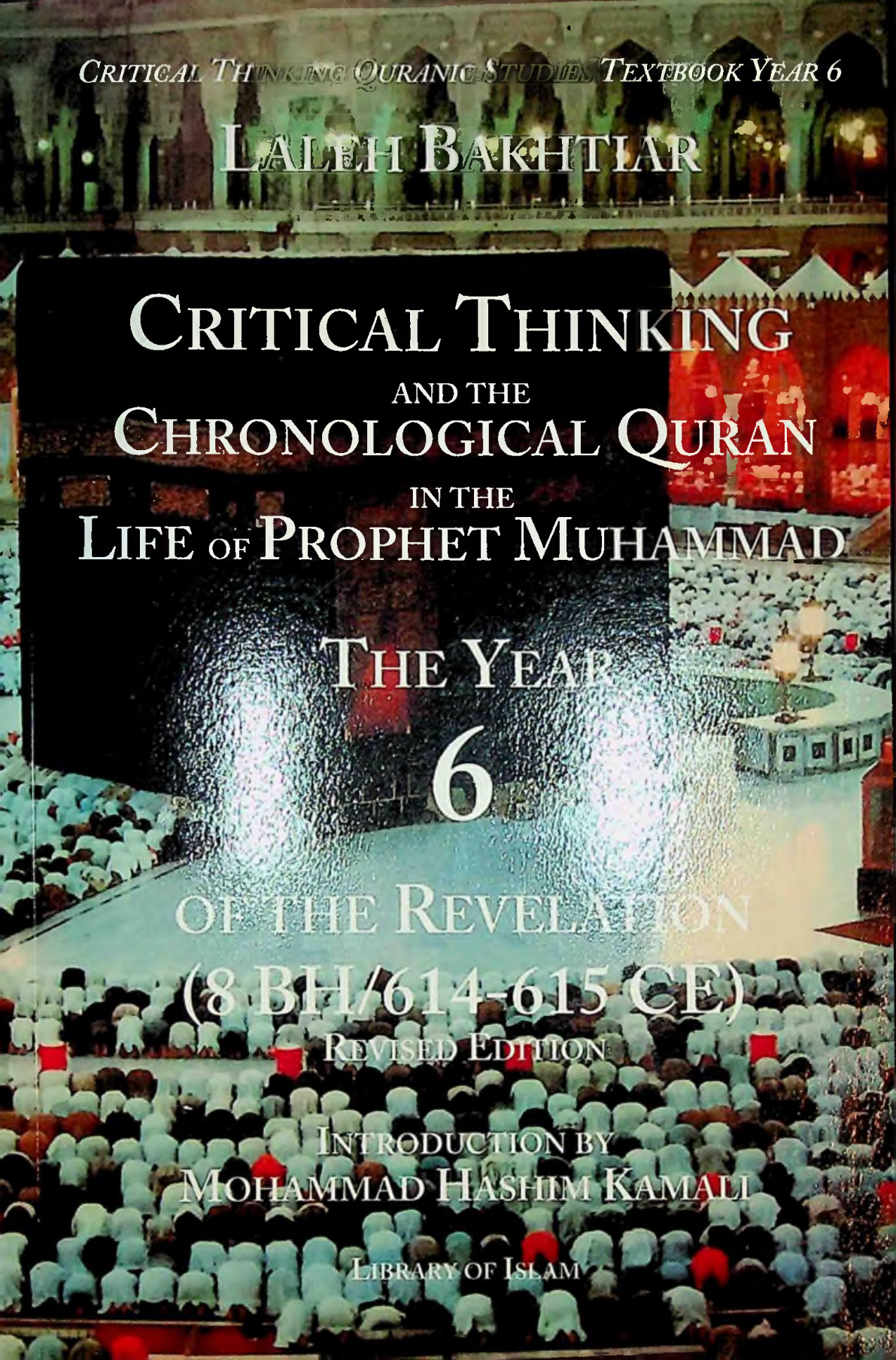
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Laleh Bakhtiar

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

The Year 6, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 8 BH/October 11, 614 CE-September 29, 615 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned

in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The

Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being

fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)

4. Appropriateness (to make relevant: sadid)
5. Worthiness (Focusing on the important, not trivial, to be significant: ahl)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: 'dhara'a)
7. Right Judgment (rushd)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**

COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on

these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

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Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facil-

itates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the

act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike

the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge

tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the

intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowl-

edge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends

farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long be-

fore it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remem-*

brance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones*

who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33]

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer

forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 6*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 6* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. *Book Year 6* begins with Lesson 49 and Quranic Chapter 28 which is the 49th Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 17, 10, 11, 12 and, finally, Chapter 15, the 54th Chapter revealed.. It is in this year that the second migration to Abyssinia occurs and the conversion of Umar al-Khattab which further strengthened the young community suffering under torture and oppression.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary, an analysis of the signs that answer three questions: Who is God?, How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad? and How are the signs directed towards the Community? Following these questions, there is a section called Example of How Critical Thinking works. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

PRELUDE
THE SECOND MIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA

The second migration to Abyssinia was under the leadership of Jafar ibn Abi Talib. Again, some of the Muslims who migrate are former POWs/slaves while others are from various tribes who live in Makkah. They each leave Makkah in small groups so as not to bring attention to themselves.

Those who migrate from the Abd al-Dar Clan to Abyssinia:

Musab ibn Umayr
Abd Rum ibn Umayr ibn Hashim
Suwaybit ibn Sad
Khuzaymah ibn Jahm ibn Qays
Jahm ibn Qays
Umm Harmala bint Abd al-Aswad
Amr (son of Jahm ibn Qays and Umm Harmala)
Khuzayma (son of Jahm ibn Qays and Umm Harmala)
Firas ibn al-Nadr[1]

Those who migrate from the Abd al-Manaf, Nawfal ibn, Clan to Abyssinia.

Utbah ibn Ghazwan ibn Jabir ibn Wahb, an ally of theirs[2]

Those who migrate from the Abd al-Shams Clan to Abyssinia:

Uthman ibn Affan
Ruqayya, daughter of the Messenger, his wife
Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah
Sahla bint Suhayl ibn Amr one of the Amir ibn Luayy clan, his wife
Abu Musa al-Ashari (Abdullah ibn Qays) an ally of the family of Utbah.
Said ibn al-Aas
Fatima bind Safwan
Khalid
Umaya bint khalaf
Said (son of Fatima bint Safwan and Amr ibn Said, born in Abyssinia)
Ama (daughter of Faatima bint Safwan and Amr ibn Said, born in Abyssinia, later married Zubayr ibn al-Awwam and bore Amr and Khalid)[3]

The one who migrates from the Abd al-Qusayy Clan to Abyssinia.

Tulayb ibn Umary[4]

Those who migrate from the Adiyy Clan to Abyssinia:

Amir ibn Rabiah of Anz ibn Wail, an ally of the al-Khattab family,
Layla bint Abu Hathma ibn Hudhayfah, his wife
Kharijah ibn Hudhayfah ibn Ghanim
Mamar ibn Abd Allah
Urwa ibn Abd al-Uzza
Adiy ibn Nadla
Numan (son of Adiy ibn Nadla)
Amr ibn Rabia
Layla[5]

Those who migrate from the Amir ibn Luayy Clan to Abyssinia:

Abu Sabrah ibn Abi Ruhm ibn Abd al-Uzza ibn Abu Qays. Others say it was Abu Hatib ibn Amr ibn Abdu Shams of the same descent. It is said that he was the first to arrive in Abyssinia.
Umm Khulthum
Abd Alah ibn Makhrama ibn Abdul Uzza
Sad ibn Khaula an ally of theirs
Abd Allah ibn Suhayl
Salit ibn Amr
al-Sakran
Sauda bint Zamaa
Malik ibn Zamaa
Amra bint al-Sadi
Hatib ibn Amr
Saad ibn Khaula[6]

Those who migrate from the Asad Clan to Abyssinia:

Zubayr ibn al-Awwam
al-Aswad
Yazid ibn Zamaa
Amr ibn Umayya
Abd Allah ibn Jahsh
Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh
Umm Habiba bint Abu Sufyan
Qays ibn Abd Allah
Baraka bint Yasar
Muayqib ibn Abu Tatima[7]

The one who migrate from the Hisham Clan to Abyssinia and his wife:

Jafar ibn Abi Talib
Asma bint Umays
Abd Allah (child born in Abyssinia)[8]

Those who migrate from the Fihr ibn Malik Clan to Abyssinia:

Suhayl ibn Bayda
Amr ibn Abu Sarh ibn Rabia Iyad ibn Zuhayr; but it is said that this is wrong and that Rabia was the son of Hilal ibn Malik ibn Dabba
Amr ibn al-Harith
Harith ibn Abdu Qays ibn Laqit
Abu Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah
Amr ibn Abu Sahr
Uthman ibn Abd al-Ghanm
Saad ibn Abd al-Qays
al-Harith ibn Abd al-Qays[9]

Those who migrate from the Jumah Clan to Abyssinia:

Uthman ibn Mazun
Said (son of Uthman ibn Mazun)
Qudama ibn Mazun
Abd Allah ibn Mazun
Hatib ibn Harith
Fatima bint al-Mujallil
Muhammad ibn Harith
al-Harith ibn Harith
Hattab
Fukayha bint Yasar
Sufyan ibn Mamar
Jabir ibn Mamar
Jundad ibn Mamar
Hasana
Shurahbil ibn Abd Allah
Uthman ibn Rabia
Khattab ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar
Muhammad ibn Hatib[10]

Those who migrate from the Makhzum ibn Yaqaza Clan to Abyssinia:

Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad
Hind bint Abi Umayya ibn al-Mughirah (Umm Salama), his wife

Zaynab (daughter of Umm Salama, born in Abyssinia)
Abdullah ibn Sufyan ibn Abdul Asad
Habbbar ibn Sufyan ibn Abdul Asad
Muattib ibn Auf of Khuzaa (Ayhama)
Shammas ibn Uthman ibn al-Sharid
Salama ibn Hisham
Ayyash ibn Abu Rabia[11]

Those who migrate from the Sahm ibn Amr Clan to Abyssinia:

Khunays ibn Hudhafa
Abd Allah ibn al-Harith
Hisham ibn al-Aas
Qays ibn Hudahafa
Abu Qays ibn al-Harith
Abd Allah ibn Hudhafa
Harith ibn al-Harith
Mamar ibn al-Harith
Bishr ibn al-Harith
Said ibn al-Harith
Said ibn Amr
al-Saib ibn al-Harith
Umayr ibn Riab
Mahmiya ibn al-Jaza[12]

Those who migrate from the Taym ibn Murra Clan to Abyssinia:

Amr ibn Uthman ibn Amr
al-Harith ibn Khalid
Rayta bint al-Harith
Musa (son of Rayta born in Abyssinia)
Aisha (daughter of Rayta, born in Abyssinia)
Zaynab (daughter of Rayta, born in Abyssinia)[13]

Those who migrate from the Umayya sub-clan of Abd Shams to Abyssinia:

Amr ibn Said ibn al-As
Muayqib ibn Abu Fatima
Qays ibn Abdullah[14]

Those who migrate from the Zuhrah ibn Kilab Clan to Abyssinia

Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf
Amir ibn Abu Waqqas
al-Muttalib ibn Azhar
Ramla bint Abu Auf
Abd Allah (son of Ramla born in Abyssinia)

Abd Allah ibn Masud
Utba ibn Masud
al-Miqdad ibn Arm[15]

Those who migrate from the the Khuzaah Tribe to Abyssinia:
Muattib ibn Auf of Khuzaa, who was called Ayhama
Umm Harmala bint Abdul Aswad of Khuzaah (wife of Jahm ibn Qays)

The one who migrates from the the Kinanah Tribe to Abyssinia:
Fatima bint Safwan ibn Umayya (Muhrith)[16]

THE LEADER OF THE SECOND MIGRATION, JAFAR IBN ABI TALIB, RELATES HOW HE DEFENDED THE QURANIC MESSAGE TO THE NEGUS AGAINST THE UNGRATEFUL QURAYSH

When we reached Abyssinia the Negus gave us a kind reception. We safely practiced our religion, and we worshipped God, and suffered no wrong in word or deed.[17]

When the Quraysh came to know of that, they decided to send two determined men to the Negus and to give him presents of the choicest wares of Makkah. Leatherwork was especially prized there, so they collected a great many.

When Abu Talib perceived their design he composed a poem for the Negus to move him to treat the Muslims kindly and protect them. The Quraysh sent Abd Allah and Amr with instructions to give each general his present before they spoke to the Negus about the refugees. Then they were to give their presents to the Negus and ask him to give the men up before he spoke to them. They carried out these instructions to the letter, and said to each of the generals: Some foolish fellows from our people have taken refuge in the king's country. They have forsaken our religion and not accepted yours, but have brought in an invented religion which neither we nor you know anything about. Our nobles have sent us to the king to get him to return them, so when we speak to the king about them advise him to surrender them to us and not to speak to them, for their own people have the keenest insight and know most about their faults.

This the generals agreed to do. They took their gifts to the Negus and when he had accepted them, they said to him what they had already said to the generals about the refugees. Now there was nothing which Abd Allah and Amr disliked more than that the Negus should hear what the Muslims had to say. The generals recommended the king give them up and return them to their own people.

The Negus was enraged and said: No, by God, I will not surren-

der them. No people who have sought my protection, settled in my country, and chosen me rather than others shall be betrayed, until I summon them and ask them about what these two men allege. If they are as they say, I will give them up to them and send them back to their own people; but if what they say is false, I will protect them and see that they receive proper hospitality while under my protection.

Then he summoned the Messenger's Companions, and when his messenger came, they gathered together, saying one to another: What will you say to the Negus when you come to him?

They said: We shall say what we know and what our Prophet commanded us, come what may. When they came into the royal presence they found that the king had summoned his bishops with their sacred books exposed around him. He asked them what was the religion for which they had forsaken their people, without entering into his religion or any other.

Jafar ibn Abu Talib, the brother of Ali ibn Abi Talib and son of Abu Talib, answered: O King, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols, eating corpses, committing abominations, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong devoured our weak. Thus we were until God sent us a Messenger whose lineage, truth, trustworthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and offer hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him, and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving, and fasting (enumerating the commands of the Quranic message).

We accepted his truth and believed in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God, and we worshipped God alone without associating anything with Him. We treated as forbidden what he forbade, and as lawful what he declared lawful. Thereupon our people attacked us, treated us harshly and seduced us from our faith to try to make us go back to the worship of idols instead of the worship of God, and to regard as lawful the evil deeds we once committed. So when they got the better of us, treated us unjustly and circumscribed our lives, and came between us and our religion, we came to your country, having chosen you above all others. Here we have been happy in your protection, and we hope that we shall not be treated unjustly while we are with you, O King.

The Negus asked if they had with them anything which had come from God. When Jafar said that he had, the Negus commanded him to read it to him, so he recited to him a passage from Chapter 19:16-19:36 which had been revealed the previous year.

And mention in the Book Mary when she withdrew from her people to an eastern place, and she took a veil apart from them; then We sent unto her Our Spirit that presented himself to her a man without fault. She said, 'I take refuge in the All-merciful from you! If you fear God...' He said, 'I am but a messenger come from your Lord, to give you a boy most pure.' She said, 'How shall I have a son whom no mortal has touched, neither have I been unchaste?' He said, 'Even so your Lord has said: "Easy is that for Me; and that We may appoint him a sign unto men and a mercy from Us; it is a thing decreed.

So she conceived him, and withdrew with him to a distant place. And the birth pangs surprised her by the trunk of the palm-tree. She said: Would I had died before this, and become a thing forgotten!

*But the one that was below her called to her: Nay, do not sorrow; see, your Lord has set below you a rivulet. Shake also to you the palm-trunk, and there shall come tum*bling *upon her dates fresh and ripe. Eat therefore, and drink, and be comforted; and if you should see any mortal, say: I have vowed to the All-merciful a fast, and today I will not speak to any man." Then she brought the child to her folk carrying him; and they said, Mary, you have surely committed a monstrous thing! Sister of Aaron, your father was not a wicked man, nor was your mother a woman unchaste. Mary pointed to the child then; but they said, How shall we speak to one who is still in the cradle, a little child?*

He said: Lo, I am God's servant; God has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet. Blessed He has made me, wherever I may be; and He has enjoined me to pray, and to give the alms, so long as I live, and likewise to cherish my mother; He has not made me arrogant, unprosperous. Peace be upon me, the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive!

That is Jesus, son of Mary, in word of truth, concerning which they are doubting. It is not for God to take a son unto Him. Glory be to Him! When He declares a thing, He but says to it: Be, and it is. Surely God is my Lord, and your Lord; so serve you Him. This is a straight path. (19:16-36)

The Negus and the bishops wept when they heard what Jafar recited to them. Then the Negus said: Of a truth, this and what Jesus brought have come from the same niche. You two may go, for by God, I will never give them up to them and they shall not be betrayed.

The Negus took a stick from the ground and said, By God, Jesus,

son of Mary, does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick.

His generals round about him snorted when he said this, and he said: Though you snort, by God! Go, for you are safe in my country. Then he repeated three times the words: He who curses you will be fined. Not for a mountain of gold would I allow a man of you to be hurt. Give them back their presents, for I have no use for them. God took no bribe from me when He gave me back my kingdom, that I should take a bribe for it, and God did not do what men wanted against me, so why should I do what they want against Him.

So they left his presence, crestfallen, taking away their rejected gifts, while we lived with him comfortably in the best security.

THE ABYSSINIANS REVOLT AGAINST THE NEGUS

Jafar ibn Abi Talib wrote: While we were living thus, a rebel arose to snatch his kingdom from Negus and I never knew us to be so sad as we were at that, in our anxiety lest this fellow would get the better of the Negus, and that a man would arise who did not know our case as the Negus did. He went out against him, and the Nile lay between the two parties.

Jafar ibn Muhammad told me on the authority of his father that the Abyssinians assembled and said to the Negus: You have left our religion. They revolted against him. So he sent to Jafar and his companions and prepared ships for them, saying: Embark in these and be ready. If I am defeated, go where you please; if I am victorious, then stay where you are.

The Messenger's Companions called for a man who would go to the battle and bring back news, and Zubayr ibn al-Awwam volunteered. Now he was the youngest man we had. We inflated a waterskin and he put it under his chest, and swam across until he reached that point of the Nile where the armies faced one another. Then he went on until he met them.

Meanwhile we prayed to God to give the Negus victory over his enemy and to establish him in his own country; and as we were doing so, waiting for what might happen, up came al-Zubayr running, waving his clothes as he said: Hurrah, the Negus has conquered and God has destroyed his enemies and established him in his land.

By God, I never knew us to be so happy before. The Negus came back, God having destroyed his enemy and established him in his country, and the chiefs of the Abyssinians rallied to him. Meanwhile we lived in happiest conditions until we came to the Messenger of God in Makkah in 7 AH.

News of this reached the Prophet, and when the Negus died he prayed over him and begged that his sins might be forgiven.[18]

LESSON 49(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan*, *wasatiyyah*). The Islamic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and ijtihad, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does wasatiyyah manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?[19]

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS) SIGNS 28:1-28:13

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:1)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:2)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:3)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:4)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:5)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:6)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:7)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:8)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:9)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:10)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:11)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:12)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:13)

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS) SIGNS 28:14-28:21

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:14)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:15)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:16)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:18)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:20)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:21)

Quranic Chapter 28: The Story (al-Qasas) Signs 28:22-28:28

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:27)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:28)

Quranic Chapter 28: The Story (al-Qasas) Signs 28:29-28:42

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:29)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:30)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:31)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:32)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:33)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:34)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:35)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:36)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:37)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:40)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:42)

Quranic Chapter 28: The Story (al-Qasas) Signs 28:43-28:50

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:43)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:49)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:50)

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS)
SIGNS 28:51-28:60

Makkah: *And, certainly, We caused the saying to reach them so that perhaps they will recollect.* (28:51)

Madinah (28:52)

Madinah (28:53)

Madinah (28:54)

Madinah (28:55)

Makkah: *Truly, **you** have not guided whom **you** have loved but God guides whomever He wills.*
And He is greater in knowledge of the ones who are truly guided. (28:56)
*They said: If we follow the guidance with **you**, we would be snatched away from our region.*
Establish We not firmly for them a holy, safe place where all kinds of fruits are collected as provision from that which proceeds from Our Presence?
But most of them know not. (28:57)
And how many a town that We caused to perish boasted about its livelihood.
And these are their dwellings, not to be inhabited after them but a little.
And, truly, We, We had been the ones who inherit. (28:58)
***Your** Lord had not been One Who Causes towns to perish until He raises up to their mother-town a Messenger who recounts Our signs to them.*
We never had been Ones Who Cause towns to perish unless their people are ones who are unjust. (28:59)
And whatever things you were given are enjoyment for this present life and its adornment.
And what is with God is better for one who endures.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (28:60)

COMMENTARY°

Chapter 28, the 49th Chapter revealed, was revealed in Makkah, at a time when the Muslims were a small minority without power, while the idolaters were in full control of power, wealth, position and authority. In this context, the chapter establishes the true standard of values and power: It clearly states that there is only one true power in the universe, God's, and only one true value, faith. Whoever en-

joys God's support need have no fear, even though he may be bereft of material power, and whomever God opposes can enjoy neither peace nor security even though he may be in possession of all types of material power. A person who enshrines the value of faith enjoys every good thing, while the one who lacks it will not reap any benefit whatsoever.

The Prophet did not need to do more than recite a portion of the Quran in his effort to present his faith to followers of earlier revelations and they accepted it. Yet with regard to his own people, the Prophet made every endeavor to help them see the light of faith, yet God did not open their hearts to it because of what He knew of them. The Prophet could not give guidance to everyone he wished. It is certainly God who guides those whom He knows to have the right attitude and mentality making them ready to accept the faith: *Truly, you have not guided whom you have loved but God guides whomever He wills. And He is greater in knowledge of the ones who are truly guided.* (28:56)

It takes the ungrateful on a further round showing them the true causes of ruin, not least ingratitude for God's blessings, denying His messengers, and turning a blind eye to His signs. This is followed by further signs that clearly outline true values. Thus, this present life, with all its pleasures, appear infinitesimal when compared to what God has in store for those who truly believe. (28:57-28:60)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 28:51-28:60

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad: You, Muhammad, have not guided whom you loved, but God guides. The ungrateful had said to him: If we follow the guidance with you, Muhammad, we will be forced to leave our land. God confirms to Prophet Muhammad that they had been established firmly in a holy, safe place.

Your Lord, Muhammad, has not been one who causes towns to perish until He raises up to their mother-town a Messenger who recounts the signs to him and unless their people are ones who are unjust.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Most of the ungrateful do not realize that the land in which they have been established is a holy, safe place for them to earn a livelihood. It asks the ungrateful: Will you not be reasonable?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that guidance from God has been continuous. How is guidance from God continuous? God has sent previous Messengers with His revelations. Those who know the previous revelations readily believe that it is possible for a Messenger to receive revelation from God. God has continually sent Messengers who teach His guidance. The following of the guidance results in those who exhibit noble qualities. Those who exhibit noble qualities are those who follow guidance from God.

Here is an example:

Point of view: The Quranic message states: **Purpose:** that guidance from God has been continuous. **Question:** How is guidance from God continuous? **Fact:** God has sent previous Messengers with His revelations. **Interpretation:** Those who know the previous revelations readily believe that it is possible for a Messenger to receive revelation from God. **Concept:** God has continually sent Messengers who teach His guidance. **Implication:** The following of the guidance results in those who exhibit noble qualities. **Assumption:** Those who exhibit noble qualities are those who follow guidance from God.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.

I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life.

LESSON 49(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS) SIGNS 28:61-28:75

Makkah: *Is he to whom We promised*
a fairer promise
—and it is one that reaches fulfillment—
like him to whom We gave the enjoyment
of enjoyment for this present life?
Again, on the Day of Resurrection he will be
among the ones who are charged? (28:61)
And on that Day He will proclaim to them and will say:
Where are My ascribed associates
whom you had been claiming? (28:62)
They would say about whom will be realized the saying:
Our Lord! These are they whom we led into error.
We led them into error even as we erred.
We clear ourselves with ***You****.*
They had never been worshipping us. (28:63)

And it would be said: Call to your ascribed associates.
Then, they will call to them, but they will not respond to them
and they will see the punishment.
If only they had been truly guided! (28:64)
And on a Day when He would proclaim to them
and He would say:
What have you answered to the ones who are sent? (28:65)
Then, the tidings of that day will be in darkness
and they will not demand anything of one another. (28:66)
As for him who repented and believed
and did as one in accord with morality,
then, perhaps he will be among the ones who prosper. (28:67)
And ***your*** *Lord creates whatever He wills and chooses.*
Not for them had there been a choice.
Glory be to God and exalted is He
above partners they ascribe! (28:68)
And ***your*** *Lord knows what their breasts hide*
and what they speak openly. (28:69)
And He, God, there is no god but He.
His is all Praise in the First and in the Last.
And His is the determination.
And to Him you will be returned. (28:70)
Say: Considered you
what if God made the nighttime endless for you
until the Day of Resurrection?
What god other than God brings you illumination?
Will you not, then, hear? (28:71)
Say: Considered you
what if God made the daytime endless for you
until the Day of Resurrection?
What god other than God
brings you nighttime wherein you rest?
Will you not, then, perceive? (28:72)
And it is out of His mercy that He assigned for you
the nighttime and the daytime that you rest in it
and that you be looking for His grace
and so that perhaps you will give thanks. (28:73)
And on a Day He will proclaim to them and say:
Where are My ascribed associates
whom you had been claiming? (28:74)
And We will tear out a witness from every community
and We will say: Prepare your proof.
Then, they will know that The Truth is with God

and will go astray from them what they had been devising. (28:75)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter now takes us on another round in which it portrays certain images of the Day of Judgment. It shows us the inevitable end to which associating partners with God leads. (28:61-67)

The first question is one of rebuke: *And on that Day He will proclaim to them and will say: Where are My ascribed associates whom you had been claiming?* (28:62) God certainly knows that such alleged partners are not to be found on that day, and that those who made the claims about their alleged status know nothing about them, they cannot even reach them. The question is asked so as to disgrace them. Therefore, those who are asked will give no answer, because no answer is needed or expected. They only try to exonerate themselves for having led others astray, preventing them from following divine guidance, as the elders of the Quraysh used to do with their subordinates. *They would say about whom will be realized the saying: Our Lord! These are they whom we led into error. We led them into error even as we erred. We clear ourselves with **You.** They had never been worshipping us.* (28:63)

This attempt at diverting the questions will not, however, benefit them. They are forced back to the central point, which is the farce of associating partners with God: *Then, they will call to them.* (28:64) If those alleged partners can do any good, now is the time to call on them. Therefore, they are urged to appeal to them to come to their help. In their misery, they know all too well that calling on them is futile. But they have no choice but to do as they are told: *But they will not respond to them.* (28: 64) Nothing else was expected and so the ungrateful are humiliated: *And they will see the punishment.* (28:64) They see it in this dialogue, just as they see it before them. Their inevitable end is one of great suffering.

When the image we see is at its climax, they are shown the guidance they continued to reject. This is the dear wish of anyone in that position on that great day. Guidance is available to them in this life if they will only take it up: *If only they had been truly guided!* (28:64)

They are immediately returned to that dreaded scene: *And on a Day when He would proclaim to them and He would say: What have you answered to the ones who are sent?* (28:65) God certainly knows how they answered His messengers, but the question is put to them as a form of rebuke. In their state of total loss, they have no answer to give: *Then, the tidings of that day will be in darkness and they will not demand anything of one another.* (28:66) For "*darkness*" the Ara-

bic text uses the word *amiyat*, which denotes blindness. Indeed, it imparts an air of non-seeing to the whole scene. It is as if all information has been blinded and cannot reach them, leaving them with nothing. They can neither ask nor answer any questions. They remain silent, totally lost.

This is the opposite image. *As for him who repented and believed and did as one in accord with morality, then, perhaps he will be among the ones who prosper.* (28:67) At the moment the ungrateful are at the height of their distress, the chapter depicts the person who repents of his sins, believes in God and does God-conscious deeds. This is the person who hopes to be successful. The choice is open to all and the time is there to make such a choice.

The chapter makes it clear that everything is subject to God's will and His choice: *And **your** Lord creates whatever He wills and chooses. Not for them had there been a choice. Glory be to God and exalted is He above partners they ascribe!And **your** Lord knows what their breasts hide and what they speak openly. And He, God, there is no god but He. His is all Praise in the First and in the Last. And His is the determination. And to Him you will be returned.* (28:68-28:70)

The chapter then takes the ungrateful on yet another round presenting them with scenes of the universe. In these, they are shown to remain oblivious to what God chooses for them and their life. It alerts them to two great universal signs, the night and the day, and the secrets they involve of what God chooses for His servants. (28:71-28:73)

People miss the light of day when the winter nights become a little longer, and cannot wait for the bright sun when it disappears for a few hours behind clouds. *Say: Considered you what if God made the nighttime endless for you until the Day of Resurrection? What god other than God brings you illumination? Will you not, then, hear?* (28:71) What will they do then if they lose its light completely, with the night stretching perpetually over their world? This question supposes that they will remain alive in such an eventuality, when all life is in peril unless daylight is forthcoming.

People look for the shade when the hours of day stretch and become very hot, and they look forward to the coming of the night when the days stretch longer in the summer. *Say: Considered you what if God made the daytime endless for you until the Day of Resurrection? What god other than God brings you nighttime wherein you rest? Will you not, then, perceive?* (28:72) They enjoy their repose and rest in the night. All creatures need the night when they can renew the energy they spend during the day. What would happen to them then, should they remain alive, if the day were endlessly per-

petuated until the Day of Judgment? Indeed, all life could perish in a day that never ends.

Everything in this universe is determined according to a careful measure, and every little detail is planned. *And it is out of His mercy that He assigned for you the nighttime and the daytime that you rest in it and that you be looking for His grace and so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (28:73)

Then follows a quick image of the Day of Judgment presented in a rhetorical question about those beings the ungrateful alleged to be partners with God. The chapter, thus, confronts them with their false claims, showing them to be absolutely without substance: *And on a Day He will proclaim to them and say: Where are My ascribed associates whom you had been claiming? And We will tear out a witness from every community and We will say: Prepare your proof. Then, they will know that The Truth is with God and will go astray from them what they had been devising.* (28:74-28:75)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 28:61-28:75

WHO IS GOD?

God will tear out a witness from every community.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: Considered you (the ungrateful) what if God made the nighttime endless for you until the Day of Resurrection? What god other than God brings you illumination? Will you not hear? Considered you (the ungrateful) what if God made the daytime endless for you until the Day of Resurrection? What god other than God brings you nighttime wherein you rest? Will you not perceive?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic message asks the ungrateful: Is he to whom We promised a fairer promise—and it will be fulfilled—like he to whom We gave enjoyment in this present life? On the Day of Resurrection will he be among the ones who are charged? Where are My ascribed associates whom you had been claiming? Call to your ascribed associates. When they call to them, they will not respond. Then the ungrateful will see the punishment. What have you answered to the ones who are sent?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for **a purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message teaches that on the Day of Judgment the believers in false and imaginary deities will be asked to call those whom they worshipped as gods other than the One God. Where are the partners you associated with God? The idolaters worshiped multiple gods instead of the One God. On the Day of Judgment, those who ascribed partners to God will be asked where their ascribed partners are. Those who ascribe partners with God will call to these partners deny that God is One. That which we name and worship as partners with God will not be able to answer us when we call them on the Day of Judgment because they are just names that we have created. Partners we ascribe with God cannot answer when we call them.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

Lesson 49(3). Critical Thinking Strategy
Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations

The Middle Community
Islamic Moderation:[20]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of Islam that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of Islam, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts of Islam include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the ummah throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts of Islam include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of Islam set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*ummah*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

Quranic Chapter 28: The Story (al-Qasas)
Signs 28:76-28:82

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:76)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:79)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:80)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:81)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:82)

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS)
SIGNS 28:83-28:88

Makkah: *This is the Last Abode*
that We will assign to those
who want not self-exaltation in the earth, nor corruption.
And the Ultimate End is for
the ones who are God-conscious. (28:83)
Whoever brought about benevolence,
for him there will be better than it.
And whoever brought about an evil deed,
then, not will be given recompense to those who did evil deeds
other than for what they had been doing. (28:84)
Jufha on the Migration: *Truly He Who imposed the Quran for*
you will be one who restores you to the place of return. Say: My
Lord is greater in knowledge of whoever drew near guidance and
whoever is clearly wandering astray. (28:85)
And ***you*** *had been without hope that the Book*
would be cast down to ***you****,*
but as a mercy from ***your*** *Lord.*
Be ***you*** *not a sustainer of the ones who are ungrateful.* (28:86)
And let them not bar ***you*** *from the signs of God*
after they were caused to descend to ***you****.*
And call to ***your*** *Lord.*
And be ***you*** *not among the ones who are polytheists.* (28:87)
And call not to any god other than God.
There is no god but He!
Everything is that which perishes, but His Countenance.
To Him is the determination
and to Him you will be returned. (28:88)

COMMENTARY°

Now it addresses the Prophet and the small band of believers who followed him when he was still in Makkah. (28:86)

His Lord bids him then not to lend support to the ungrateful. He warns him of allowing the ungrateful or anyone else to turn him away from God's revelations. He sets the pure faith based on God's absolute Oneness against idolatry and idolaters.

There can never be any mutual support or cooperation between believers and the ungrateful when their two ways and codes are so widely different. One group is God's party and the other Satan's

party. On what could they cooperate? (28:87)

The ungrateful always try to turn the advocates of faith away from their task, using all means and methods. The believers, however, always stick to their way, paying no heed to those who oppose them or try to divert them. They have God's revelations with which they have been entrusted.

It should always be a direct, clear call that allows for no ambiguity or equivocation. It is a call to God, not to any bond based on national or narrow interests. It does not seek the fulfilment of any desire. Whoever wishes to adopt this message pure and simple should do so. Those who want something else should know that the way to that end is different. (28:87-28:88)

This rule is stated twice in succession. The first warns against associating partners with God. The second warns against adopting any deity alongside God. It is this rule that separates clarity from confusion with regard to faith. It is on this rule that the whole structure of faith is based: Its morality, values, duties and legislations. It is the pivot around which every directive and legislative order turns. Therefore, it is always stated first.

Such emphasis is then repeated in a rather different way. (28:88)

There is no deity other than Him. No submission is made to anyone else. His is the only power and the only refuge. Indeed everything else will die and perish: Wealth, position, authority, power, life and its comforts, the whole earth, the heavens and all creatures in them, as well as the entire universe we know or do not know about. All will perish and only God, the Everlasting, will remain. *To Him is the determination.* (28:88) He judges as He pleases. No one is party to His judgment, and none can impede or abrogate His verdict. Whatever He wills shall be. *And to Him you will be returned.* (28:88) There can be no escape from Him or His judgment.

Thus concludes the chapter that shows God's will taking direct action, protecting the divine message and destroying tyranny. It concludes with restating the basic concept of faith: God's Oneness and His transcendent authority. Therefore, the advocates of the divine message should go along their way confident and reassured.

LESSON 49(3). SUMMARY OF SIGNS 28:83-28:88

WHO IS GOD?

God will assign the Last Abode for those who do not self-exalt on the earth nor cause corruption. There is no god but He. Everything perishes or dies except His Presence. To Him everyone will be returned.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says to Prophet Muhammad: Were you, Muhammad, hoping that the Quran would be sent down to you as a mercy from your Lord, Muhammad? Do not sustain or assist the ungrateful. Do not let them bar you from the signs of God when they are revealed to you. Call to your Lord, Muhammad. Do not be among the idol worshipers. Call not upon any god, but God.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

According to the Quranic message here, the best place of rest in the hereafter is for the pious. Who are the pious? The pious are those who not exalt themselves in the earth nor cause corruption. Whoever does acts of kindness, there will be better for him or her than that. To be pious means to not be arrogant nor to corrupt the earth and to do acts of kindness to others. The pious are the ones who will receive the best reward in the eternal life to come. There will be an afterlife in the hereafter.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life.

50(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34 as we move forward to Problem to Solve.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)
SIGNS 17:1-17:10

The Night Journey: *Glory be to Him Who caused His servant to set forth by night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa around which We blessed so that We cause him to see Our signs.* **(17:1)**[21]

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (17:2)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (17:3)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:4)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:5)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:6)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:7)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:8)

Makkah: *Truly, this, the Quran, guides to what is upright and gives good tidings to the ones who believe, those who are as the ones in accord with morality, that they will have a great compensation.* (17:9)

And as for those who believe not in the world to come,

We made ready for them a painful punishment. (17:10)

COMMENTARY°

The section now speaks about the Quran, making it clear that it is a book of true and full guidance: Surely this Quran shows the way to that which is most upright. It gives the believers who do good deeds the happy news that theirs will be a rich reward. It declares that We have prepared a grievous suffering for those who do not believe in the life to come. (17:9-17:10)

Truly, this, the Quran, guides to what is upright (17:9) is a general statement applicable to all those who are guided by the Quran and the goals to which it guides. Thus, the guidance is given to communities and generations that are not restricted by time or place. And the superiority of its guidance applies to all that they may attain when they follow any method or approach. It is also superior to every good thing to which people may be guided at any time or place.

The Quran also ensures harmony between our outward and inward existence, feelings and behavior, faith and action. In all this it shows the way to what is 'most upright', linking all these aspects to the true and unseverable bond that exists between us and God. This enables us to look up to a higher horizon while we are still on earth. Thus what we do in our daily life becomes an act of worship, provided that we do so seeking God's acceptance. This is true even when the action itself provides us with pure enjoyment of what is available in this life.

The Quran also endorses all divine religions, establishing a firm link between them, honoring all that is sacred in them, and protecting all that they hold in reverence. This ensures that humanity, with all its divine faiths live in peace. In this again the Quran provides its perfect guidance. This is all summed up in the sign which says: (17:10) This is the basic rule laid down by the Quran in respect of action and reward. The Quranic structure is built on the two pillars of faith and good action. Faith that is not confirmed by action is hollow, unfulfilled, while action that is not based on faith lacks firm roots. It is when both are combined that life maintains its most upright course, and with them both together guidance shown in the Quran takes its proper effect.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:1-17:10

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quran guides human beings to what is upright. It gives good tidings to ones who believe, who are in accord with morality while those who deny

the signs will have a painful punishment.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran guides to what is what is honest, honorable, worthy, moral, conscientious, good, virtuous. What does the Quran give to those who are guided? Good tidings to the ones who believe and who act in accord with morality. It is those who believe and who are moral people who will have a great compensation. Following God's guidance is to act morally. Acting in accord with morality results in a great compensation from God. Human beings have been created with a moral compass.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold contradictory point of views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

Lesson 50(2). Critical Thinking Strategy
Noting Significant Similarities and Differences

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases.

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)
Signs 17:11-17:22

Makkah: *And the human being calls to worse*
as much as he supplicates for good.
And the human being had been hasty. (17:11)
We made the nighttime and the daytime as two signs.
Then, We blotted out the sign of nighttime
and We made the sign of daytime
for one who perceives
that you be looking for grace from your Lord
and that you know the number of years
and the reckoning.
And We explained everything distinctly,
with a decisive explanation. (17:12)
For every human being
We fastened his omen to his neck
and We will bring out for him
on the Day of Resurrection
a book in which he will meet
that which unfolded. (17:13)
*Recite **your** book!*
*This day **your** soul sufficed **you***
*as **your** reckoner against **you**.* (17:14)
Whoever was truly guided is truly guided only for his own soul.
And whoever went astray, then, only goes astray against it.
And no burdened soul bears
the heavy load of another,
nor would We have been ones who punish
until We raised up a Messenger. (17:15)

And when We wanted to cause a town to perish,
We commanded ones who are given ease,
but they disobeyed therein.
So the saying was realized against it.
Then, We destroyed it with utter destruction. (17:16)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (17:17)

Makkah: *Whoever had been wanting that which hastens away,*
We quicken it for him, whatever We will
to whomever We want.
Again, We assigned hell for him.
He will roast in it, one who is condemned,
one who is rejected. (17:18)
And whoever wanted the world to come
and endeavored for it, endeavoring, while he is one who believes,
then, those, their endeavoring had been appreciated. (17:19)
To each We furnish relief, these and these,
*with the gift of **your** Lord.*
*And this gift of **your** Lord*
has not been that which is confined. (17:20)
Look on how We gave advantage to some of them
over some others.
And, certainly, the world to come will be greater in degrees
and greater in excellence. (17:21)
Assign not another god with God for,
*then, **you** will be put as one who is condemned,*
one who is damned. (17:22)

COMMENTARY°

OUR HASTY CHARACTERISTIC

Those who do not follow the guidance of the Quran are left to their own devices. But we are hasty, unaware of what benefits him and what causes him harm, impulsive, unable to control his reactions even when they bring about evil consequences: *And the human being calls to worse as much as he supplicates for good. And the human being had been hasty.* (17:11) He does not know the ultimate results. He may do something that is evil and precipitate its results unaware that these only bring about immense harm to himself; or he may be aware of such results but is unable to control himself. This is a long, long way away from the assured, calm and consistent guidance given in the Quran. The two ways of Quranic guidance and human desire are too widely divergent.

The chapter here mentions some of God's universal signs and

relates these to people's actions, efforts and earnings on the one hand and their fruits and reward on the other. We thus see that the laws that govern action and reward are closely linked to the laws governing the whole universe. Both are based on perfect rules that never fail. They are as accurate as the system that ensures that day and night succeed each other. They are operated by the Creator who has made them two of His signs: (17:12) Nothing takes place haphazardly. (17:12)

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The law of action and reward is directly linked to the meticulous law of the universe: (17:13-17:14)

The Arabic phraseology of this sign provides a highly graphic description which uses the word, 'bird', in place of 'action'. Thus we have here a metaphor referring to what flies of a person's actions and becomes tied around his neck, so that it never parts from him. Thus does the Quran in graphically describing things in order to emphasize its point. A person's actions do not leave him, and he cannot disown them. The same applies to the wide open record of all his actions. Thus whatever he has done in life is laid bare. He cannot hide, ignore or disown it. Both descriptions, of the bird denoting action and the record thrown open, produce a very strong effect that adds to the fears experienced on that very difficult day when nothing remains hidden. Everyone is told to read their own records because, ***This day your soul sufficed you as your reckoner against you.*** (17:14)

Again the same accurate universal law is linked to the rules governing action and reward: (17:15)

It is all individual responsibility. When one follows guidance, one reaps the fruits, and when one chooses error, one bears the consequences. None will bear or lighten the burden of another. Everyone will be questioned about their own actions and will have the reward for what they have done in this life. Close friends will be of no help to each other.

Yet as a sign of God's grace, He does not leave our guidance dependent only on the signs that are available in the universe. Nor does He leave him to the covenant God has made with human nature before a person is born. He has sent messengers to warn and remind: (17:15) This is certainly an aspect of God's grace which gives everyone ample opportunity to follow His guidance. Only when they have been properly warned and still persist in error does He punish them, if He so wills.

AFFLUENCE LEADING TO DESTRUCTION

The same consistent and universal law that governs the succession of day and night also applies to the destruction of any community: *And when We wanted to cause a town to perish, We commanded ones who are given ease, but they disobeyed therein. So the saying was realized against it. Then, We destroyed it with utter destruction.* (17:16)

The mention of God's will in the sign: *And when We wanted to cause a town to perish, We commanded ones who are given ease, but they disobeyed therein.* It does not mean a commanding will which initiates the cause. It is a will that brings the effect when the cause takes place. Thus the effect becomes inevitable as a result of the operation of God's laws of nature. Similarly, the 'command' in the same statement does not refer to a directive requiring them to indulge in sin. It simply refers to the natural result which comes about in consequence of those people leading such a life. Therefore, the sign states that: *So the saying was realized against it. Then, We destroyed it with utter destruction.* (17:16)

This statement highlights the responsibility of every community, as it makes clear that this law has remained operative since Noah's time: (17:17)

CHOICES AND REWARDS

Someone who wishes to lead a life based solely on this world, looking up to nothing beyond this earth and its pleasures, will have whatever God has assigned to him of these: *Whoever had been wanting that which hastens away, We quicken it for him, whatever We will to whomever We want. Again, We assigned hell for him. He will roast in it, one who is condemned, one who is rejected.* (17:18) He is disgraced by his actions, rejected, suffering severe punishment.

On the other side is a totally different picture: *And whoever wanted the world to come and endeavored for it, endeavoring, while he is one who believes, then, those, their endeavoring had been appreciated.* (17:19) Someone who desires the rich reward of the life to come must pursue his goal diligently.

NO LIMITS TO GOD'S GRACE

Yet both groups receive God's bounty which is open to all and restricted to none. Both those who seek only this world's pleasures and enjoy them to the full and those who pursue the reward of the life to come partake of God's bounty which God grants to all: *To each We furnish relief, these and these, with the gift of your Lord.*

And this gift of your Lord has not been that which is confined. (17:20)

This bounty bestowed by God differs widely, in accordance with people's means, aims and actions. They differ despite the fact that the scope on earth is very limited and its expanse so narrow. How then will they differ when they are in the other place, where the scope is limitless? How can we compare the expanses of the two worlds, when, in God's sight, this world and all that it contains counts for less that the span of a mosquito's wings, as stated by the Prophet? *Look on how We gave advantage to some of them over some others. And, certainly, the world to come will be greater in degrees and greater in excellence.* (17:21)

Assign not another god with God for, then, you will be put as one who is condemned, one who is damned. (17:22) This is a commandment forbidding the association of partners with God and a warning against the results it brings about.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:11-17:22

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message commands Prophet Muhammad: Recite your book, Muhammad. You yourself, Muhammad, are sufficient as a reckoner of your account. Your Lord, Muhammad, is sufficient in regard to the sins of His servants. The gift of your Lord, Muhammad, is to furnish relief to either those who want that which hastens away or those who want the world to come. Those who want the world to come endeavor while being one who believes. God appreciates their endeavoring. The gift of your Lord, Muhammad, is not restricted. Do not, Muhammad, assign another god with God.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Human beings call for worse as well as for good. The human being is hasty. The nighttime and daytime have been created for reckoning the number of years and the reckoning. Everything has been explained distinctly. Every human being will face a reckoning from his book that will be unfolded on the Day of Judgment. Whoever is truly guided is guided for his or her own soul alone. Whoever goes astray goes astray for his or her own soul. No one bears the burden of another person. The saying is realized against those who are given ease and then disobey.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

None shall bear the burden of another states the Quranic message here. Am I responsible for the actions of others? No one shall bear the burden of another. Each person is responsible on the Day of Judgment for his or her own actions. Everyone is responsible to God for his or her own actions. A person only needs to be concerned with his or her own actions and not with the actions of others. We are each responsible to God for our own actions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

Lesson 50(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Vocabulary

What is a concept?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)

Signs 17:23-17:30

Makkah: *And **your** Lord decreed that you worship*
none but Him!
And kindness to the ones who are one's parents.
*If they reach old age with **you**—one of them or both of them—then,*
you will not say to them a word of disrespect
nor scold them,
but say a generous saying to them. (17:23)
*And make **yourself** low to them,*
the wing of the sense of humility through mercy.
And say: O my Lord! Have mercy on them
even as they raised me when I was small. (17:24)
Your Lord is greater in knowledge of what is within yourselves.
If you be ones in accord with morality, truly, He is Forgiving
to those who had been penitent. (17:25)
Madinah (17:26)
Makkah: *Truly, the ones who spend extravagantly*
had been brothers/sisters of the satans
and Satan had been ungrateful to his Lord. (17:27)
*And if **you** have turned aside from them,*
*looking for mercy from **your** Lord for which **you** have hoped,*
then, say to them a saying softly. (17:28)
*And make not **your** hand be one that is restricted to **your** neck*
as a miser nor extend it to its utmost expansion as a prodigal

*so that **you** will sit as one who is reproached,*
one who is denuded. (17:29)
*Truly, **your** Lord extends the provision for whom He wills*
and He tightens for whom He wills.
Truly, He, He had been Aware, Seeing of His servants. (17:30)

COMMENTARY°

A CODE BASED ON JUSTICE

In the preceding passages, which comprises the first twenty-two signs of chapter 17, the rules of action and reward, guidance and error, earnings and reckoning are linked to the great universal law that governs the succession of night and day. In the current passage, the rules for behavior, manners, individual and social duties are linked to belief in God's Oneness. Indeed this belief provides the essential tie to which all other ties are linked, within the family, community and humanity as a whole.

*And **your** Lord decreed that you worship none but Him!* (17:23) This order to offer all worship to God alone follows the one prohibiting the association of partners with God. It takes the form of a decisive ruling to be implemented without fail, by all humanity. The term, *qada*, used in the Arabic text and translated as 'decreed', signifies a final verdict imparting additional emphasis to an already emphatic order that also uses the construction of a negation and exception: *You worship none but Him.* The mode is one of total emphasis and stress. When this basic ruling is well established, individual and community duties are outlined. These rely on a firm belief in the One God. Therefore, motives and goals behind actions and practices work towards the same end.

KINDNESS TO ONE'S PARENTS

The most important bond next to that of faith is the family. Therefore, the chapter links kindness to parents with the worship of God, in order to emphasize its importance in God's sight: (17: 23-17:24) With inspirational expression that is full of tenderness, the Quran enhances our feelings of compassion towards our parents.

The chapter then imparts an air of tenderness to the whole atmosphere. It engenders memories of childhood, of compassion, love and tender care: *If they reach old age with you—one of them or both of them.* (17:23) Old age commands veneration, and the weakness of the elderly imparts certain feelings. Use of the phrase, 'in your care', describes an elderly person weakened by advancing years needing shelter and care. Therefore, sons and daughters are told: *Then, **you** will not say to them a word of disrespect nor scold them* .(17:23)

This is the first step in taking care of one's parents and being kindly to them. Sons and daughters must never use words which suggest their being vexed or bothered by their parents, or say anything that betrays disrespect. On the contrary, they must *but say a generous saying to them.* (17:23) This is a higher and more positive step. What sons and daughters say to their parents must always be coupled with genuine respect. *And make yourself low to them, the wing of the sense of humility through mercy.* (17:24) At this point the Quran uses very tender words to touch our hearts and consciences. Mercy and compassion are so heightened that they border on humility, making the son and daughter too respectful to look their parents straight in the face, but willing to obey them. It is as if such tenderness spreads wings over one's parents. This is followed by a prayer: *And say: O my Lord! Have mercy on them even as they raised me when I was small.* (17:24)

Since all feelings, actions and reactions are related to faith in the context of the chapter, it adds a final comment, referring all matters to God who knows people's intentions and what lies behind words and actions: (17:25)

The Quran speaks strongly against squandering, which is defined as spending one's money in the wrong way. If one spends all one's money for rightful purposes, one is not a squanderer, but if one spends a small amount in the wrong way, then one is. Thus, it is not the amount which one spends, but the purpose for which one spends it. Therefore, squanderers are indeed Satan's brothers because they spend their money for evil purposes, and to finance their disobedience of God. This makes them Satan's cronies. It must be remembered that *Satan had been ungrateful to his Lord.* (17:27)

When a person does not have the means to do his duty by relatives, the needy and he finds it embarrassing to meet them face to face, he should turn to God praying to Him to give him good provisions and to provide for those in need. At the same time, he should promise the needy that he will give to them whenever his means improve. At the same time, he should speak to them kindly. He must not be bored with them, nor should he remain silent and so embarrass them. A kind word serves a good purpose and opens up hope: *And if you have turned aside from them, looking for mercy from your Lord for which you have hoped, then, say to them a saying softly.* (17:28)

Within the context of prohibiting the squandering of money, the Quran orders moderation in all spending: (17:29) Striking a proper balance is the Quranic message.

The order to seek a middle course is followed with a comment stating that the provider for all is God, and it is He who may give

abundant provisions or may give only in a tight measure. Yet the One who gives to all is the One who orders a middle course: (17:30) Whichever way He gives to any one of His servants is determined on the basis of His wisdom. He commands all to follow a course of moderation, prohibiting both extremes of miserliness and careless extravagance on the basis of His perfect knowledge of what is most suitable for all His servants at all times. It is He who has revealed the Quran to always guide along the straight path.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:23-17:30

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

An important point to be noted in connection with all these instructions is that matters which an individual needs to implement in person, as an individual, are phrased in the singular form. By contrast, the instructions that are addressed to the community are given in the plural. Thus we see that orders to be kind to parents, to be charitable to relatives, the needy and stranded travelers, and to refrain from extravagance, maintain a middle way between being tight-fisted and spendthrift, to ascertain the truth in every situation and refrain from showing arrogance and conceit, are all given in the singular form. This is due to the fact that responsibility in these areas is shouldered by the individual. On the other hand, the plural form is used to express the instructions prohibiting the killing of children and those concerning the protection of an orphan's property, honoring promises and pledges, and giving fair weight and measure, because these concern the community as a whole.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?

8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says to be kind to one's parents. How does the Quran say one should treat one's parents? Do not scold them or say a word of disrespect. Be humble towards them. Pray for them. Be good to our parents who raised us. One should be good to one's parents. God will reward those who are good to their parents. Our parents have been good to us.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP
Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.
How do I map?
First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.
Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

Concept mapping: This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

Pre-questions: Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

Definition: What is....? Where does ... fit? What group does ... belong to?

Characteristics: How would I describe...? What does ... look like? What are its parts?

Examples What is a good example of ...? What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

Experience What experience have I had with ....? What can I imagine about ...?

Visual Aids: Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

50(4). Critical Thinking Strategy
Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframe Insights to New Contexts

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability students have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form of tribal mentality and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)
Signs 17:31-17:40

Makkah: *And kill not your children dreading want.*
We will provide for them and for you.
Truly, the killing of them had been a grave inequity. (17:31)
Madinah (17:32)
Madinah (17:33)
Makkah: *And come not near the property of the orphan,*
but with what is fairer until he reaches the coming of age.
And live up to the compact.
Truly, the compact had been
that which will be asked about. (17:34)[22]
And live up to the full measure when you wanted to measure.
And weigh with a scale, one that is straight.
That is best and fairer in interpretation. (17:35)[23]
And follow up not of what there is not for ***you*** *knowledge of it.*
Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind,
each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36)
And walk not on the earth exultantly.
Truly, ***you*** *will never make a hole in the earth*
and will never reach the mountains in height. (17:37)[24]
All of that had been bad deeds,
ones that are disliked by ***your*** *Lord.* (17:38)
That is of what ***your*** *Lord revealed to* ***you*** *of wisdom.*
So make not up with God another god
that ***you*** *would be cast down into hell*
as one who is reproached, as one who is rejected. (17:39)
Selected your Lord for you sons

and taken for Himself females
from among the angels?
Truly, you, you say a serious saying! (17:40)

COMMENTARY°

SETTING VALUES RIGHT

As the Quran makes this statement clear, it follows it with reference to the fact that some people in pre-Quranic days used to kill their daughters for fear of want and poverty. It then adds a clear order prohibiting the killing of children for any such reason. Since God is the One who determines the means people have, there is no connection, then, between poverty and the number or sex of the children they have. The matter is fully in God's hands. When people purge their thoughts of the false notion of any direct relationship between poverty and having children, and when they adopt the correct concept in this regard, there is no reason for that ghastly crime which flies in the face of human nature and the right to life: *And kill not your children dreading want. We will provide for them and for you. Truly, the killing of them had been a grave inequity.* (17:31)

The fact that people in pre-Quranic Arabia used to bury their daughters alive provides a clear case of how far false religious beliefs can affect human life so as to establish such horrendous crime as an acceptable social norm. It testifies to the fact that life is affected by the sort of beliefs people adopt. Indeed faith cannot remain isolated from human life.

PERFECT HONESTY

Having completed its instructions concerning the sanctity of people's honor and life, the chapter tackles the question of orphans' property and the requirement of fulfilling one's promises and pledges towards them: (17:34)

The Quran makes it clear that a Muslim's life, honor and property are to be protected and preserved. The chapter, however, makes a special case concerning the property of an orphan, ensuring its full protection. It forbids the mere coming near it except for what is best for the orphan. That is because an orphan is too weak to manage his property or defend it against assault. Therefore, the Muslim community is required to take proper care of the orphan and his property until he comes of age and is able to take care of his own affairs.

Here we see that the order not to come near the property of an orphan, except with the best of intentions, is given in the plural in order to make the whole community responsible for the protection of orphans and their property. It is then a collective responsibility.

Looking after an orphan's property is an act of trust which constitutes a pledge by the whole community. Therefore, it is followed with an order to honor all promises and pledges: (17:34)

Just Weight and Measure

The code of conduct the chapter outlines also speaks about fairness in commercial dealings: *And live up to the full measure when you wanted to measure. And weigh with a scale, one that is straight.* (17:35) The relevance of fulfilling promises and giving fair and full measure and weight is readily apparent, both in meaning and expression. This makes the progress from one to the other easy and smooth. To be fair in transactions and to give full weight and measure are actions which mark honest dealing and good faith. Thus internal dealings within the community are set on the right footing which promotes trust and honesty, and ensures blessings all round: *That is best and fairer in interpretation.* (17:35) It is good in this life as it maintains fairness, and better in the hereafter as it ensures good reward.

Accountability for All Actions

A basic characteristic of the Quranic message is that it is straightforward, clear and transparent. Nothing is permitted on the basis of suspicion, myth or unsubstantiated impression: *And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked.* (17:36) These few words establish a complete method for the human mind and heart, incorporating the scientific approach that humanity has begun to apply only recently. It adds, however, honesty and fear of God. This is an advantage the Quranic message adds over cold rational approaches that are devoid of spirituality. Certain knowledge must be the only basis for judgement or conviction. Whatever is not certain must never constitute such a basis.

These orders and instructions that are closely linked to the faith based on God's Oneness are concluded with an order prohibiting conceit and arrogance: *And walk not on the earth exultantly.* (17:37)

The Quran puts the conceited and arrogant face to face with their humbleness and powerlessness: *Truly, you will never make a hole in the earth and will never reach the mountains in height.* (17:37) Physically we are small and insignificant, particularly when compared to giant creation. But we are strong when we rely on God's power, honorable with His honor, and noble with His spirit which God has breathed into us. God has given us all this so that we always remem-

ber and remain conscious of Him.

As we have seen, these instructions are mainly concerned with prohibiting evil action and improper behavior. Their outline concludes with declaring God's disapproval of them: *All of that had been bad deeds, ones that are disliked by your Lord.* (17:38)

This outline of the Quranic code of conduct is brought to an end by showing its details again linked to faith in God's Oneness, which was also stated at the outset of this passage. This is coupled with a warning against associating partners with God. Furthermore, we are told that this code is only a part of the wisdom to which the Quran guides people: *That is of what your Lord revealed to you of wisdom. So make not up with God another god that you would be cast down into hell as one who is reproached, as one who is rejected.* (17:39)

Thus the ending is akin to the opening, with both emphasizing the basis on which the Quranic message builds its structure for human life, namely, the concept of God's oneness. For it is to God that all worship should be addressed.

Selected your Lord for you sons and taken for Himself females from among the angels? Truly, you, you say a serious saying! (17:40) This question implies a sarcastic response to what the ungrateful used to do, as they described the angels as God's daughters. God is indeed too exalted to take to Himself a son or a wife, and He is too sublime to have any partner or associate. The sign also ridicules the assigning of daughters to God, when the Arabs considered girls to be of lesser status than boys. They indeed killed their daughters for fear of poverty or shame. Nevertheless they considered angels to be female and made them God's daughters.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:31; 17:34-17:40

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The humility which the Quran calls upon people to adopt, decrying at the same time all types of conceit, is a mark of maintaining proper relations with God and one's fellow human beings, and a proper personal and social attitude. No one abandons such good manners except the petty and the conceited. Such people are disliked by God because they overlook His favors which they enjoy, and are hated by human beings for their arrogance. By contrast, God humiliates an arrogant person so as he rates himself highly while people look down upon him.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view**

based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran commands that you not to kill your children. Why would people kill their children? God will provide for them and for you. The Quran forbids abortion after a certain number of days. Killing one's children is because of fear of poverty. The Quran says that this is a grave inequity. There are those who kill their children dreading poverty.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to respond to the following in class:

What evidence do the above signs give?
Why would the facts be true?
What assumptions are you making?
Do you have reason to think your assumptions are true?

50(5). Critical Thinking Strategy
Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

The Idolaters Listen to the Prophet's Recitation as they begin to develop their perspective:

A group of the Quraysh idolaters had gone out by night to listen to the Messenger as he was praying in his house. Everyone of them chose a place to sit where he could listen, and none knew where the others were sitting. So they passed the night listening to him, until as the dawn rose, they dispersed.

On the way home they met and reproached one another, and one said to the other: Don't do it again, for if one of the light-minded fools sees you, you will arouse suspicion in his mind.

Then they went away, until on the second night everyone of them returned again to his place, and they passed the night listening. Then at dawn the same thing happened again, and again on the third night, when on the morrow they said to one another: We will not go away until we take a solemn obligation that we will not return. This they did and then dispersed.

In the morning al-Akhnas went to the house of Abu Sufyan, and asked him to tell him his opinion of what he had heard from Muhammad. He replied: By God, I heard things that I know, and know what was meant by them, and I heard things whose meaning I don't know, nor what was intended by them.

Al-Akhnas replied: I feel precisely the same.

Then he left him and went to Abu Jahl's house, and asked him the same question. He answered: What did I hear! We and the Abd al-Manaf clan have been rivals in honor. They have fed the poor, and so have we; they have assumed others' burdens, and so have we; they have been generous, and so have we, until we have progressed side by side, and we were like two horses of equal speed.

They said: We have a Messenger to whom revelation comes from heaven, and when shall we attain anything like that? By God, we will never believe in him and treat him as truthful. Then al-Akhnas got up and left him.[25]

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)
Signs 17:41-17:52

Makkah: *And, certainly, We diversified*
in this, the Quran,
that they recollect. And it increases them only in aversion. (17:41)

Say: If there had been gods along with Him as they say,
then, they would, certainly, be looking for a way
to the Possessor of the Throne. (17:42)
Glory be to Him! And exalted is He
above what they say, greatly exalted. (17:43)
The seven heavens glorify Him and the earth
and whatever is in and on them.
There is not a thing but it glorifies His praise,
except you understand not their glorification.
Truly, He had been Forbearing, Forgiving. (17:44)
*And when **you** had recited the Quran,*
*We made between **you** and between those who believe not*
in the world to come a partition obstructing their vision. (17:45)
And We laid sheaths on their hearts so that they not understand it
and heaviness in their ears.
*And when **you** had remembered **your** Lord in the Quran*
that He is One, they turned their backs in aversion. (17:46)
We are greater in knowledge of what they listen
*for when they listen to **you**.*
And when they conspire secretly,
when the ones who are unjust say:
You follow but a bewitched man. (17:47)
*Look on how they propounded parables for **you**.*
So they went astray and they are not able to be on a way. (17:48)
And they say: When we had been bones and broken bits
will we be ones who are raised up in a new creation? (17:49)
Say: Should you be rocks or iron, (17:50)
or any creation that is more troublesome
in your breasts to raise up?
Then, they will say: Who will cause us to return?
Say: He Who originated you the first time.
*Then, they will nod their heads at **you** and say:*
When will it be?
Say: Perhaps it is near. (17:51)
It will be a Day when He will call to you
and you will respond to Him with His praise
and you will think that you lingered in expectation
but a little. (17:52)

COMMENTARY°

GOD: THE ONE AND GLORIOUS

The second passage of this chapter begins and ends with a strong emphasis on God's Oneness and the prohibition of associating any

partners with Him. Within its two ends, it contains a number of orders, prohibitions and values that are all based on the central principle of God's oneness. The present passage begins and ends with the denunciation of the very concept of assigning a son or a partner to God, explaining its absurdity. It states that the whole universe functions on the basis of believing in God as one, having no partners:

Truly, you, you say a serious saying! (17:40) It is enormously odd, impudent, false and outlandish. *And, certainly, We diversified in this, the Quran, that they recollect. And it increases them only in aversion.* (17:41) The Quran preaches the faith of God's Oneness, presenting it in a variety of ways, styles and methods, so that people may 'take warning'. Indeed accepting the faith based on God's Oneness does not require more than a reminder and a reference to uncorrupted human nature. It only needs to reflect on the various signs presented in the universe. But they only grow in their aversion to this faith whenever they listen to the Quran. They show that they are averse to the faith the Quran preaches, and averse to the Quran itself, lest it clearly show the fallacy of their erroneous beliefs based on myth and superstition.

Here also the chapter goes part of the way with them to make its argument about their alleged deities. It states that had such deities existed, they themselves would have tried to get closer to God and believe in Him: *Say: If there had been gods along with Him as they say, then, they would, certainly, be looking for a way to the Possessor of the Throne.* (17:42)

Mention of the Throne here indicates God's clear exaltation above all creatures, including those they claim to be deities alongside Him. They are below His Throne, which means that they cannot be 'with Him'. This is followed by a clear statement glorifying God: *Glory be to Him! And exalted is He above what they say, greatly exalted.* (17:43)

The chapter then portrays the whole universe, with all creatures living in it, under God's Throne. They all turn to God glorifying Him: *The seven heavens glorify Him and the earth and whatever is in and on them. There is not a thing but it glorifies His praise, except you understand not their glorification. Truly, He had been Forbearing, Forgiving.* (17:44)

The leaders of the Quraysh, the Prophet's own tribesmen who rejected his call, tried hard to prevent their hearts and souls from responding positively to the truth of the Quran. As a result, God raised an invisible curtain between them and the Prophet, and placed coverings on their hearts preventing them from understanding it. Their ears were in a state similar to deafness, which meant that they could

not understand its message.

BRINGING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE

Such was what they said about the Quran and the Messenger who recited it. They also denied resurrection and the life to come: (17: 49-17:52)

The concept of resurrection was the subject of a long controversy between the Prophet and the ungrateful. The Quran relates much of this argument. Yet the whole issue is very clear and simple for anyone who contemplates the nature of life and death, resurrection and the gathering of all creation. The Quran explains it in full on various occasions. Yet people could not take it in its simple and clear nature. They could not imagine how a person could be brought back to life after the body had decomposed: *And they say: When we had been bones and broken bits will we be ones who are raised up in a new creation?* (17:49)

The reply comes in the form of an instruction to the Prophet to say to them: (17:50-17:51) The bones and dust may still have some traces or memory of life, but iron and stones seem even further away from life. Therefore, they are told to be stones or iron or any other form that cannot ever be associated with life. Even if they are made of material that is least imagined to have life, God will bring them alive.

Then, they will say: Who will cause us to return? Say: He Who originated you the first time. (17:51) Who is it that brings bones and dust, or even more lifeless objects, back to life? *Say: He Who originated you the first time.* (17:51) The answer puts the whole question into its proper perspective, which is both simple and direct. The One who originated them the first time is able to bring them back to life. Yet this reply is ignored: *Then, they will nod their heads at you* in disbelief. (17:51) They simply shake their heads in disapproval, or even in ridicule. They try to make this sound too far fetched by asking: *When will it be?* (17:51) The Prophet is told to reply: *Say: Perhaps it is near.* (17:51) The Prophet does not know its exact timing, but it may very well be nearer than they think. They should fear then lest it happen when they are engaged in such opposition and ridicule.

The chapter then paints a speedy image of what happens when that event takes place, as it will indeed do: *It will be a Day when He will call to you and you will respond to Him with His praise.* (17:52) The image shows those people who were bent on denying the resurrection rising up to respond to the call that brings them back to life. As they do, they praise God in clear terms. They have nothing else to say apart from praising God. This is a strange response from those

who were dogged in their denial of resurrection and the Day of Judgement altogether. They simply rise, saying nothing except: "Praise be God, praise be God." Thus this whole life is shown to be very brief, like a flickering light: *And you will think that you lingered in expectation but a little.* (17:52)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:41-17:52

WHO IS GOD?

God diversified in this, the Quran, that they recollect. Glory be to Him. Exalted is He above what they say. The seven heavens glorify Him and the earth and whatever is in and on them. There is not a thing but it glorifies His praise except human beings do not understand their glorification. God is greater in knowledge of what the ungrateful listen to and when they secretly conspire, when the unjust say to the people: You follow a man who is bewitched.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say to the ungrateful: If there had been gods along with Him, they would be looking for a way to become the Possessor of the Throne. It says: If you, Muhammad, had recited the Quran, God has made a partition between you, Muhammad, and those who do not believe in the world to come. Their hearts have been sheathed and there is a heaviness in their ears. When you, Muhammad, remember your Lord in the Quran and that He is One, the ungrateful turn away in aversion. Look on the stories and parables they say to you, Muhammad. Say to the ungrateful when they do not believe in the Day of Resurrection: Should you be rocks or iron or any creation, will you be difficult to raise up? The one who Originated the first time will cause you to return. When they want to know when the promise will be, say: Perhaps it is near.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

It is a powerful and majestic scene in which we see every stone, large and small, every seed and leaf, every flower and fruit, every little shoot and every tree, every insect and reptile, every animal and human being, every creature that walks the earth, swims in the water or floats in the air, in short, all creatures in the whole universe glorifying God and turning to Him in submission. We are filled with awe as we sense that everything that comes within our vision or stays beyond it comes alive. 'Whenever we stretch our hands out to touch something, and whenever we put our feet to step over something, we feel that it is alive, glorifying God.

The ungrateful say: When we are bones and broken bits, will be raised up in a new creation? Who will cause us to return. When will it be? the ungrateful ask.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message confirms the Resurrection for the ungrateful. When we are bones and broken bits, will we be raised up in a new creation? Even if they wer rocks or iron or any other creation, they would be raised up. Everyone will be raised up on the Day of Resurrection. God can create a new creation just as He originated the first one. Each person is responsible for his or her own actions that will be witnessed on the Day of Judgment. There will be a Resurrection.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the following guidelines:

Arrive on time for class.

Teachers do not take lateness lightly

Position yourself in the classroom to focus on the subject matter; consider the best location for: listening, asking questions, seeing visual material, discussion (not only with the teacher, but with your classmates as well).

Lesson 50(6). Critical Thinking Strategy

Making Interdisciplinary Connections

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions *as you differ in what you say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[26]

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)
Signs 17:53-17:60

Makkah: *And say to My servants*

they should say what is fairer.
Truly, Satan sows enmity among them.
Truly, Satan had been to the human being, a clear enemy. (17:53)
Your Lord is greater in knowledge of you.
If He wills, He will have mercy on you.
And if He wills, He will punish you.
And We sent you not as a trustee over them. (17:54)

Makkah: Book 28: David (17:55)

Say: Call to those whom you claimed other than Him.
Then, they are neither in control to remove harm
from you nor revise it. (17:56)

Madinah (17:57)

Makkah: *And there is not a town but We will be*
ones who cause it to perish before the Day of Resurrection,
or We will be ones who punish it with a severe punishment
— that which had been inscribed in the Book. (17:58)
And nothing prevented Us from sending the signs,
but that the ancient ones denied them.

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (17:59)

Makkah: *And mention when We said to you:*
Truly, your Lord enclosed humanity.
And We made not the dream that We caused you to see,
but as a test for humanity—and the tree—
one that was cursed in the Quran.
And We frighten them,
but it only increases them in great defiance. (17:60)

COMMENTARY°

SATAN IS THE HUMAN BEING'S OPEN ENEMY

After it has described their attitude of ridiculing God's promise and the Prophet's message, the chapter turns away from those who deny the life to come and resurrection. It has something to say about the believers, instructing the Prophet to direct them to say only what is best. They should always be in the habit of saying a good word: (17:53)

And say to My servants they should say what is fairer. It is a general order that applies in all situations and positions. They should choose the best to say. *Truly, Satan sows enmity among them.* (17:53) He tries to build on every slip of a person's tongue to spread an air of alienation between brothers. Good words simply foil his attempts and protect the bond of brotherhood among all believers.

The chapter then returns to those ungrateful who responded to the call to rise on the Day of Judgment. All destiny is in God's hands:

He may forgive or punish. They will have to face God's judgement. The Prophet is no more than a Messenger. He is not their protector against God's will: (17:54) God's knowledge is absolute. Whatever He may determine of punishment or forgiveness is based on His knowledge. The Prophet's mission is completed when he has conveyed his message. God's knowledge encompasses all that is in heaven and earth, including the angels, prophets, human beings and jinn, as well as other creatures which are known only to God.

COMPETITION TO BE CLOSER TO GOD

This passage, which begins with a definitive negation of the concept of God having a son or partner before calling on people to turn to God alone in all situations, concludes with a challenge to those who associate partners with God. The challenge is simply that they should call on those partners to remove any harm that befalls them, should God decide to punish them, or that they should divert His punishment to others: (17:56) No one can remove hardship or change its nature or recipient except God Himself. He alone is in control of the destinies of all creation.

The passage, then, ends on the same note on which it began, illustrating the hollow nature of polytheistic beliefs and showing clearly that God is the only Lord in the universe. Human beings should turn to Him alone with their appeals and worship.

CLEAR WARNINGS, INCREASED TRANSGRESSION

There is no community but We shall destroy or severely punish before the Day of Resurrection. That is laid down in Our decree. (17:58)

Miraculous events took place in the past in order to endorse the messages preached by God's messengers, and to warn people against rejecting them: (17:59)

The preternatural events that took place at the time of the Prophet, or happened to him, such as that of his night journey, were not meant as proof of his message. These were given as a test for his people. We said to you that your Lord encompasses all humanity. We have made the vision which We have shown you, as also the tree cursed in this Quran, only a trial for people. We seek to put fear in their hearts, but it only increases their gross transgression. (17:60)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:53-17:60

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say to the servants of God: Say what is the fairer thing to say. Satan is an enemy to you, a clear enemy. We

did not send you, Muhammad, as a trustee over them Mention when We said to you, Muhammad, truly, your Lord enclosed humanity. We made the dream that We caused you, Muhammad, to see as a test for humanity.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says for the Prophet to tell the servants of God to say that which is fairer. Does the Quranic message ask the believers to be fair and to say what is fair? The Quranic message tells the Prophet to tell the servants of God that they should say that which is fairer. To speak the truth is to say what is fair. Those who say what is fair will be counted among God's servants. There are those who do not say what is fair.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

LESSON 50(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)

SIGNS 17:61-17:70

Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:61)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:62)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:63)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:64)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:65)

Makkah: *Your Lord is He Who propels for you*
the boats on the sea
so that you be looking for His grace.
Truly, He had been Compassionate towards you. (17:66)
And when harm afflicted you upon the sea,
whomever you call to besides Him went astray.
But when He delivered you to dry land, you turned aside.
And the human being had been ungrateful. (17:67)
Were you safe that He causes not the shore of dry land to swallow
you up or send a sand storm against you?
Again, you will find no trustee for you. (17:68)
Or were you safe that He will not cause you to return to it
another time and send against you a hurricane of wind
and drown you because you were ungrateful?
Again, you will not find for yourselves
an advocate against Us in it. (17:69)
And, certainly, We held the Children of Adam in esteem.
And We carried them on dry land and on the sea
and provided them with what is good.
And We gave them advantage over many
of whomever We created with excellence. (17:70)

COMMENTARY°

ASPECTS OF GOD'S FAVORS

Satan tries to inflict only evil on humanity, yet there are those

who listen to his temptations and do his bidding, turning their backs on God's guidance. God is always merciful to them, provides them with help, support and guidance, facilitates their living, saves them from harm, removes their distress and responds to them when they pray to Him to lift their suffering and hardship. Yet despite all this, they turn away, denying Him and the message He has sent them: (17:66-17:67)

The chapter then shows them the other extreme. After a smooth phase in their journey, they experience great turbulence in high seas. Enormous waves seem to carry their vessel and throw it around in every direction. They realize then that they have no real support and no saviour except God. They turn to Him in a sincere prayer, addressed to Him alone: *And when harm afflicted you upon the sea, whomever you call to besides Him went astray.* (17:67)

But we remains the same. When the hardship is over and we feel himself steady, moving easily on dry land, the experience we suffered disappears gradually from our mind, and as a result we forget God. We then allows our desire to get the better of us and overshadow the beckoning of our uncorrupted nature: *But when He delivered you to dry land, you turned aside. And the human being had been ungrateful.* (17:67) This applies to all people except those who maintain their strong bond with God. Their hearts continue to have the light of right guidance.

At this point the chapter makes a direct and emotional address to people's consciences, depicting the danger they left at sea as though it were chasing them on land, or engulfing them again when they return to sea. It wants them to feel that safety and security can only be ascertained with God's protection. It cannot be guaranteed at sea or on land, with easy waves and moderate wind, or with a comfortable home or fortified shelter: (17:68-17:69)

A Special Honor for the Human Being

God has honored us by making natural forces on earth subservient to our will and endeavor, and by making other natural forces operating in the universe helpful to us. A further aspect of the honor God has given us is seen in the reception given us when we were first created. It was a reception in which the angels prostrated themselves in a gesture of respect, because God Himself declared that we are to be honored. Then there comes the additional honor when God states in His book, sent down from on high and which He guaranteed to remain intact for the rest of time, that we are given a position of honor. *And, certainly, We held the Children of Adam in esteem. And We carried them on dry land and on the sea* (17:70) This is accom-

plished by making natural laws fit with human nature and its abilities. Had these laws been at odds with human nature, life would have been impossible to sustain on earth. Indeed we are weak when our strength is measured against the natural forces that operate on land and sea, but we are given the ability to live on earth and to make use of its resources and treasures. This is all an aspect of God's grace. *And provided them with what is good.* (17:70)

Indeed we are placed in charge of a complete world which includes countless blessings. *And We gave them advantage over many of whomever We created with excellence.* (17:70) Indeed, God has favored human beings by giving them mastery of this wide planet. Furthermore, He placed in their nature such abilities that make them unique among God's creatures.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:66-17:70

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet told his people of God's promise and what he had seen in his true vision. This included the tree of *Zaqqum* which grows in hell. It is a tree which God cites as a warning to ungrateful. However, they continued to deny the message and whatever the Prophet said. Abu Jahl, the arch-enemy of the Quranic message even ridiculed the tree, playing on the sense given by its name. He asked for dates and butter and mixed them together and ate them. He said to those around: Come and eat. This is the only *Zaqqum* we know.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The present passage speaks about the ultimate destiny of all humanity, as it is determined by God's justice. All cities and communities will suffer death before the Day of Judgment, although some may suffer a doom of some sort should they incur something that deserves God's punishment. Thus, every living creature will have come to its life's end, either by natural death or by destruction.

God has honored humanity, favoring the human race over many of His creatures. He honored us when He created us in this particular fashion, giving us a nature that combines the characteristics of clay, from which we were made, and the spirit that was breathed into us. Thus we combine elements of heaven and earth in our constitution. God has also honored us by placing in our nature such faculties that make us able to take charge of the earth, able to be active and make changes in it. Thus we initiate and produce new things, combine things together and analyse complex matters in order to elevate life to the highest standard attainable.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here states: There is no protector other than God. Who protects us from harm? We have no advocate other than God. When some trouble afflicts us, we turn to God. God is our protector and trustee. We turn to God when we face difficulties, but then they are gone, we forget to be grateful. God is our protector.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked.
Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

LESSON 50(8). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of 'Say" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)

SIGNS 17:71-17:77

Makkah: *On a Day when We will call to every clan with their leader, then, whoever was given his book in his right hand, those will recite their book and they will not be wronged in the least.* (17:71)

And whoever had been unwilling to see here, will be unseeing in the world to come and one who goes astray from the way. (17:72)

Madinah (17:73)
Madinah (17:74)
Madinah (17:75)
Madinah (17:76)
Madinah (17:77)

COMMENTARY°

WHY PEOPLE REJECT THE DIVINE MESSAGE

This is a scene showing all creatures gathered together. (17: 71-17:72) Every group is called by the doctrine it followed in this life, or the messenger in whom it believed, or the leader it followed in this first life. It is called to be handed the record of its actions and the result that determines its reward in the life to come. Whoever is given his record in his right hand will be full of joy, reading through his record and looking carefully at its details. Such people are given their reward in full. Nothing is denied them, even though it may be no larger than a hair's breadth. On the other hand, a person who chooses in this life to remain blind to all indications of guidance will be also blind to the way of goodness in the life to come. They will be even far more astray. The outcome they will suffer is well known.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:71-17:72

WHO IS GOD?

On that Day, God will call every clan to their leader. Those whose books are given to them in their right hand will not be wronged in the least. Those who were unwilling to see here will be unseeing in the world to come because

they have gone astray.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran states that every clan will call to its leader on that Day. Who will not be wronged on that Day? Those who are given their book in their right hand. Those who are given their book in their right hand are those who followed God's guidance. Receiving one's book in one's right hand is a sign of those who have inherited the garden. The consequences of our actions and intentions in this world will result in either reward or punishment in the next. That that Day will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 50(9). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF ASSUMPTIONS

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: *We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards: *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)
SIGNS 17:78-17:84

Madinah (17:78)
Madinah (17:79)
Madinah (17:80)
Makkah: *And say: The Truth drew near*
and falsehood is vanishing!
Truly, falsehood had been made to vanish away. (17:81)
We send down in the Quran what is a healing and a mercy
for the ones who believe.
And it increases not the ones who are unjust,
but in a loss. (17:82)
And when We were gracious to the human being, he turned aside
and withdrew aside.
And when worse afflicted him, he had been hopeless. (17:83)
Say: Each does according to his same manner.
And your Lord is greater in knowledge of him
who is better guided on the way. (17:84)

COMMENTARY°

And say: The Truth drew near and falsehood is vanishing! (17:81) With irrefutable authority derived from God Himself it is proclaimed that truth has come to be established with its overpowering might, while falsehood is totally defeated. For it is in the nature of truth to triumph and establish itself with vigor, while it is in the nature of falsehood to wither away and be vanquished. (17:81) This is a basic truth that is stated here with emphasis. It may appear sometimes that falsehood is equipped with power and influence, but this is all hollow.

Truly, falsehood had been made to vanish away. (17:81) Falsehood may have all the might of Satan and those tyrannical forces which command power behind it, but God's promise will definitely come true and His power is far superior. Every believer who is firm of faith is certain to experience the truth of this promise.

THE QURANIC CURE

We send down in the Quran what is a healing and a mercy for the ones who believe. And it increases not the ones who are unjust, but in a loss. (17:82) There is certainly a cure and a blessing for those whose hearts are full of faith.

In the Quran we have a cure from carnal desires, greed, envy

and evil thoughts. All these cause sickness of the heart and mind, leading to debility and utter ruin. As the Quran cures these, it is a tool of grace bestowed by God on those who truly believe in Him.

The Quran also provides a cure from deviant thoughts and feelings. It protects the mind from going far astray, while allowing it complete freedom within its fruitful pursuits. It stops the mind from wasting its energy over what is devoid of use. It lays down for it a sound approach that ensures good and useful results. The same principle applies to the human body, ensuring that its resources are utilized for what is useful and fruitful, steering human beings away from the suppression of natural desires or indulgence without restraint. Thus it ensures a healthy body. In this again we see that the Quran is a means of God's grace that is bestowed on believers.

There is also in the Quran a cure for social ailments that weaken the structure of society and destroy its peace and security. Under the social system established by the Quran society enjoys perfect justice in peace and security. This is again a further aspect of grace bestowed through the Quran.

However, the Quran *increases not the ones who are unjust, but in a loss.* (17:82) They make no use of the cure it provides or the blessings it brings about. They look with dismay at the believers as they feel proud to be among the followers of the Quran.

When we are left to our own devices, without the cure and blessing of the Quran, and without consistent restraint of our whims and desires, we move between two extremes: when we enjoy good fortune, we may be arrogant and ungrateful, and when we experience hardship we are given to despair. *And when We were gracious to the human being, he turned aside and withdrew aside. And when worse afflicted him, he had been hopeless.* (17:83)

The chapter then states that everyone and every camp acts according to the path it follows. The final verdict on methods and actions is left to God alone: *Say: Each does according to his same manner. And your Lord is greater in knowledge of him who is better guided on the way.* (17:84) In this statement we have an implicit warning as to the results of approaches and deeds. Therefore, everyone needs to heed the warnings and strive to follow the path of divine guidance which is available to all.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:81-17:84

WHO IS GOD?

God is greater in knowledge of who is better guided on the way.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

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1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

According to God's message, God is greater in knowledge of him who is better guided on the way. Who is greater in knowledge of him who is better guided on the way? God is greater in knowledge of this. God who is the Originator of creation has greater knowledge of who among us is better guided. God is greater in knowledge. It is God who will judge us as He is greater in knowledge. God is greater in knowledge.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 50(10). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Consequences follow from our actions.

REASONING WELL

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

IMPLICATIONS IN REASONING

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?
Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?
Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?
Can you trace the implications and consequences that comes from your reasoning?

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)

SIGNS 17:85-17:93

Makkah: *Say: The spirit is of the command of my Lord.*
And you were not given the knowledge but a little. (17:85)
And if We willed, We would, certainly, take away what We revealed to ***you****.*
Again, ***you*** *would not find for* ***you*** *in that any trustee against Us,* (17:86)
but a mercy from ***your*** *Lord.*
Truly, His grace had been great upon ***you****.* (17:87)
Say: If humankind were gathered together and jinn to bring the like of this Quran,
they would not approach the like of it

even if some of them had been sustainers of some others. (17:88)
And, certainly, We diversified for humanity in this, the Quran,
every kind of parable,
but most of humanity refused all but disbelief. (17:89)
And they would say: We will never believe in ***you***
until ***you*** *have a fountain gush out of the earth for us.* (17:90)
Or will there be a garden for ***you*** *of date palms and grapevines*
and ***You*** *have caused rivers to gush forth in its midst*
with a gushing forth? (17:91)
Or have ***you*** *caused heaven to drop on us*
in pieces as ***you*** *had claimed?*
Or have ***you*** *brought God and the angels as a warranty?* (17:92)
Or is there a house of ornament for ***you****?*
Or have ***you*** *ascended up into heaven?*
And we will not believe in ***your*** *ascension until* ***you*** *have sent down*
for us a Book that we recite.
Say: Glory be to my Lord!
Had I been but a mortal Messenger? (17:93)

COMMENTARY°

OUR SCANTY KNOWLEDGE

At this point the chapter mentions how some ungrateful questioned the Prophet about the spirit and its nature. The consistent approach of the Quran, which is indeed the best approach, is to answer people when they ask about matters that they need to know about and to give them answers that their faculties can understand and learn. It does not waste the intellectual faculties God has given them in pursuits that are of no use to them. Nor does it carry them over domains which they cannot comprehend. Therefore, when they asked about the spirit and its nature, the Prophet was instructed to tell them that such knowledge belonged to God alone. None other than Him has such knowledge. (17:85)

We know nothing of the spirit except the information God has given us in the revelations He has bestowed from on high. This information provides knowledge that is certain, beyond doubt. It comes from the One who knows everything. Had it been His will, He would have deprived humanity of such knowledge, taking away what He revealed to His Messenger. But He does not do so as an act of grace: (17: 86-17:87)

Just as the spirit is one of the secrets that God keeps to Himself, the Quran is God's book that human beings cannot emulate. Indeed, neither human beings nor jinn, representing the visible and invisible types of creation, can produce anything similar to the Quran, even if

they were to muster all their powers in a single effort to achieve this task: (17:88)

ONLY A HUMAN BEING AND A MESSENGER

Indeed We have explained to humanity, in this Quran, every kind of lesson. Yet most people refuse to accept anything other than disbelief: (17:89-17:93)

Their limited perception has failed to appreciate the inimitability of the Quran. Therefore they started asking for material miracles, enlisting absurd requests that only betrayed their childish thinking. Or they spoke with impudence about God Himself. They did not benefit by the expounding of cases and examples in the Quran, nor were they satisfied with the wide variety of styles and approaches the Quran employed in explaining its concepts, so as to be understood by people of different standards and faculties. Therefore, *most of humanity refused all but disbelief.*(17:89) They started to place conditions which they required to be met so that they might believe in the Prophet's message. *And they would say: We will never believe in you until you have a fountain gush out of the earth for us* (17:90) Alternatively, they told him that they would not believe in him until there *will there be a garden for you of date palms and grapevines and You have caused rivers to gush forth in its midst with a gushing forth?* (17:91)

But producing a miracle was something that the Prophet could not accomplish. Miracles are only determined by God in His wisdom. It is not appropriate for the Prophet to request such a miracle, unless God wishes to give it to him. The Prophet's understanding and appreciation of God's wisdom prevented him from requesting such a miracle. Therefore, he is commanded to say in reply to them: (17:93) He confines himself to the limits of his human status and he works according to the duties outlined for him in his message. He does not suggest to God anything beyond this.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:85-17:93

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: The spirit is of the command of my Lord. God's grace is great upon you, Muhammad. Say: If humankind were gathered together and jinn to bring the like of this Quran, they would not be able to do so. Say: Glory be to my Lord! I am not but a mortal Messenger.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

You have only been give a little knowledge about the spirit. Every kind of parable has been diversified for humanity, but most continue to deny the signs. The ungrateful say: We will not believe in you, Muhammad, until you have a fountain gush out for the earth for us. Or will there be a garden of date

palms and grapevines and rivers gushing forth? Or have you, Muhammad, caused heaven to drop on us? Or have you, Muhammad, brought God and the angels as a warranty? Or is there a house of ornament for you, Muhammad? Or have you, Muhammad ascended to heaven? We will not believe in your ascension, Muhammad, until you have sent down for us a Book that we recite.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here states that: The spirit is of the command of God. What is the spirit? The spirit is of the command of God. We are given only a little knowledge of the spirit. The spirit is from the command of God. We know very little about the spirit. God has told us very little about the spirit other than that it is the command of God.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Ask yourself:

Do you talk about what you have not yet done?
Why do you do so?
What evidence do you have?

LESSON 50(11). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad.

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)
SIGNS 17:94-17:100

Makkah: *And nothing prevented humanity*
from believing
when the guidance drew near them,
but that they said:
Raised God up a mortal as a Messenger? (17:94)
Say: If there had been angels on earth walking around, ones who
are at peace, then, We would certainly have sent down for them
from heaven an angel as a Messenger. (17:95)
Say: God sufficed as a Witness between me and between you.
Truly, He had been of His servants Aware, Seeing. (17:96)
And he whom God guides is one who is truly guided. And
whomever He causes to go astray,
you will never find for them protectors other than Him.
And We will assemble them on the Day of Resurrection
on their faces, unseeing and unspeaking and unhearing.
Their place of shelter will be hell.
Whenever it declined, We will increase the blaze for them. (17:97)
That is their recompense
because they were ungrateful for Our signs.
And they said: When we had been bones and broken bits,
will we be ones who are raised up as a new creation? (17:98)
Consider they not God Who created the heavens and the earth
is One Who Has Power to create the like of them?
And He assigned a term for them whereof there is no doubt in it,
but the ones who are unjust refused all but disbelief. (17:99)
Say: If you possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord,
then, you would hold back for dread of spending.
And the human being had been ever stingy. (17:100)

COMMENTARY°

Before the Prophet Muhammad was sent as God's Messenger, and even after he began to preach his message, people took satisfaction in the misconception that a human being could be God's messenger. Therefore, they rejected God's messengers and the messages He revealed to them: *And nothing prevented humanity from believing when the guidance drew near them, but that they said: Raised God up a mortal as a Messenger?* (17:94). In this way they turned away from divine guidance.

Say: If there had been angels on earth walking around, ones who

are at peace, then, We would certainly have sent down for them from heaven an angel as a Messenger. (17:95) Had God willed that angels should inhabit the earth, He would have made them in the form of human beings, because it is the form that suits the laws of nature affecting the earth. He says in another sign, *And if We made him an angel, certainly, We would have made him as a man.* (6:9)

Since this is the pattern God has chosen for His creation, He instructs His Messenger to end all argument with them and leave the dispute between the two parties to God. He calls on God to be his witness, leaving them entirely to God to do with whatever He pleases. He is the One who knows everything about everyone. *Say: God sufficed as a Witness between me and between you. Truly, He had been of His servants Aware, Seeing.* (17:96) This statement carries an implicit warning. The results, however, are painted in a frightening scene of what will happen on the Day of Judgement.

DEVOID OF ALL FACULTIES

We find those who deserve to be left in error are so because they turn away from God's revelations and blind themselves to all signs pointing the way to His guidance. (17: 97-17:99) Such people will have no one to protect them against God's punishment: ***You*** *will never find for them protectors other than Him.* (17:97) On the Day of Judgment they shall suffer humiliation and will be resurrected in a terrible situation, *on the Day of Resurrection on their faces*, lost as they will be *unseeing and unspeaking and unhearing.* (17:97) They are thus deprived of their senses by which they might have been able to find their way through the great multitude. It is a fitting result, because it was they who chose not to use their senses in life to follow the signs of divine guidance. The final outcome is that "Hell shall be their abode." It will be made to continue to burn fiercely: *Whenever it declined, We will increase the blaze for them.*(17:97)

It is certainly a horrifying end, but they have earned it through their disbelief in God's signs and revelations, and also through their denial of resurrection, the reckoning and reward: *That is their recompense because they were ungrateful for Our signs. And they said: When we had been bones and broken bits, will we be ones who are raised up as a new creation?* (17:98)

This is followed by a new argument based on what they see in real life but tend to ignore: *Consider they not God Who created the heavens and the earth is One Who Has Power to create the like of them?* (17:99) Why should the concept of resurrection be difficult to accept when simple logic confirms that God who has created this majestic universe is able to create a similar one? If He is thus able to

create, He is also able to bring creatures back to life after they have died. *And He assigned a term for them whereof there is no doubt in it.* (17:99) He has allowed them a term of life and set a time for their resurrection. However, *the ones who are unjust refused all but disbelief.* (17:99) Therefore, their punishment will be fair, as they have had all signs, pointers and evidence to show them the path of guidance, but they refused to follow anything except error and unbelief.

A THREAT TO EXTERMINATE THE BELIEVERS

Yet those who made such suggestions and demands as related in the chapter were themselves misers. Had they been in charge of God's grace, they would have held on to it, fearing to expend it. *Say: If you possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, then, you would hold back for dread of spending. And the human being had been ever stingy.* (17:100) This is an image of utter stinginess, because God's grace encompasses everything. It will never be exhausted or diminished. Yet in their miserly attitude, they would have withheld God's grace from His creation, had they been placed in charge of administering it.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:94-17:100

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: If there had been angels on the earth walking around, God would have sent down for the ungrateful an angel as a Messenger. God sufficed as a Witness between me and between you, the ungrateful. You, Muhammad, will never find for them protectors other than Him. Do those who deny the Day not consider that God Who created the heavens and the earth is One Who Has Power to create the like of them? Say: If you, the ungrateful, possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, then you would hold back for dread of spending as the human being is every stingy.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful ask: Did God raise up a moral as a Messenger? They ask: When we are bones and broken bits, will we be raised up in a new creation?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message: God sends human beings as Messengers. Can a human being be a Messenger of God? God raised up a mortal as a Messenger. Many previous Messengers were also human beings like Abraham, Moses, Joseph and Jacob. God can choose to send human Messengers. Muhammad is a human being and a Messenger of God. God sends human beings as Messengers.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

LESSON 50(12). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)

SIGNS 17:101-17:111

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (17:101)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (17:102)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (17:103)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (17:104)
Makkah: *And We caused it to descend with The Truth.*
And it came down with The Truth.
And We sent it not to ***you,***
but as one who gives good tidings and as a warner. (17:105)
And it is a Recitation.
We separated it in order that ***you*** *recite it*
to humanity at intervals.
And We sent it down a sending successively down. (17:106)
Say: Believe in it, or believe not.
Truly, those who were given the knowledge before it,
when it is recounted to them, they fall down on their visages,
ones who prostrate.(17:107)
And they say: Glory be to our Lord!
Truly, the promise of our Lord
had been one that is accomplished. (17:108)
And they fall down on their visage weeping.
And it increases them in humility. (17:109)
Say: Call to God or call to the Merciful.
By whatever you call Him, to Him are the Fairer Names.
And be ***you*** *not loud in* ***your*** *formal prayer*
nor speak in a low tone. Look for a way between. (17:110)
And say: The Praise belongs to God
Who takes not a son to Himself
and there be no associates ascribed with Him
in the dominion
nor there be for Him need for a protector out of humility.
And magnify Him a magnification! (17:111)

COMMENTARY°

The Quran was revealed in order to educate a community and establish for it a system and code of life. This community would then carry it to all the corners of the earth in order to educate humanity on the basis of this perfect system. Hence the Quran was revealed one part at a time, according to the practical needs of that community and the circumstances attending its first formative period. Education and the molding of a nation and a community require time as well as practical experience. Thus the Quran was not revealed as a theoretical doctrine or an abstract vision to be used for academic study and polemical argument. It was revealed part by part instead so that it could be implemented gradually during this formative period. This is indeed the reason for its gradual revelation, one part or passage at

a time, not a whole scripture or code given at the outset.

The first generation of believers received it in this light. They approached it as directives to be implemented in practice, be they prohibitions, recommendations or obligations. They never approached it as something for moral or intellectual debate like poetry and literature, or for amusement like legends and stories. They allowed it to influence their daily lives to the full, bringing their feelings, perceptions and behavior in line with it, and molding their way of life in accordance with its teachings. They discarded whatever was in conflict with it of their values, norms and practices.

TO BELIEVE OR NOT TO BELIEVE

At this point the Prophet is commanded to explain the truth plainly to his people, leaving them free to make their choice to either believe in the Quran or to reject it. They will have to bear the consequences of their choice. (17:107-17:109)

This is an inspiring image showing people endowed with knowledge listening to the Quran, touched by its truth and falling down on their faces in humble prostration. They cannot restrain themselves. They do not merely prostrate themselves, but fall down on their faces in complete humility. They give expression to what they feel in their hearts of God's greatness and the fulfilment of His promise: (17:108) But then their feelings are further enhanced and they are deeply touched so that words are insufficient to express their feelings. Tears pour down from their eyes telling of their profound emotion: (17:109) It is a scene of profound feelings demonstrated by people receiving the Quran with open hearts, having learned from their earlier scriptures of the truth it explains.

This inspiring scene is painted after the chapter has given the Arabs the choice of believing in the Quran or rejecting it. It is followed with a statement leaving it up to them to call on God with whatever names they choose. (17:110)

The Prophet is then instructed to recite his prayers in a middle voice. This is because the unbelievers used to ridicule him whenever they saw him praying. It is also true to say that a voice pitched in the middle is the most suited to prayer: (17:110)

The chapter closes in the same way as it opened, praising God and asserting His oneness, and reiterating the facts that He has neither son nor partner and is in need of no help or support from anyone. This is indeed the pivot round which the chapter turns: (17:111)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:105-17:111

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

God tells the Prophet that the Quran was sent down with The Truth so that he would warn the people. He sent it down for him to recite it in intervals. Those who believe, prostrate themselves when they hear it and say: Glory be to our Lord. It increases them in humility. God did not take a son to Himself nor did He have any associates in the creation. Magnify God a magnification. ?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 51(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT

VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:1-10:10

Makkah: *Alif Lam Ra.* (10:1)
These are the signs of the wise Book.
Had it been for humanity to wonder
that We revealed to a man from among them that:
Warn humanity and give you good tidings
to those who believed so that they will have
an indisputable footing with their Lord?
The ones who are ungrateful said:
Truly, this is one who is a clear sorcerer. (10:2)
Truly, your Lord is God Who created
the heavens and the earth in six days.
Again, He turned Himself to the Throne
managing the command.
There is no intercessor but after His permission.
That is God, your Lord, so worship Him alone.
Will you not, then, recollect? (10:3)
To Him is your return, altogether.
The promise of God is true.
It is He Who begins the creation.
Again, He will cause it to return
so that He may give equitable recompense
to those who believed

and did as the ones in accord with morality.
And those who are ungrateful,
for them is a drink of scalding water
and a painful punishment
because they had been ungrateful. (10:4)
It is He Who made the sun an illumination
and the moon as a light
and ordained its mansions
so that you would know the number of the years
and the reckoning.
God created that only in Truth.
He explains distinctly the signs for a folk who know. (10:5)
Truly, in the alternation of the nighttime and the daytime
and whatever God has created in the heavens
and the earth are signs
for a folk who are God-conscious. (10:6)
Truly, those who hope not for their meeting with Us,
but were well-pleased with this present life
and were secured in it,
those are they, ones who are heedless of Our signs. (10:7)
Those, their place of shelter will be the fire
because of what they had been earning. (10:8)
Truly, those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
their Lord will guide them in their belief.
Rivers will run beneath them in Gardens of Bliss. (10:9)
They will be calling out from there:
*Glory be to **You**, O God!*
And their greetings in it will be: Peace!
And the last of their calling out will be that:
The Praise belongs to God the Lord of the worlds! (10:10)

Commentary°

Alif Lam Ra

This first section (*ruku*) gives the example of how we receive God's grace and how we react when we are faced with hardship or disaster. The signs are full of life where examples of us boarding ships and traveling upon the sea before we face a raging storm that brings us into contact with high waves from every direction. They also describe another scene showing how quickly this life passes for each one of us. It takes just an instant for all its glitter to disappear while we are being impressed with its brightness, unaware as we are of the coming doom. At the same time, God calls on us to seek a life

of peace and security in order to be reassured of a life that does not end quickly and suddenly, but lasts forever. Each one of the signs of the Quran has a specific purpose as (10:24) says: *We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who reflect.* It is those of us who reflect on God's wisdom in the creation and the way that He conducts and regulates all of creation.

These are the signs of the wise Book. (10:1) It is truly a wise Book that addresses us with what suits our human nature. Some aspects that are always true of human nature are presented in this section reflected over every generation. It calls on those of us who are unaware to wake up and reflect on the signs that we see and experience all around us in the vast universe, in the heavens and the earth, in the sun and the moon, in the night and the day, in the fate of communities that have passed before us and how they responded to their Messengers. Everything points to the great power that manages, conducts and regulates all of life.

The Quran asks us a rhetorical question, a question that makes a point, but does not expect an answer. The Quranic question wonders at an attitude of ours that may consider the concept of revelation to be a strange one: *Had it been for humanity to wonder that We revealed to a man from among them that: Warn humanity and give you good tidings to those who believed so that they will have an indisputable footing with their Lord.* (10:2)

WHY A HUMAN MESSENGER

God's wisdom is clear in choosing to send the revelations to a human being from among themselves and one whom they knew well so that they could give and take with him without any difficulty or embarrassment. His wisdom in sending Messengers is even more clear. Each of us by our very nature can accept and follow good or evil. We distinguish between the two with our ability to reason. Our sense of reason needs to have an accurate criterion (*furqan*) to which it can refer whenever things become doubtful and unclear or whenever temptations or immediate desires affect our judgment. We need a measure that is totally unaffected by anything that influences our human body, mentally or in temperament in order to give us the right answer concerning any uncertainty. This criterion or measure is nothing other than God's guidance and His law.

This requires that our faith should give us a firm basis to which our mind can refer all its concepts and ideas in order to determine which of them are correct and which are false. To say, on the other hand, that our faith always reflects how we think about our faith (which may change and evolve) is to rely only on human logic and

concepts. This way of thinking undermines the whole basis and leaves no proper criterion to evaluate human concepts. In other words, we have to rely on criterion that are greater than our own individual self.

Although the question of revelation is so clear, the ungrateful among us see it as being very strange as the sign tells us: *Had it been for humanity to wonder that We revealed to a man from among them that: Warn humanity and give you good tidings to those who believed so that they will have an indisputable footing with their Lord.* (10:2)

The ungrateful say that Prophet Muhammad is an enchanter or a sorcerer because what he says is beyond the power of human beings. Yet they should acknowledge the fact of revelation because of just this: Sorcery is not capable of including statements about universal facts or of delivering a complete code of living, laws and moral principles that make for a highly civilized society. They tend to confuse revelations with sorcery because sorcery was always a part of pagan beliefs as part of the religion.

THE LORD TO BE WORSHIPPED

The Lord (*rabb*) Who deserves to be worshipped alone is the Creator of all that is: *Truly, your Lord is God Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.* (10:3) It is He Who created the heavens and the earth according to a plan of creation and to a wise purpose. He did this all in "six days." The "six days" are not necessarily to be understood in the literal sense. We may conclude that they are mentioned only to point to the wisdom behind the planning of creation and how the affairs of the universe are conducted so as to suit God's purpose. These "six days" belong to the realm that God has kept to Himself. We cannot determine what they are unless He chooses to inform us. Therefore, we do not go beyond the fact that they are stated in the Quran.

The expression: *Again, He turned Himself to the Throne managing the command* (10:3) indicates a position of an authority of a higher power. It gives a physical image in the style of the Quran. It uses the conjunction "again," but it does not indicate any chronological order. It only indicates a mental dimension. There is no sense of time in this context. There is simply no state or form that can be applied to God that came into existence after it was not there. God is not subject to an event taking place and all that events happening include "time" and "location."

He determines the beginning and the end, the shape and the form, the preliminaries and the conclusions, and chooses the laws that govern its stages and its final place: *There is no intercessor but*

after His permission. That is God, your Lord, so worship Him alone. Will you not, then, recollect? (10:3)

As has been said in regard to all universal phenomena pointing to God and His Lordship, the ungrateful do not necessarily deny the existence of God. They may acknowledge that He is the Creator who gives sustenance, initiates life, causes death, regulates all matters and is able to do whatever He wills. However, this acknowledgement, if given, is not followed by its logical consequence of acknowledging His Lordship over their lives. Acknowledging His Lordship over their lives would have to be reflected in submitting to Him alone in all matters, orienting all worship to Him and accepting His rule in all their affairs. This is precisely the meaning of: *That is God, your Lord, so worship Him alone. Will you not, then, recollect?* (10:3)

TRIBAL HONOR

Tribal honor, although not a period of history or a particular stage of development, may refer to the state of affairs that prevailed in Arabia in the period right about the first revelations first began to Prophet Muhammad. The root word contains the meaning of "ignorance." In the broader sense used in this commentary, it refers to any situation, social, political, economic, psychological that is not based on the belief in the Oneness of God implying that such a situation is generated by and based on a state of ignorance.

In tribal societies the meaning of the word "worship" is seriously curtailed. It becomes synonymous with "offering worship rituals." People with this mind-set think that once they address these rituals to God, they are worshipping God alone. The fact is that the term "worship" comes from the root *abada* that mans "submission." Worship rituals are only one aspect of submission.

To Him is your return, altogether. (10:4) The return is to God, not to the partners we may associate with God nor the intercessors we claim that we have. God has promised that we will return to Him and that His promise is certain to be fulfilled as resurrection is the completion of creation. *The promise of God is true. It is He Who begins the creation. Again, He will cause it to return so that He may give recompense to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality with equity. And those who are ungrateful, for them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (10:4) Those of us who are ungrateful put aside the code of divine justice aside and, as a result, do not move to the way that leads to the attainment of human perfection. According to the laws of nature that never fail, such deviation keeps the ungrateful short of that level of perfection.

The Quran draws our attention to the elaborate design clearly seen in their creation: *It is He Who made the sun an illumination.* (10:5) We feel that it is almost ablaze. *And the moon as a light.* It shines and illuminates. *And ordained its mansions.* (10:5) It stands every night in a new position which gives it a corresponding shape. This is seen by all of us when we look at the moon, night after night. We do not need to have any specialized knowledge of astronomy to realize this. The purpose is clear: *So that you would know the number of the years and the reckoning* (10:5) Today, we all still calculate time on the basis of the sun and the moon's movements.

Is all this a pastime, a coincidence or something false? Certainly not. Such an elaborate system, providing such perfect harmony and accuracy which never fail, could not be without purpose. It is neither false nor a coincidence: *God created that only in Truth.* (10:5) The truth is its tool, substance and objective. The truth is constant and firmly rooted, and these phenomena which point to the truth are also clear, constant and permanent. *He explains distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* (10:5) Knowledge and learning are needed to understand the elaborate planning behind these magnificent scenes.

The heavens, the earth, the blazing sun, and the illuminating moon combine to produce the succession of day and night. This is a telling phenomenon which inspires anyone who opens his heart and mind to the messages contained in the universe: *Truly, in the alternation of the nighttime and the daytime and whatever God has created in the heavens and the earth are signs for a folk who are God-conscious.* (10:6) The Arabic term used for the 'alternating of night and day' (10:6) refers both to their succession and their varying length. Both are well-known aspects which lose their significance with familiarity, except in those moments when the human soul and conscience are awakened and he begins to contemplate the rise and setting of different stars and planets like a person reborn, responding to every aspect and every phenomenon. Only in such moments does a person truly live, shaking away the rust of familiarity and repetition which becloud his vision and blunt his responses.

The very existence of the universe and its meticulously accurate and harmonious systems remains a proof too strong for the ungrateful to face. Human nature, in heart, mind and soul, responds to this proof. The Quranic approach addresses human nature as a whole in the broadest and most direct way. *Those, their place of shelter will be the fire because of what they had been earning.* (10:8) This is a fitting end.

The believers by contrast realize that there is something much superior to this present life. Their deeds are God-conscious because

their faith motivates them to obey God's commands and expect His generous reward in the hereafter: *Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, their Lord will guide them in their belief. Rivers will run beneath them in Gardens of Bliss.* (10:9) Having faith establishes a relationship between them and God who guides them to do what is right. As a result of this guidance, their hearts are alive, fully aware of the straight path they have to follow. Their conscience is alert, directing them always to do what is good and what earns God's pleasure. These are the ones who are admitted into heaven where: *Rivers will run beneath them in Gardens of Bliss.* (10:9) The reference here to running waters in heaven is at the same time a reference to water generally which is always associated with growth, fertility and life.

*What are their preoccupations once in heaven? What do they wish for? They have no need for wealth, position, or personal gain. They will be calling out from there: Glory be to **You**, O God!* (10:10) What God gives them is far better than any such concern which is in any case now behind them. Instead, their preoccupation, their top priority, is described as their 'appeal' or 'call' to glorify God in the beginning and praise Him in the end. In between times they greet one another and are greeted by the angels: *And their greetings in it will be: Peace! And the last of their calling out will be that: The Praise belongs to God the Lord of the worlds.* (10:10)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:1-10:10

WHO IS GOD?

God is the creator of the heavens and the earth in six days. God is your Lord so worship Him. To God is the return. He Who begins creation will cause it to return so that He can give equitable recompense to those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality. God explains the signs distinctly for ones who know.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Warn humanity and give you, Muhammad, good tidings to those who believe that they will have an indisputable footing with their Lord.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Will you not recollect that God is your Lord so worship Him. Humanity wonders why God sent a Messenger from among themselves. Those who are ungrateful said: Muhammad is a clear sorcerer. For the ungrateful there is a painful punishment. The place of those who were heedless of God's signs, there place will be the fire. For those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality, for them is the Gardens of Bliss. They will call out from there:

Glory be to You, O God. Their greeting will be: Peace. And their last calling out will be: The Praise belongs to God the Lord of the worlds.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

God revealed His message, the Quran, to a human being. What does a Messenger do? The Messenger is sent by God to warn and to give good tidings. Messengers were sent by God to warn humanity about the Day of Judgment and to give good tidings to those who believed in it that they will be have an eternal reward in the Gardens of Eden. Those who believe will be rewarded and those who do not heed the warning will be punished. To follow the guidance results in receiving good tidings. God sent the Messenger.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

LESSON 51(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

Constancy, change is firmness of purpose; resoluteness, resolve, willpower, strength of character, purposefulness, intentness and the ability to do something that frightens one. It is to show strength in the face of pain or grief.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:11-10:20

Makkah: *And if God is to quicken*
the worst for humanity,
as they would desire to hasten for the good,
their term would be decided.
But We forsake those who hope not for the meeting with Us,
wandering unwilling to see in their defiance. (10:11)
And when harm afflicted the human being,
he calls to Us on his side or as one who sits at home
or as one who is standing up.
But when We removed his harm from him,
he passed by as if he had never been calling to Us
for harm that afflicted him.
Thus, made to appear pleasing to the ones who are excessive
is what they had been doing. (10:12)
And, certainly, We caused to perish generations
before you when they did wrong
while their Messengers drew near with the clear portents,
but they had not been such as to believe.
Thus, We give recompense to the folk, the ones who sin. (10:13)
Again, We made you vicegerents on the earth after them
that We look on how you would do. (10:14)
And when are recounted to them Our signs,
clear portents, those who hope not for their meeting with Us said:
Bring us a Recitation other than this or substitute it.
Say: It be not possible for me to substitute it of my own accord.
I follow nothing but what is revealed to me.
Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord
a punishment on the tremendous Day. (10:15)
Say: If God willed, I would not have related it to you
nor would He have caused you to recognize it.
Surely, I lingered in expectation among you
a lifetime before this.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (10:16)

So who did greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God
or denied His signs?
Truly, the ones who sin will not prosper. (10:17)
And they worship other than God things
that injure them not, nor profit them.
And they say: These are our intercessors with God.
Say: Are you telling God of what He knows not
in the heavens nor in and on the earth?
Glory be to Him
and exalted is He above partners they ascribe. (10:18)
And humanity had not been but one community,
but, then, they became at variance.
And if it were not for a Word that preceded from your Lord,
it would be decided between them immediately
about what they are at variance in it. (10:19)
And they say: Why was a sign not caused
to descend from his Lord?
Say: Truly, the unseen belongs only to God.
So wait awhile.
Truly, I am with you
of the ones who are waiting awhile. (10:20)

COMMENTARY°

THE CHANGING ATTITUDE OF HUMAN BEINGS

The Quran states: *We forsake those who hope not for the meeting with Us, wandering unwilling to see in their defiance.* (10:11) It says: *And if God is to quicken the worst for humanity, as they would desire to hasten for the good, their term would be decided.* (10:11) And, then, to those who turn to God when harm afflicts them, but is not grateful to God once the harm is removed and the signs that follow explain why: (10:12-110:4)

In connection to the challenge to hasten punishment, the Quran shows the situation of what happens when we suffer affliction. When the affliction is removed, some of us return to what caused the affliction in the first place: *And when harm afflicted the human being, he calls to Us on his side or as one who sits at home or as one who is standing up.* (10:12) All situations are included so that we have a feeling of how we stop when the energy we derive from good health, wealth or power is cut off. It is just like something moving that suddenly hits a wall. When the wall is removed, it moves along. Here we have the verb "passed by" describing a violent movement that leaves no time for reflection, learning or gratitude: *But when We removed his harm from him, he passed by as if he had never been call-*

ing to Us for harm that afflicted him. (10:12)

It is this kind of nature—remembering God when suffering an affliction, but not once it is removed—that makes those of us who exceed our limits that our excesses are only normal and fair. *Thus, made to appear pleasing to the ones who are excessive is what they had been doing.* (10:12)

It is only right that people should reflect on what happened in the past to those who were excessive in their lifestyle: *And, certainly, We caused to perish generations before you when they did wrong while their Messengers drew near with the clear portents, but they had not been such as to believe. Thus, We give recompense to the folk, the ones who sin.* (10:13) We go beyond the limits. This is another way of describing a disbelief in the Oneness of God and of our associating partners, including our ego, with God and how this leads to our ruin as it did with the Aad and the Thamud in the past.

Having been shown the fate of those who turned away from God's guidance after it had been explained to them by their Prophets and Messengers, those of us who are ungrateful are reminded that we are now their successors, having power in the land so that we can show ourselves to be worthy of God's trust: *Again, We made you viceregents on the earth after them.* (10:14)

Thus, the Quran shows us the facts as they so that we are not deceived by appearances. This creates in our heart an alertness based on consciousness and God-consciousness. This alertnesss works as a safety valve for both each individual self as well as for the community. When we realize that we are being tested in their life on earth and that everything we possess or enjoy during our lifetime is a part of this text, such realization give us immunity against being arrogant or deluded. We no longer seek abundance of enjoyment at any cost because we realize that we will have to account for what we enjoy. There is, then, in essence a constant feeling of being protected. This is clear in the Quranic statement: *We look on how you would do.* (10:14) This should make us extra careful and willing to do well and pass the test.

A DEMAND TO CHANGE THE QURAN

Once we have been made aware that we are the successors to earlier communities that refused God's guidance, this section then provides examples of the deeds of these past groups: (10:15-10:20)

This is the attitude of the ungrateful to Prophet Muhammad's message when they are given power in the land: *And when are recounted to them Our signs, clear portents, those who hope not for their meeting with Us said: Bring us a Recitation other than this or*

substitute it. (10:15) This is a strange request. It shows a lack of seriousness and a total ignorance of the role of the Quran in our lives and the reason for its revelation.

It may be that those of us who do not have any expectation of meeting God are trying to be too clever. We look on the issue as if it were a kind of literary challenge. All that Prophet Muhammad needs to do is to accept the challenge and compose a different discourse or to replace some parts of it. Here he receives clear instructions: *Say: It be not possible for me to substitute it of my own accord. I follow nothing but what is revealed to me. Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord a punishment on the tremendous Day.* (10:15) The issue here is not one of competition or of demonstrating skills or of any literary talent. The Quran is a constitution outlining a complete code of living revealed by the One Who controls the whole universe. He is the One who has created us and knows what suits us best. The Prophet cannot alter it on his own initiative. He only conveys God's message and follows what is revealed to him. Any change in the Quran represents a very serious act of disobedience to God: *Say: If God willed, I would not have related it to you nor would He have caused you to recognize it. Surely, I lingered in expectation among you a lifetime before this. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (10:16)

The Prophet is further instructed to make it clear that he would never have invented a lie and attributed it to God. Far be it from him to do anything of the kind. He would never have claimed to have received revelations unless it were absolutely true. For the one who attributes a lie to God and the one who denies His revelations go too far in the wrong: *So who did greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs?* (10:17) As the Prophet warns us strongly against committing the second of these two very grave wrongs, he himself would not even commit the first by inventing fabrications and attributing them to God: *Truly, the ones who sin will not prosper.* (10:17)

KNOWING SOMETHING UNKNOWN TO GOD

This section continues with its account of what the ungrateful say and so following previous, earlier communities: (10:18)

When we deviate from the truth, there is no end to how meaningless this is. The numerous deities to whom we address our worship can neither harm nor benefit us in any way. Nevertheless, some of us think that they have a role to play claiming that: *They say: These are our intercessors with God.* (10:18)

In response, the Prophet is told to say to the ungrateful: *Say: Are you telling God of what He knows not in the heavens nor in and on*

the earth? (10:18) God does not know anyone who can intercede with Him. Do you then presume to know what is unknown to God Himself? Are you, by implication, informing Him of the existence in the heavens or in and on the earth of beings He is not aware of? Here the Quran adopts sarcasm as the means to best counter their unrivalled absurdity. But this is followed with a statement of God's glorification that makes it clear that all their claims are false: *Glory be to Him and exalted is He above partners they ascribe.* (10:18)

The Quran then clarifies that the claim that God has partners is something that developed over time. Originally our human nature as the human species believed in God's Oneness. Only later did people in the past begin to disagree about this: *And humanity had not been but one community but, then, they became at variance.* (10:19) God in His wisdom determined to let them be until their appointed time. His will is done and His purpose is accomplished? *And if it were not for a Word that preceded from **your** Lord, it would be decided between them immediately about what they are at variance in it.* (10:19)

Then the account of what those new generations given power on earth said continues: *And they say: Why was a sign not caused to descend from his Lord?* (10:20) All the signs that this great revelation includes do not seem to be enough for them. Nor are they satisfied with all the signs that they see in the universe. They appeal for a miracle like the ones shown to earlier communities. Their request shows them to be totally unaware of the nature of the Prophet's message and its own great miracle. It is not a temporary miracle that is over and done with once a community has seen it. The Quran is a permanent miracle that addresses our hearts and minds from one generation to another.

In reply to this request, God directs the Prophet to refer them to Him, for He alone knows what He has in store for them. He alone will determine whether He shows them some miracle or not: *Say: Truly, the unseen belongs only to God. So wait awhile. Truly, I am with you of the ones who are waiting awhile.* (10:20)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:11-10:20

WHO IS GOD?

Is God who quicken's the worst for humanity. God caused generations to perish because they did wrong and denied Our Messengers. We made humanity vicegerents on earth so see what you would do.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: It is not possible for me to substitute it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. I fear if

I rebelled against my Lord a punishment on the Day. If God willed, I would not have related it to you (the ungrateful) nor would He have caused you to recognize it. Will you not be reasonable? Say: Are you ungrateful telling God what He knows not in the heavens nor in and on the earth? Glory be to Him. Say: The unseen belongs only to God. So wait awhile. I am waiting awhile with you.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

This section refers to the challenge given by the ungrateful in Makkah to Prophet Muhammad. They demand that he immediately give the punishment he warns them against. They are told that setting such punishment to a specific time is an aspect of God's mercy. A scene is then drawn to demonstrate how they behave when they suffer some affliction. At that moment, their nature returns to its purity and they appeal to God, their Lord. When the affliction is relieved, those who habitually go beyond the limits revert to their erring ways. They are then reminded of the fate of earlier communities who also transgressed. This serves as a warning to stop them exceeding their limits. After all, this present life is a test which determines their destiny.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that it is not possible for the Prophet to substitute the signs of the Quran on his own accord. Was it possible for the Prophet to substitute signs of the Quran? The Messenger only follows what is revealed to him. The revelation comes from God alone. Revelation is from

God alone. The Messenger only recites what is revealed to him by God. God sent the revelation to the Messenger.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

LESSON 51(3). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:21-10:30

Makkah: *And when We caused humanity*
to experience mercy
after tribulation afflicted them, that is when they conspired against
Our signs.

Say: God is Swifter in planning.
Truly, Our messengers write down what you plan. (10:21)
He it is Who sets you in motion through dry land and the sea
until when you had been in boats
and they ran them with the good wind and they were glad in it.
A tempest wind drew near them.
Waves drew near from every place,
and they thought that they were enclosed by it.
They called to God, ones who are sincere
and devoted in their way of life to Him saying:
*If **You** were to rescue us from this, we will,*
certainly, be of the ones who are thankful. (10:22)
But when He rescued them, that is when they are insolent
in and on the earth without right.
O humanity, your insolence is only against yourselves,
an enjoyment of this present life. Again, to Us is your return.
Then, We will tell you what you had been doing. (10:23)
The parable of this present life is but like water
that We caused to descend from heaven.
It mingled with the plants of the earth
—from which you eat—humanity and flocks—
until when the earth took its ornaments
and was decorated and its people thought that,
truly, they are ones who have power over it!
Our command approached it by nighttime or by daytime.
Then, We made it stubble as if it flourished not yesterday.
Thus, We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who reflect. (10:24)
And God calls to the Abode of Peace
and He guides whom He wills to a straight path. (10:25)
For those who did good is the fairer and increase.
Neither will gloom come over their faces nor abasement.
Those are the Companions of the Garden.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (10:26)
And for those who earned evil deeds,
the recompense of an evil deed will be its like
and abasement will come over them.
They will have none but God as One Who Saves from Harm.
It is as if their faces were covered
with a strip of the night, one in darkness.
Those are the Companions of the Fire.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (10:27)
And on a Day We will assemble them altogether.
Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God:

Stay in your place, you and your ascribed associates.
Then, We will set a space between them.
And their ascribed associates would say:
It had not been us that you were worshipping. (10:28)

COMMENTARY°

Now the chapter goes on to speak of human nature when people are shown God's grace after having experienced misfortune and hardship. It gives them an example of what actually takes place in real life. The scene so depicted is vivid and powerful:s (10:21-10:23)

Strange indeed is this human creature, for he does not remember God except in times of hardship and affliction. He does not remove from his nature all the bad influences that distort it, bringing it back to its purity, except when he feels the pressure of misfortune weighing heavily upon him. But when he feels safe and secure, he either forgets or transgresses. The only exceptions are those who follow God's guidance. Their nature remains pure and responsive all the time. It enjoys the purity of faith which keeps it clean and shining: *And when We caused humanity to experience mercy after tribulation afflicted them, that is when they conspired against Our signs.* (10:21)

When the Quraysh at the Prophet's time experienced drought and feared for their lives, they went to the Prophet, appealing to him by their ties of kinship, to pray to God on their behalf. He did and God answered his prayers, sending rain in abundance. But the Quraysh did not fulfill their pledges. They schemed against God's revelations and continued in their erring ways. Indeed this is a constant phenomenon, unless one follows God's guidance.

God is certainly more able to plan: *Say: God is Swifter in planning.* (10:21) When their scheming is known in advance, it is very easy to stop: *Truly, Our messengers write down what you plan.* (10:21) Nothing of it is overlooked or forgotten. As for the identity of those messengers and how they record and write, all we know is that which we can glean from statements like the present one. We accept these statements as they are, without trying to interpret them further.

Then we are given a very vivid scene which is portrayed as if it is happening before our eyes. We react to it with feeling and emotion. It begins with establishing the fact of God"s power that controls both what is moving and what is motionless: *He it is Who sets you in motion through dry land and the sea.* (10:22) The entire chapter emphasizes the fact of God's limitless power which controls the whole universe and the destiny of all creatures that live in it.

The full scene then unfolds before us: *Until when you had been*

in boats (10:22) As we look we see the ships moving on their way: *And they ran them with the good wind and they were glad in it.* (10:22) We also learn about the feelings of those who are on board: *they were glad in it.* (10:22) In the midst of this atmosphere of complete serenity, and the happiness that it spreads, everyone is suddenly jolted: *A tempest wind drew near them.* (10:22) What a calamity! The ships start to shake violently, and the waves hit against them time and again, and they spin like a feather in the air. Those on board are overtaken with fear, feeling that there is no escape: *and they thought that they were enclosed by it.* (10: 22) There is simply nowhere to turn.

At that moment, and in the midst of all this chaos, their nature sheds all the impurities it had accumulated, blunting its reactions. Their minds rid themselves of all wrong thoughts. Their nature reverts to its original condition, undistorted. It acknowledges God as the only Lord in the universe and submits to Him alone: *They called to God, ones who are sincere and devoted in their way of life to Him. saying: If You were to rescue us from this, we will, certainly, be of the ones who are thankful.* (10:22)

Then the winds subside, and the waves die down. The people on board begin to catch their breath, and their pounding hearts slow down. Soon the ships reach the shore, and the people feel secure. When they step on land, feeling its firmness, they are sure that they are not about to die. They have their lives ahead of them. Then what?

A DESCRIPTION OF LIFE IN THIS WORLD

O humanity, your insolence is only against yourselves. (10:23) Whether these offenses are committed against oneself, by sending it on the way to death, letting it indulge in disobedience that is certain to make it the loser, or offenses against all humanity since humanity represents one soul, the offenders will suffer the consequences. These consequences will also be shared by those who allow them to offend:

O humanity, your insolence is only against yourselves, an enjoyment of this present life. (10:23) That then is all that we will have. *Again, to Us is your return. Then, We will tell you what you had been doing.* (10:23) That is the reckoning and reward that take place in the hereafter, when all the misery and suffering of this life is clearly over.

So how much are the pleasures of this life worth? What is the reality of their enjoyment? This is described in a Quranic scene that shows aspects of everyday activity, but to which most of us pay little attention: (10:24-10:25)

Yet in the midst of all this pleasure and fine celebration, our con-

fidence is suddenly broken into pieces. What has happened? The answer is simple: *Our command approached it by nighttime or by daytime. Then, We made it stubble as if it flourished not yesterday.* (10:24) It all happens in a moment. It is all expressed in a sentence. Such mode of expression is a deliberate contrast to the detailed description which paints the land's fertility and beauty, as well as people's pleasure and confidence.

Such is the life of this world that some of us regard as our utmost aspiration, and for the pleasures of which they sacrifice their future life. It is a life in that there is no settlement or security. Our control over it is very limited indeed. The chapter then contrasts this image with the other world: *And God calls to the Abode of Peace and He guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (10:25)

The present ones are clearer, certain to receive the right response from any person with an uncorrupted nature. The ungrateful genuinely feared that the Quran would weaken them considerably. That is why they urged one another not to listen to it because they wanted to continue with their erring beliefs and practices: (10:26-10:27)

The last sign in the preceding passage said: *And God calls to the Abode of Peace and He guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (10:25) Here we have an outline of the rules that determine the reward of those who follow God's guidance and those who turn away from it. It shows God's grace, mercy, fairness and justice in both types of reward.

Those who do well in their choice of belief and practice, recognizing the right path and understanding the universal law which leads to the abode of peace will have a goodly reward which is the fair outcome of what they do. But they will also have something more of God's unlimited bounty: *For those who did good is the fairer and increase.* (10:26) They will be spared the misery of the Day of Resurrection, and the stress experienced by others before judgment is passed on all creatures: *Neither will gloom come over their faces nor abasement.* (10:26)

Such people who enjoy this high position: *Those are the Companions of the Garden.* (10:26) They are its owners and dwellers, and there *They are ones who will dwell in it forever.*

And for those who earned evil deeds, (10:27) A more literal translation of this phrase would be 'those who have earned evil'. The earnings they have made out of the transaction of this life are simply evil. They will have their fair reward, which means that they will not have their punishment increased or doubled. They are simply given their reward, like for like: *The recompense of an evil deed will be its like.* (10:27) They are the ones to endure humiliation which weighs

down heavily on them: *Abasement will come over them. They will have none but God as One Who Saves from Harm.* (10:27) There is simply no one to provide them with protection against the inevitable workings of divine law which metes out punishment to those who choose the path of evil.

The section then paints an image of the mental darkness that overshadows them and leaves its impact on their terrified faces. *It is as if their faces were covered with a strip of the night, one in darkness.* (10:27) The whole atmosphere is dark, causing much fear and apprehension. Our faces are made to look as if we are wearing the cover of the dark night.

Those who are abandoned in the midst of all this darkness are destined for the fire: *Those are the Companions of the Fire. They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (10:27)

But where are those whom they claimed to be God's partners and the ones they thought would intercede on their behalf? How come they could not provide them with any protection? What is happening to them on this fearful Day of Resurrection: (10:28-10:30)

To all these, ungrateful and partners, an order is given: *Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God: Stay in your place, you and your ascribed associates.* (10:28) Stop where you are. That is the order. They must stand still the moment the order is issued, for an order given on that day is complied with immediately, without question. Then one group is set apart from the other: *Then, We will set a space between them. And their ascribed associates would say: It had not been us that you were worshipping.* (10:28)

At this point the ungrateful do not speak. It is their claimed partners that speak to exonerate themselves from the crime committed by the ungrateful when they worshipped them in place of God, or in association with Him. They speak to make it clear that they were totally unaware of their being worshipped. As such, they have had no role in the crime. They appeal to God to be their witness: *And God sufficed as a witness between you and between us. We had been of your worship certainly, ones who are heedless.* (10:29)

At this point when everything is laid open, every soul will know the true nature of the deeds it did, realizing its inevitable outcome: *There every soul will be tried for what it has did in the past.* (10: 30) What is abundantly clear to all at that moment is the fact that there is only one God to whom all shall return. Everything else is false: *And they would be returned to God, their Defender, The Truth.* (10:30)

There the ungrateful will find nothing of what they used to claim

and fabricate. All prove to have no real existence. *And from them will go astray what they had been devising.* (10:30) It is a vivid scene which is raised before our eyes so that we can examine all its details and the truth it reflects. It is painted in a few words which have an effect far superior to what a mere statement of facts supported by clear arguments would have produced.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:21-10:30

WHO IS GOD?

God causes humanity to experience mercy after tribulation afflicted them. That is when they conspired against Our signs.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

When the human being is in trouble, they call to God, but when God rescues them, they turn away, ungrateful. For those who do good, there is the fairer and increase. They are the Companions of the Garden. For those who earned evil deeds, they are the Companions of the Fire.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

When the human being is in trouble, they call to God, but when God rescues them, they turn away, ungrateful the Quran states. When do people call to God? When the human being is in trouble, he calls to God. When the human being is in trouble, they call to God, but when God rescues them, they turn away, ungrateful. Human beings forget God except in times of difficulties. It

is a sign of ingratitude not to remember God at all times. When the human being is in trouble, they call to God, but when God rescues them, they turn away, ungrateful.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

LESSON 51(4). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathic Altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Emphatic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:31-10:40

Makkah: *Say: Who provides for you*
from the heaven and the earth?
Who controls having the ability to hear and sight?
And Who brings out the living from the dead
and brings out the dead from the living?
And who manages the command?
They will, then, say: God!
Say: Will you not be God-conscious? (10:31)
Such is God, your Lord, The Truth.
And what else is there after The Truth
but wandering astray?
Where, then, turn you away? (10:32)
Thus, was the Word of your Lord

realized against those who disobeyed
that they will not believe. (10:33)
Say: Are there among your ascribed associates with God
anyone who begins the creation and, then, causes it to return?
Say: God begins the creation.
Again, He causes it to return.
Then, how you are misled! (10:34)
Say: Are there among your ascribed associates
with God anyone who guides to The Truth?
Say: God guides to The Truth.
Has not He who guides to The Truth
a better right to be followed
than he who guides not unless he himself be guided?
What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (10:35)
And most of them follow nothing but opinion.
Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.
Truly, God is Knowing of what they accomplish. (10:36)
This Recitation had not been devised by other than God
because it establishes as true what was before it
and as a decisive explanation of the Book.
There is no doubt in it.
It is from the Lord of the worlds. (10:37)
Or they will say: He devised it.
Say: Bring a chapter of the Quran like it
and call to whomever you were able—other than God—
if you had been ones who are sincere. (10:38)
Nay! They denied the knowledge that they comprehend not
while approaches them not the interpretation.
Thus, those who were before them denied.
So look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who are unjust! (10:39)
Madinah (10:40)

COMMENTARY°

GIVING LIFE AND CAUSING DEATH

The first round in this passage took us to the gathering of all on the Day of Resurrection when all false claims and fabrications are shown to have no validity whatsoever. God's is the only power on that day. Now the chapter speaks of matters human beings see in their lives, and in their own souls, admitting that they are only done by God and subject to His control. (10:31-10:32)

The ungrateful do not necessarily deny God's existence, nor do they deny that He is the One who creates, provides sustenance for

His creation and controls the whole universe. They simply ascribe divinity to other beings whom they consider to be God's partners. They claim that these are able to bring them nearer to God or that they had their own power, independent of God's. Here the section addresses them taking their own beliefs as its starting point. It aims to alert their consciousness and make them reflect, so that they can discard their ill-conceived ideas: *Say: Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth?* (10:31)

Who controls having the ability to hear and sight? (10:31) Who is it that gives our organs their power or deprives them of it; who makes them healthy or malfunctioning? Who is it that makes us see and hear what we like or dislike? Although this may be the limit of our understanding of the functioning of these senses, it is enough to enable us to understand the significance of such a question.

And Who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? (10:31) We may consider everything that is motionless to be dead. On the other hand, motion and growth indicate life.

And who manages the command? (10:31) This question applies to all that has just been mentioned and to everything else, whether it relates to the affairs of the universe or to human affairs. Who regulates the great universal system that conducts the movement of all worlds in such a fine and elaborate manner? Who regulates the cycle of life and sets it along its finely tuned system? Who regulates the social laws that govern human life, without the slightest deviation from its course? The list of such questions is endless.

They will, then, say: God! The ungrateful who were the first to be addressed by the Quran did not deny God"s existence, or His control of these great issues. But as they deviated from the path of the truth, they began to associate partners with God, and to address worship rituals to such partners. Furthermore, they put into operation laws that God had not sanctioned.

Say: Will you not be God-conscious? (10:31) Since He is the One who provides sustenance, controls hearing and sight, brings the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living, and regulates all matters and affairs, should we not be God-conscious? The One who has all these attributes is indeed the true Lord who has no partners to be associated with Him.

WHO GUIDES TO THE TRUTH

Such is God, your Lord, The Truth. (10:32) Since the truth is one and cannot be present in more than one form at the same time, then whoever goes beyond it is in fundamental error. *And what else is*

there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away? (10:32) When the truth is clearly evident, how can anyone look elsewhere for guidance?

The outcome of the deliberate denial of the truth by the ungrateful, despite their acknowledgement of its basis, is that God has made it a law of human nature that those who deviate from the sound logic of nature and the overall laws of creation will not be believers: *Thus, was the Word of your Lord realized against those who disobeyed that they will not believe.* (10:33) He does not prevent them from believing. Indeed the pointers to the truth and true faith are everywhere in the universe, and its logical basis is acknowledged by them.

The section then resumes its line of drawing attention to aspects of God's power and asks whether any of the partners the ungrateful associate with Him have any share in such power: (10:34-10:35)

The questions now addressed to those who are ungrateful concerning re-creation and guidance to the truth are asked on the basis of what they accept as true. They relate to conclusions they should arrive at with reflection. No answer is required of them. The answer is placed in front of them, outlining the conclusions to the premises they have accepted: *Say: God begins the creation.* (10:34)

This fact needs to be stated clearly to them, since they believe that God is the Creator, and acknowledge that He is the One who brings the living out of the dead. In fact the second life is closely similar to the process of bringing what is alive out of what is dead: *Again, He causes it to return.* (10:34) It is singularly strange that they should turn away from this fact when they accept its premise: *Then, how you are misled!* (10: 34) How is it that you choose error and accept false beliefs?

Say: God guides to The Truth. Has not He who guides to The Truth a better right to be followed than he who guides not unless he himself be guided? What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (10:35) Does any such partner reveal scriptures, send messengers, lay down a law and a code of living, give warnings and direct people to the truth? Does any of them explain the signs that are available in the universe and within human nature, awakening minds that have been left in deep slumber and alerting disused faculties? They were aware of all this since God's Messenger presented it to them for their guidance. This was not something that they had already known and accepted, but rather something that actually took place before their very eyes. The Prophet was among them fulfilling the task God had assigned to him. Therefore, it is put to them as evidence of the truth they are called upon to acknowledge: *Say: God guides to The Truth.* (10:35)

This leads to another question with a ready answer: *Has not He who guides to The Truth a better right to be followed than he who guides not unless he himself be guided?* (10:35) There can only be a single answer to this question. Naturally, the one who guides humanity to the truth is the one to be followed, in preference to the one who is in need of guidance.

What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (10:35) What has come over you that you clearly misjudge matters and deviate so badly from the truth?

And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all. (10:36) They think that God has partners, but they do not try to test such thoughts either by reasoning or in practical terms. They think that their forefathers would not have worshipped idols unless those idols had something to deserve worship. But they do not question this false premise, nor do they free their minds from the shackles of following such thoughts blindly. They assume that God would not reveal anything to a human being from among them, but they do not question why God would not do so. They also assume that the Quran is authored by Muhammad, but they do not try to verify whether Muhammad is capable of authoring the Quran, when they themselves, human beings like him, are totally incapable of producing a chapter similar to the Quran. Thus they go about life nourishing a host of assumptions and thoughts that have no foundation. As the Quran describes it, they thrive on conjecture but this does not give them anything of substance. It is God alone who knows fully what they do.*Truly, God is Knowing of what they accomplish.* (10:36)

A BOOK OF GOD"S OWN DEVISING

The signs now begins a new round speaking of the Quran itself. It starts with a categorical statement that there is no way that the Quran could have been invented by anyone, followed by a challenge to the ungrateful to produce a single chapter like it. It then shows their judgement to be hasty, lacking solid ground. This is followed by stating the nature of their attitude to the Quran along with encouragement to the Prophet to remain steadfast regardless of the response he receives from them. The round concludes with a reference to the destiny awaiting those who are stubborn in their erroneous beliefs. It is a just and fitting destiny, determined by their deeds. (10:37-39)

This Recitation had not been devised by other than God. (10: 37) Such unique characteristics of topic and expression; such perfection of order and harmony; such completeness of the faith it preaches and the code for human life it lays down; such a thorough

concept of the nature of God, as well as the nature of life, human beings and the universe could never have been designed by anyone other than God. Only He is able to combine all this, because He is the One who knows the beginnings of all things and their ends, the apparent and the hidden. No one else can devise a system that is perfect, free of shortcomings and based on perfect knowledge.

This Recitation had not been devised by other than God. (10: 37) What is negated here is the very possibility that the Quran could ever have been fabricated or authored by anyone other than God. This is much more comprehensive and emphatic.

It establishes as true what was before it. (10:37) It confirms all the revelations and Scriptures given to earlier messengers. It confirms the original faith outlined by those messages and the good things they advocated. It is also *a decisive explanation of the Book* (10: 37) It is the same Book, outlining the same message preached by all messengers. There may be differences of detail in these messages, but the basic principles are the same. The Quran explains God's Book fully, making clear all the methods and means of goodness it outlines and how these are to be fulfilled and followed in human life. The faith is the same and the basic substance is the same, but the methods of goodness and the laws outlined are given each time in a degree of detail that suits human progress and development. When we came of age, we are addressed by the Quran as adults. We are no longer addressed by physical miracles that defy human intellect.

Moreover, it is a Book: *There is no doubt in it.* (10:37) This is an assertion that the Quran could never have been fabricated or attributed falsely to God. It is indeed a revelation by *It is from the Lord of the worlds.* (10:37)

Having stated the truth about the Quran, the signs speaks of a certain possibility: *Or they will say: He devised it. Say: Bring a chapter of the Quran like it and call to whomever you were able—other than God—if you had been ones who are sincere.* (10:38) The challenge is permanent, as is their inability to meet it. It continues for the rest of time and no one will ever be able to meet it. Anyone who appreciates the strength, beauty and artistic expression of the Arabic language will recognize that the Quranic style is unique, and that no human being could produce anything similar to it. So will those who study human social systems and legal principles.

CONJECTURE PREFERRED TO FACT!

Or they will say: He devised it. Say: Bring a chapter of the Quran like it and call to whomever you were able—other than God—if you had been ones who are sincere. (10:38) At this point, with the

chapter presenting this challenge, all argument is stopped and a clear statement is made to establish the fact that they rely only on conjecture, judging what they do not know.

Right judgement must be preceded by thorough knowledge, and not rely on personal preferences or unproved views. What they are judging is the revelation of the Quran and the truth of its promises and warnings. They have denied all these without having any firm knowledge to justify their denial, and without waiting for its true interpretation: *Nay! They denied the knowledge that they comprehend not while approaches them not the interpretation.* (10:39) In this they have followed in the footsteps of former communities who rejected God's revelations and associated partners with their Lord. They should consider the fate of those earlier communities in order to know what awaits them if they continue to reject the faith. *Thus, those who were before them denied. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who are unjust!* (10:39)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:31-10:40

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say to the ungrateful: Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? Who controls having the ability to hear and sight? Who brings out the dead from the living? Who manages the command? They will say: God. Then, say: Will you not be God-conscious? Where do you turn away to? This is the Word of your Lord, Muhammad, realized against those who disobeyed. Say: Are there among your ascribed associates one who begins the creation and then causes its return? God beings the creation and causes it to return. How you are misled! Are there among your ascribed associates with God anyone who guides to the Truth? God guides to the Truth. Has the one who guides to the Truth have a better right to be worshiped than one who cannot guide unless he himself be guided? What is the matter with you ungrateful? How you give judgment! When the ungrateful say that you devised the revelation, say: Bring a chapter like it or call on whoever you want—other than God—if you are sincere.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message explains here that some of the divine gifts. The Quranic message tells the Prophet to ask: Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? Who controls having the ability to hear and sight? And Who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who manages the command? The ungrateful will, then, say: God! The Prophet says: Will you not be God-conscious? Such is God, your Lord, The Truth. And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray? Where, then, turn you away? Thus, was the Word of **your** Lord realized against those who disobeyed that they will not believe. The ungrateful continue to deny the message.Even though the ungrateful admit to a belief in God, they refuse to believe that there is only One God. The ungrateful worship several gods.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 51(5). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT FAIRNESS

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); truly, *God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:41-10:53

Makkah: *And if they denied **you**, then, **you** say:*
For me are my actions and for you are your actions.
You are free of what I do
and I am free of what you do. (10:41)
*And among them are some who listen to **you**.*
*So have **you** caused someone unwilling to hear,*
to hear if they had not been reasonable? (10:42)
*And among them are some who look on **you**.*
*So have **you** guided*
the unwilling to see if they had not been perceiving? (10:43)
Truly, God does not wrong humanity at all,
but humanity does wrong itself. (10:44)
And on a Day He will assemble them
as if they had not been lingering in expectation
but an hour of the daytime.
They will recognize one another among themselves.
Surely, those who denied lost the meeting with God
and they had not been ones who are truly guided. (10:45)
*Whether We cause **you** to see some of what We promise them*
*or We call **you** to Us, then, to Us is their return.*
Again, God will be witness to what they accomplish. (10:46)
Every community has its Messenger.
So, then, when their Messenger drew near,
it would be decided between them with equity.
And they, they will not be wronged. (10:47)
And they say: When is this promise
if you had been ones who are sincere? (10:48)
Say: I control not either hurt or profit for myself,
but what God willed.
To every community there is a term.
When their term draws near,
neither will they delay it an hour
nor will they press it forward. (10:49)
Say: Considered you
that if His punishment approached you at nighttime
or at daytime, for which portion would
the ones who sin be ones who seek to hasten? (10:50)
Again, when it falls on you, believed you in it?
Now? While you had been seeking to hasten it? (10:51)
Again, it would be said to those who did wrong:

Experience the infinite punishment!
Will you be given recompense
but for what you had been earning? (10:52)
*And they ask **you** to be told: Is it true?*
Say: Yes! By my Lord it is The Truth
and you are not ones who frustrate Him. (10:53)

COMMENTARY°

Having explained their attitude to the Quran the signs address the Prophet, telling him not to let himself be affected by their rejection of the truth. He is to disown them and their deeds, declaring that he has nothing to do with them, and by sticking to the truth, stating it clearly and decisively: *And if they denied **you**, then, **you** say: For me are my actions and for you are your actions. You are free of what I do and I am free of what you do.* (10:41) This directive to the Prophet is also meant to touch their consciences. They and their actions are disowned by the Prophet. Now they can face the fate they have been told about without his support. It is yet another way of awakening their hearts.

The chapter goes on to portray how they behave with the Prophet. They listen to him and look at him, but they have already sealed their hearts and minds. Therefore, their faculty of perception cannot make any sense of what they hear and see: *And among them are some who listen to **you**. So have **you** caused someone unwilling to hear, to hear if they had not been reasonable? And among them are some who look on **you**. So have **you** guided the unwilling to see if they had not been perceiving?* (10:42-10:43)

Those who cannot use their reason to understand what they hear or appreciate what they see are always present in large numbers everywhere. The Prophet cannot do anything for them because they refuse to learn how to discern and reason. The Prophet cannot make the deaf hear or the blind see. Only God can do that. He, however, has set a law in operation and left His creatures to reap the results of their dealings according to this law. He has given them ears, eyes and minds to hear, see and reason with, so that they may follow the true guidance He has sent them. If they decide to put these faculties out of order, they will reap the consequences according to His law. Such consequences are their fair reward, for God does not treat anyone with injustice: *Truly, God does not wrong humanity at all, but humanity does wrong itself.* (10:44)

WHEN GOD IS THE WITNESS

The next signs quickly touch the hearts of the ungrateful, por-

traying as they do a scene from the Day of Judgment. In this scene the whole of life which is so heavily present in their consciousness, and which encompasses all their concerns and preoccupations appears to be no more than a short trip which people undertake before returning to their permanent abode: (10:45-10:53)

This passage begins with a clear statement reaffirming the fact that such people will undoubtedly return to God, whether they experience some of what the Prophet has warned them against in his life or after his death. The return in both cases is to God who is a witness of all they do at all times, during the lifetime of the Prophet or afterwards. Nothing of what they do will ever be lost. The Prophet"s death will not exempt them from facing the reckoning. *Whether We cause you to see some of what We promise them or We call you to Us, then, to Us is their return.* (10:46)

Everything takes place according to deliberate planning. Nothing is lost or changed on account of any emergencies or special circumstances. *Again, God will be witness to what they accomplish.* (10:46) Every community is left to wait until its messenger comes to warn them and explain all the facts to them. Thus they are given their rights in accordance with the condition God has imposed upon Himself that He would not punish any community until He has sent them a messenger with a clear message. When this has taken place, they will have no excuse. They will be judged fairly, on the basis of their response to the messenger: *Every community has its Messenger. So, then, when their Messenger drew near, it would be decided between them with equity. And they, they will not be wronged.* (10:47)

The last two signs should be taken as the basis of an understanding of the nature of God and servitude to Him. The Quran is keen to explain it at every occasion, in different ways and methods. Here the Prophet is told that what is to become of this faith and the people to whom it is addressed belongs entirely to God. The Prophet himself has no say in it. His role is that of conveying the message he has been given. Anything beyond that belongs to God alone.

WHY BRING ABOUT GOD'S PUNISHMENT

The question was asked by way of a challenge. *And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (10:48) They were actually demanding that whatever the Prophet warned them against be fulfilled, and that God's judgment be made just as it had been on earlier communities which denied God's messengers. But the answer the Prophet is instructed to give makes all issues succinctly clear: *Say: I control not either hurt or profit for myself, but what God willed. To every community there is a term. When their*

term draws near, neither will they delay it an hour nor will they press it forward. (10:49)

Say: I control not either hurt or profit for myself, but what God willed. (10:49) It is all, then, by God's will. He brings His word to pass and He puts His warnings into effect whenever He pleases. His law will never fail, and the term He has set will fall due as He has determined: *To every community there is a term. When their term draws near, neither will they delay it an hour nor will they press it forward.* (10:49) The term may end with physical destruction, as happened to earlier communities, or it may take a metaphorical form, which leaves a community lost, vanquished. This may last for some time and the community may then rise again, or it may be permanent and the community continues its decline.

The chapter then adds a surprising touch. The ungrateful are led from a position where they challenge and ridicule to one where they are threatened: *Say: Considered you that if His punishment approached you at nighttime or at daytime, for which portion would the ones who sin be ones who seek to hasten?* (10:50) God's punishment will come at a time and place unknown to human beings. It may come during the night when people are asleep, or in the day when they are awake and alert. Yet their alertness will not prevent it. So why should they wish to hasten it when it brings them no good?

While they are still in shock at the idea that their punishment may be very close, the next sign delivers an even greater shock, showing that punishment as having actually occurred when it has not. This is done to alert people's consciences and heighten their feelings to its reality. *Again, when it falls on you, believed you in it? Now? While you had been seeking to hasten it?* (10:51)

The image shows the punishment as having been inflicted, and they as having believed in it. It is as if they are being rebuked now for not believing when they had every reason to do so before they were punished. To complete this future scene, painted as if it is happening now, the next sign says: *Again, it would be said to those who did wrong: Experience the infinite punishment! Will you be given recompense but for what you had been earning?* (10:52) Thus the chapter takes us to the moment of reckoning and punishment while a few moments and a couple of signs earlier we are still in this life, listening to God's address to His Messenger, telling him of the fate of those who persist in denying his message.

The scene concludes with the ungrateful asking the Prophet about whether the warning and punishment are really true. Deep inside, they are shaken. The answer is emphatic, asserted with an oath that it is most certain: *And they ask you to be told: Is it true?* (10:53)

That is a remarkable reply indeed: '*Say: Yes! By my Lord.* (10:53) I know my Lord and His power, and I do not make a false oath. I only swear to assert the truth in a most serious manner: *It is The Truth and you are not ones who frustrate Him.* (10:53) He can always gather you and bring you to the reckoning and then administer His reward or punishment, as you deserve.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:41-10:53

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

This is followed by an address to the Prophet concerning the warnings God gives to those who deny the truth of His revelations. It is a clear warning wrapped in a cover of mystery. The Quranic message tells the Prophet: If the ungrateful deny you, Muhammad, then you say: For me are my actions and for you are your actions. You are free of what I do and I am free of what you do. There will be some who will listen to you. Have you, Muhammad, caused someone unwilling to hear, to hear if they had not been reasonable? Have you, Muhammad, guided the unwilling to see if they had not been perceiving? Whether We cause you, Muhammad to see some of what We promise them or We call you, Muhammad, to us, to Us is their return. Say: I control neither hurt nor profit for myself, but what God willed. Say: Considered you that if His punishment approached you at nighttime or at daytime, for which portion would the ones who sin be ones who seek to hasten? And the ungrateful ask you, Muhammad, to be told: Is it true? Say: Yes! By my Lord, it is The Truth and you ungrateful are not ones who frustrate Him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful do not know whether it will come to pass within a day or so, or whether they will have to wait until the Day of Judgment. Thus it remains a constant threat to them, so that they may take heed and mend their ways. Gradually the passage which begins with a warning moves on to conclude with a description of the situation when nothing is of any use, and no one can buy his escape from God's punishment, not even if he had the whole world to offer. On the Day when God sits in judgement, no one shall suffer any injustice. Again we find here an example of the Quranic method which links this life with the life to come, in just a few touching words. But it also describes the link between the two lives as it is in reality, and as they should always be viewed from a Quranic standpoint.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

To every community there is a term the Quranic message says. Can the term be delayed? When its term draws near it will neither be delay by an hour or will it be able to press it forward. God determines the fate of a community. When the time comes, there is no delaying it nor moving it forward. We need to be ready each and every day as we do not know when the term for our community is. Every community has its term.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 51(6). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help

students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few studen ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life n have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:54-10:60

Makkah: *And if there would be*

for every person who did wrong
whatever is in or on the earth,
he would, certainly, offer it for his ransom.
And they would keep secret their self-reproach
when they considered the punishment.
But it will be decided between them with equity.
And they, they will not be wronged. (10:54)
No doubt to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth.
No doubt the promise of God is true,
but most of them know not. (10:55)
It is He Who gives life and causes to die
and to Him you will return. (10:56)
O humanity! Surely, an admonishment drew near you
from your Lord
and a healing for what is in the breasts and a guidance
and mercy for ones who believe. (10:57)
Say: In the grace of God and in His mercy,
therein let them be glad.
That is better than what they gather. (10:58)
Say: Considered you from what God caused to descend
for you of provision
and that you made some of it unlawful and some lawful?
Say: Gave God permission to you or devise
you against God? (10:59)
And what is the opinion of those who devise a lie
against God on the Day of Resurrection?
Truly, God is Possessor of Grace to humanity,
but most of them give not thanks. (10:60)

COMMENTARY°

While we are still following this question and answer, the chapter suddenly takes us deep into the time when people are made to account for their deeds and their fate is determined. First a supposition is made: *And if there would be for every person who did wrong whatever is in or on the earth, he would, certainly, offer it for his ransom.* (10:54)

But such a ransom will not be accepted, even should it be offered. But before the sign is concluded, we see that what was supposed has come to pass and the whole matter is done and finished with: *And they would keep secret their self-reproach when they considered the punishment.* (10:54) It has all come as a great surprise which leaves them powerless. The image here is one of gloomy faces, full of sadness, their lips unable to utter a word: *But it will be decided*

between them with equity. And they, they will not be wronged. (10:54) The whole scene which started only half a sign earlier as a supposed probability is concluded as a reality and a foregone conclusion. This is an example of how the Quran paints impressive scenes that penetrate into our consciousness.

To emphasize the concept of resurrection and reckoning the chapter gives us yet another image of God's power as it appears in the heavens and the earth, life and death. It is a quick scene serving to reassert that what God promises will come to pass. This is followed by an appeal to all humanity to make the best use of, and receive the maximum benefit from the Quran, which brings them an admonition, guidance and a cure for all that their hearts may harbour: (10:55)

The signs take us first into the unfathomable reaches of the world beyond, stretching into time and place, as well as the past, present and future and into what takes place both in this life and in our imagination: *Say: Considered you from what God caused to descend for you of provision and that you made some of it unlawful and some lawful?* (10:59)

These are nothing less than an assault on God's authority whereby He makes things lawful or unlawful. (10:59-10:60)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:54-10:60

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: In the grace of God and His mercy, therein let them be glad. That is better than what they gather. Say: Have you considered from what God caused to descent for you of provision that you made some of it unlawful and some lawful? Say: Did God give permission to you or are you devising against God? And what is the opinion of those who devise a lie against God on the Day of Resurrection? Truly God is Possessor of Grace to humanity, but most of them do not give thanks.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Whoever did wrong in this life would want to give as ransom for his or her wrong deeds whatever is in and on the earth. They would hide their self-reproach, but it will be decided between them with equity. They will not be wronged. Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. The promise of God is undoubtedly true. He gives life and causes to die and to Him will be the return. O humanity! An admonishment drew near you from your Lord and a healing for what is in the breasts and a guidance and mercy for ones who believe.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran is an healing, a guidance and a mercy for humanity. Is the Quran a healing? The Quran is an admonishment and a healing and a guidance and mercy for ones who believe. Turn to the Quran for guidance and mercy and as a healer for ones who believe. The Quran brings mercy and is a guidance for ones who believe. Those who believe turn to the Quran for mercy and guidance. The Quran is a mercy and guidance.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

Lesson 51(7). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Definitiveness

Definitiveness means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 10: Jonah (Yunus)
Signs 10:61-10:70

Makkah: *Neither have **you** been on any matter*
*nor have **you** recounted from the Recitation*
nor are you doing any action
but We had been ones who bear witness over you
when you press on it.
*And nothing escapes from **your** Lord*
of the weight of an atom in or on the earth
nor in the heaven nor what is smaller than that nor what is greater
than that but it is in a clear Book. (10:61)
No doubt with the faithful friends of God
there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (10:62)
Those who believed and had been God-conscious, (10:63)
for them are good tidings in this present life
and in the world to come.
There is no substitution of the Words of God.
That, it is the winning the sublime triumph. (10:64)
*And let not their saying dishearten **you.***
Truly, all great glory belongs to God.
He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (10:65)
No doubt to God belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
And follow not those who call to ascribed associates
other than God.
They follow nothing but opinion
and they do nothing but guess. (10:66)
It is He Who made the nighttime for you so that you rest in it
and the daytime for one who perceives.
Truly, in this are signs for a folk who hear. (10:67)

They said God took to Himself a son.
Glory be to Him. He is Sufficient.
To Him is whatever is in the heavens and in and on the earth.
With you there is no authority for this.
Say you against God what you know not? (10:68)
Say: Truly, those who devise lies against God,
they will not prosper, (10:69)
only an enjoyment in the present!
Again, to Us will be their return.
Again, We will cause them to experience
the severe punishment because they had been ungrateful. (10:70)

COMMENTARY°

The first sign in this passage reminds us that God is with us in all situations. (10:61) It is a feeling that brings reassurance and awe at the same time. For how is it that God is with us, witnessing whatever we do? (10:62-10:64)

Those whom the chapter describes as being close to God are the true believers who are God-fearing. Faith is something that penetrates deep into the heart and to which credit is given by action, which, in turn means the implementation of God's commandments. This is how the concept of being close to God should be understood: *And let not their saying dishearten you. Truly, all great glory belongs to God. He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (10:65)

Everyone in the heavens and the earth, whether human, jinn or angels, obedient or disobedient, are subject to His power: *No doubt to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.* (10:66) The reference here is to animate creatures in order to emphasize that all of them, weak or strong, are under God's control. Those presumed partners have no real partnership of any kind with God. Indeed those who claim them to be God's partners are uncertain of their claims: *And follow not those who call to ascribed associates other than God. They follow nothing but opinion and they do nothing but guess.* (10:66)

This is followed by a statement portraying some aspects of God's power as reflected in the universe. These aspects are often overlooked because of familiarity: *It is He Who made the nighttime for you so that you rest in it and the daytime for one who perceives.* (10:67) The One who controls all stillness and movement, who makes the night a time for rest, and gives he day its light, enabling people to act and see, has absolute control over all people. Therefore, He is able to protect those who are close to Him: *Truly, in this are signs for a folk who hear.* (10:67) They do not stop at the mere lis-

tening, but they also reflect and contemplate.

They are then brought face to face with the reality which shows that they have no proof to support their claims. The Quranic sign uses the term 'sultan' which means authority, in place of 'evidence' because authority provides strength, and the one who has a proof to support his claim is in a position of strength: *They said God took to Himself a son. Glory be to Him. He is Sufficient. To Him is whatever is in the heavens and in and on the earth. With you there is no authority for this. Say you against God what you know not?* (10:68)

They will have no prosperity whatsoever, whether in this life or in the life to come. *Say: Truly, those who devise lies against God, they will not prosper,* (10:69) True success is that which results from leading a life that is consistent with the laws God has set in operation. These lead to all goodness, elevating human beings to a higher level of humanity and setting their social structure on the right basis. Prosperity is not limited to material progress. Such progress is only superficial and temporary if it is combined with the destruction of human values, replacing them with animal values.

Their enjoyment is brief and temporary. *Only an enjoyment in the present! Again, to Us will be their return. Again, We will cause them to experience the severe punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (10:70) It has no permanent link with the enjoyment reserved for the hereafter. Indeed, it is followed by 'severe torment' for turning away from the laws of nature which God has devised.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:61-10:70

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who makes the nighttime for rest and the daytime for one who perceives. They said: God took to Himself a son. Glory be to Him. He is Sufficient. To Him is whatever is in the heavens and in and on the earth. With you,humanity, there is no authority. There is no substitution in the Words of God.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

We bear witness to you, Muhammad, over any matter and the recitation that you recount and any action that you do. Nothing escapes from your Lord, Muhammad, of the weight of an atom in or on the earth nor in the heaven nor what is smaller than that nor what is greater than that but it is in a clear Book. Let not their saying dishearten you, Muhammad. All great glory belongs to God. Say: Those who devise lies against God, they will not prosper. They will only have an enjoyment in the present, but to Us is their return. We will cause them to experience the severe punishment because they had been ungrateful.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

With the faithful friends of God there will be neither fear nor remorse. Those who believed and been God-conscious, for them are good tidings in the present life and in the world to come. Do not follow those who call to ascribed associates other than God. They follow nothing but opinion. They do nothing but guess.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states: There is no substitution in the Words of God. Can someone substitute for the Words of God? The Quran clearly states that there is no substitution for the Words of God. There is no substituting the Words of God. The Words of God are The Truth. There is no substitution for The Truth. The Quran is the Word of God.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked for inter-connections between these various Quranic signs.
I realized the inter-connectness of ideas in these signs.
I did not memorize the signs and repeat them like a parrot does, but I studied them as a detective would, relating new things I learned to things that I previously knew.

LESSON 51(8). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:71-10:82 NOAH AND MOSES

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (10:71)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (10:72)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (10:73)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (10:74)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:75)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:76)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:79)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:80)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:81)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:82)

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:83-10:92 MOSES

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:83)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:84)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:85)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:86)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:87)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:88)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:89)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:90)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:91)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:92)

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:93-10:103

Makkah: Book : Children of Jacob (10:93)
Madinah: (10:94)

Madinah: (10:95)
Madinah: (10:96)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (10:97)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (10:98)
And if your Lord willed, all would have believed
who are on the earth altogether.
So would you compel humanity
against their will until they become ones who believe? (10:99)
And it would not have been for any person to believe
but by the permission of God.
And He lays disgrace on those who are not reasonable. (10:100)
Say: Look on what is in the heavens and the earth.
And neither the signs nor the warning
avail a folk who believe not. (10:101)
So wait they awhile but like in the days
of those who passed away before them?
Say: So wait awhile. I am with you among
the ones waiting awhile! (10:102)
Again, We rescue Our Messengers and those who believed.
Thus, it is an obligation upon Us to deliver
the ones who believe. (10:103)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:99-10:103

WHO IS GOD?

All would have believed if God had so willed. It is an obligation upon God to deliver the ones who believe. A person believes only by God's permission. God lays disgrace upon those who are not reasonable.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Would you compel humanity to believe against their will?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.
I was able to explain the main points of the sign to another student.

LESSON 51(9). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS

Appropriateness means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:104-10:109

Makkah: *Say: O humanity!*
If you were in uncertainty as to my way of life,
then, I will not worship those whom you worship other than God.
Rather, I worship only God Who will call you to Himself.
And I was commanded that I be
among the ones who believe (10:104)
*and that: Set **you** your face to the way of life of a monotheist.*
*And be **you** not among the ones who are polytheists.* (10:105)
*And call not to other than God what neither profits nor hurts **you***
*And if **you** were to accomplish that, truly, **you** would be*
among the ones who are unjust. (10:106)
*And if God afflicts **you** with harm,*
there is no one who removes it but He.
*And if He wants good for **you**, there is no one*
who repels His grace.
It lights on whomever He wills of His servants.
And He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate. (10:107)
Say: O humanity! Surely, The Truth drew near you from your Lord

so whoever was truly guided, then, he is only truly guided
for his own self.
And whoever went astray, then, he only goes astray
to his own loss.
And I am not a trustee over you. (10:108)
*And follow **you** what is revealed to **you**.*
*And have **you** patience until God gives judgment.*
And He is Best of the ones who judge. (10:109)

COMMENTARY°

In this its final passage, the signs bring to an end for now of our journey of the universe, and reflection on aspects of human constitution, and the realms of feeling and thought. It is as if we are returning home with a wealth of riches, as also looking for relaxation after a long journey. The signs have dwelt on the central theme of faith with its main issues: the Oneness of God, Who has no partners and Who admits no mediation or mediators; His absolute sovereignty and overpowering will; the laws He has set in operation which no one can amend or change; the truth of revelation which makes the true faith clear to all; the resurrection and the reckoning and reward on the Day of Judgment. All these issues have been clarified with historical accounts and illustrated with fine examples and analogies. Now they are summed up in a short passage. The Prophet is instructed to declare these principles to humanity, making clear that he will continue along the line he has followed until God has judged between him and those who oppose him. He is indeed the best of all judges.

PERSEVERANCE UNTIL FINAL JUDGEMENT

Say: O humanity! If you were in uncertainty as to my way of life, then, I will not worship those whom you worship other than God. (10:104) Here the Prophet is told to address all humanity, although the address is meant in the first instance to the Arabs in Makkah who believed in a multiplicity of deities. He tells them that if they are in doubt about the truth of the faith to which he is calling, then their doubts will never turn him away from the truth which he is preaching. He is not going to change his way so as to worship their false gods.

Instead, *rather, I worship only God Who will call you to Himself.* (sign 104) He is the One who determines everyone's span of life and the time when everyone dies. Emphasizing this aspect here is significant because it reminds them of God's power over them. He is the One to be worshipped, not those false deities which cannot give life

or cause death. He is also told to make his own instructions plain to them: *And I was commanded that I be among the ones who believe.* (10:104) He fulfils his orders as they are given to him, without going beyond his limits.

Set you your face to the way of life of a monotheist. (10:105) Here the style changes into a direct order, which is given in such a way that it sounds as if it is being given now in front of them all. This is far more effective. *Set you your face to the way of life of a monotheist.* turning to God alone and accepting what He has revealed to you as the complete truth. *And be you not among the ones who are polytheists.* (10:105) This re-emphasizes the meaning of sincere and exclusive following to the true faith and being one of the believers. The emphasis takes the form of a direct prohibition of associating partners with God which follows a direct order to believe. *And call not to other than God what neither profits nor hurts you. And if you were to accomplish that, truly, you would be among the ones who are unjust.* (10:106) Do not appeal to any of those beings whom the ungrateful associate with God, for they cannot bring you any benefit or cause you any harm. If you do appeal to them, you will put yourself among the wrongdoers, because God is fair to all, and He does not show any favoritism to anyone.

And if God afflicts you with harm, there is no one who removes it but He. And if He wants good for you, there is no one who repels His grace. It lights on whomever He wills of His servants. (sign 107) God has set certain laws in operation whereby harm and benefit inevitably affect human beings when they expose themselves to their causes. So if harm afflicts you through the operation of God"s laws, then no one can remove that harm unless you follow the right course of action. This means that you should cease to expose yourself to the causes of harm if you are aware of them or appeal to God to make them known to you if you do not know them.

Similarly, if you follow His laws which generate benefit for you, no one will be able to stop that benefit. It will always be granted by God to those of His servants who decide to follow the means to achieve it. This is His general will and modus operandi. Furthermore: *And He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.* (10:107) He forgives past sins when one sincerely repents. Furthermore, He is merciful to His servants, forgiving them their errors and increasing their reward for their good deeds when they adhere to the true path.

This brings us to the final declaration to all people: *Say: O humanity! Surely, The Truth drew near you from your Lord so whoever was truly guided, then, he is only truly guided for his own self.* (10:108) It is the final, decisive word which makes it clear that every-

one chooses his or her way as they please after the truth has been given to all by their Lord.

Therefore, *And whoever went astray, then, he only goes astray to his own loss. And I am not a trustee over you.* (sign 108) The Prophet is not required to force people to follow divine guidance. He only conveys to them his message and leaves them to choose freely, making it clear that everyone will bear the results of his or her choice.

The final address to the Prophet tells him to follow what he has been instructed and to persevere until God has made His judgement: *And follow you what is revealed to you. And have you patience until God gives judgment. And He is Best of the ones who judge.* (10:109) The conclusion is in perfect harmony with the opening of the chapter and its contents, following the unique method of the Quran.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:104-10:109

WHO IS GOD?

He is the best of the ones who judge.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

This is the sum of faith, as illustrated in this chapter. The Prophet is ordered to declare it to humanity, and the order is given to him as though he is standing in front of them. The order is directed at each individual in person. It is a remarkably inspiring and effective method. The Prophet makes his declaration, facing up to material power, numerical strength, ignorant beliefs and a long history of associating partners with God. He makes his declaration, as commanded by God, with force and maximum clarity, when he has only a small number of followers in Makkah where the power is decidedly with the ungrateful. Thus he fulfills his duty towards the truth he is advocating, showing his unshakeable certainty in faith.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret**

the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says: Set your life to the way of a monotheist. Who is a monotheist? A monotheist is someone who worships the One God. There is no god but God. The Oneness of God. If there was more than One God, there would be chaos in the universe as each god vied with the other for control. There is no god, but God.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.
I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.
I was able to distinguish information that related to the problem of relevance from information that did not relate to it.

52(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD
WORTHINESS

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:1-11:18

Makkah: *Alif Lam Ra.*
A Book, the signs in it were set clear.
Again, they were explained distinctly
from that which proceeds from the Presence
of the Wise, Aware, (11:1)
that you not worship any but God.
Truly, I am a warner to you from Him
and a bearer of good tidings (11:2)
and that: Ask for forgiveness from your Lord.
Again, repent to Him that He give you fairer enjoyment for a term
that which is determined.
He gives His grace to every possessor of grace.
And if they turn away,
I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day. (11:3)
To God is your return.
And He is Powerful over everything. (11:4)
But they fold up their breasts
that they conceal themselves from Him.
No doubt at the time when they cover themselves
with their garments,
He knows what they keep secret and what they speak openly.
Truly, He is Knowing of what is in their breasts. (11:5)
And there is no moving creature on earth
but its provision is from God.
And He knows its appointed time and its repository.
All is in a clear Book. (11:6)
And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.
And His Throne had been upon the waters that He try you
—which of you is fairer in actions.
*And if **you** were to say to them:*
Truly, you are ones who will be raised up after death.
Those who were ungrateful would be sure to say:
This is nothing but clear sorcery. (11:7)
If We postponed the punishment for them for a period of time,
that which is numbered, they will, surely, say: What detains it?
Certainly, the day it approaches them,

there is not of that which will be turned away from them
and surrounded them was what
they had been ridiculing of it. (11:8)

COMMENTARY°

The four opening signs: (11:1-11:4) set out the main fundamental principles of the Quran: Confirmation of the facts of revelation and the divine message; submission to God alone who has no partners; God's reward in this life and in the hereafter to those who follow His guidance and implement His code of living; his punishment in the hereafter of those who disbelieve, and the fact that all creatures, believers and the ungrateful alike, will ultimately return to God; His absolute power and limitless authority.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

A Book, the signs in it were set clear. (11:1) The Arabic term which is rendered in translation as have been perfected also denotes firmness of structure and precision of meaning. Every word, every phrase is used carefully to deliver exactly the required meaning. There is no conflict or contradiction between its signs which are all distinctly spelled out. Each is used at its right place, under a proper heading, in order to impart a precise meaning.

Obviously the one who has so firmly perfected them, and distinctly spelled them out, is not the Messenger; he is God: (11:1) His wisdom helps to mold their firm structure, and His comprehensive knowledge helps to give clarity to their detail. Furthermore, they come from Him directly, as delivered to His Messenger, without any distortion or alteration.

But what do they tell us? First, an outline of the basics of faith: *That you not worship any but God.* signifies that we should submit our "self" only to God, and obey none but Him.

Truly, I am a warner to you from Him and a bearer of good tidings. (11:2) This refers to the message and its dual purpose.

And that: Ask for forgiveness from your Lord. (11:3) Whenever a sin is committed, it must be followed by a return to God and submission to Him. *Again, repent to Him that He give you fairer enjoyment for a term that which is determined.* (11:3) Good reward then awaits those who repent and seek forgiveness. *He gives His grace to every possessor of grace.* (11:3) This is a self-evident threat to those who turn away: *And if they turn away, I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day.* (11:3) Finally, the return to God who has absolute power: *o God is your return. And He is Powerful over everything.* (11:4)

The promised reward is certain to come: *Again, repent to Him that He give you fairer enjoyment for a term that which is determined.* (11:3)

He gives His grace to every possessor of grace. (11:3) Some commentators are of the view that this applies to the hereafter. However, it is probably more general, making it applicable to both this life and the life to come. But we need to look at it in the same way as we explained what "goodly enjoyment" in this present life means, because, in this sense, it is achievable in all situations.

And if they turn away, I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day. (11:3) This refers to the punishment meted out on the Day of Judgment. This sense is reinforced by the next sign: *To God is your return.* (11:4) Returning to God occurs in this world and the next, at every moment and in all situations. However, Quranic usage confirms that when such an expression is used, it means the return that comes after this life is over.

And He is Powerful over everything. (11:4) This again reinforces the meaning we have outlined, because stating that God has power over all things fits in with the concept of resurrection which the ungrateful found too difficult to accept.

HIDING AWAY FROM GOD

Having thus given a brief outline of what the Quran, the book with perfected and clearly spelled-out signs, contains, the chapter goes on to describe how some of them receive these signs when they are read to them by God"s Messenger. It describes the physical movements they make, hanging their heads down and covering their breasts to hide from God. It tells them of the absurdity of such action when God sees them even in their most private situations, and is fully aware of every move made by every creature on earth. (11:6)

It shows what the ungrateful did when the Prophet tried to recite to them God's revelations. They covered their breasts and hung their heads down in order to hide from God, even though they felt, in the depth of their hearts, that He was the originator of this revelation. This they intimated on more than one occasion. The same sign shows how futile such action is. God, who sent down this revelation, is watching them as they hide and as they come out of hiding. In the inimitable style of the Quran this meaning is presented in an awesome personal and private situation. When they go to bed, alone, in the darkness of the night, with all their clothes and covers on, God remains with them. He sees what takes place in such a private situation, and He has power over them in this condition, as well as in any other condition: *No doubt at the time when they cover themselves*

with their garments. (11:5)

Truly, He is Knowing of what is in their breasts. (11:5) He is, indeed, aware of the secrets people keep closely guarded. They are well hidden in people"s breasts and kept there permanently. For this reason they are described in the Arabic original as belonging to the bosom, as if they were inseparable. They are, nevertheless, known to God, who is well aware of every action, whisper and movement.

And there is no moving creature on earth but its provision is from God. And He knows its appointed time and its repository. All is in a clear Book. (11:6) This is another example of God's knowledge which encompasses everything. All the creatures which live on earth; every human being and every animal, whether it walks, flies, crawls or creeps; and every creature which lives underneath the soil or in the depths of the sea is known to God. He it is who provides them with sustenance and He knows where each one of them abides and where it lies down, where it comes and where it goes. Each single one of them is part of His very detailed knowledge.

MATCHING SCIENCE WITH THE QURAN

The signs moves ahead by giving people a clearer idea of their true Lord, drawing their attention to the fact that He has created the heavens and the earth according to a certain system, with well-defined stages, to serve a definite purpose. It points out certain mani festations of God's power and wisdom which fit well with the them of resurrection and reckoning, action and reward: (11:7)

The sign speaks of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, which we discussed when commenting on 10:3. This creation is mentioned here in order to establish that there is a definite link between the system which holds the universe together and the system that regulates human life: *That He try you—which of you is fairer in actions.* (11:7)

Let us now reflect on this sign from the proper point of view, that is, faith and life: *And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days. And His Throne had been upon the waters.* (11:7)

He has created the heavens and the earth in six days. There are several points not expressly stated here, but referred to later in the chapter. He has created them in this span of time to make them suitable for the emergence of human life. He has also created we human beings and made the earth and part of the heavens subject to His will. He Himself exercises His power over the whole universe: *that He try you—which of you is fairer in actions.* (11:7) Here, the text seems to make the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, coupled with the fact that God has power over the whole universe, a test for

us. This adds to the seriousness of the test and makes us feel our own importance.

Denial of the resurrection and the reckoning and the handing out of rewards sounds very strange in this context. When it is stated that testing people is linked with the creation of the heavens and the earth and is essential to this universal system and the laws of existence, those who deny it sound both absurd and totally unaware of the major facts of the creation of this universe. For this reason they are surprised and stunned by these facts: *Truly, you are ones who will be raised up after death. Those who were ungrateful would be sure to say: This is nothing but clear sorcery.* (11:7)

What a strange claim. How false it sounds in the light of the preceding Quranic statement!

THE HUMAN BEING IN DIFFERENT MOODS

In their denial of the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful are seen to be totally unaware of its close relation to the law that governs the whole universe. They demonstrate the same ignorance concerning punishment in this life. They question the fact that they have not already been overtaken by suffering and punishment. They wonder at the delay: (11:8)

Certainly, the day it approaches them, there is not of that which will be turned away from them and surrounded them was what they had been ridiculing of it. (11:8) A believer, indeed anyone who takes a serious view of things, does not ask for God"s punishment to be hastened. Such people know that if punishment is deferred, such deferment is as a result of God"s compassion and wisdom, so that those who are more responsive to faith may eventually accept it. Indeed in the period during which God chose not to inflict overwhelming punishment on the Quraysh ungrateful many of them adopted the Quranic message and served it well afterwards.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 11:1-11:18

WHO IS GOD?

He gives His grace to every possessor of grace.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet says: I am a warner to you from Him and a bearer of good tidings: As forgiveness from your Lord. Repent to Him that He give you fairer enjoyment for a determined term. If the ungrateful turn away: I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day. To God is your return. If you, Muhammad, were to say to them: you are ones who will be raised up after death, the ungrateful would say that this is sorcery.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful say to speak of the Great Day is clear sorcery. If God postponed the punishment for them, they would say: What detains it? They will be surrounded on that Day by what they had been ridiculing.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

According to the Quranic message, the Messenger is a warner and a bearer of good news from God. What is the job of a Messenger of God? To warn of the end of time and to give good news to those who believe. Those who believe are those who have heeded the warning and receive the good news. One has a choice between accepting the warning or not. Those who accept the warning and believe the Day will come, receive good news. The Day will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain this to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain this sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 52(2). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

In terms of critical thinking, numerous as an intellectual standard means involving multiple viewpoints: In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth.

The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:9-11:24

Makkah: *And if We caused the human being*
to experience mercy from Us,
then, again, We tear it out from him,
truly, he is hopeless, ungrateful. (11:9)
And if We caused him to experience favor
after tribulation afflicted him,
he is certain to say: Evil deeds went from me!
Truly, he becomes glad, boastful. (11:10)
But those who endured patiently
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
those, for them is forgiveness
and a great compensation. (11:11)

Madinah (11:12)

Makkah: *Say: Approach you, then, with ten chapters*
of the Quran like it, that which is forged,
and call to whomever you were able
other than God if you had been ones who are sincere. (11:13)
If they respond not to you, then,
know that it was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God
and that there is no god but He.
Are you, you, then, ones who submit to God? (11:14)
Whoever had been wanting this present life and its adornment,
We pay their account in full to them for their actions in it.
And they will not be diminished in it. (11:15)
Those are those for whom there is nothing
in the world to come but fire.
And what they crafted here was fruitless.
And what they had been doing is in vain. (11:16)

Madinah (11:17)
Makkah: *Who does greater wrong*
than he who devised a lie against God?
Those will be presented before their Lord.
And the ones who bear witness will say:
These are those who lied against their Lord.
But the curse of God is upon the ones who are unjust— (11:18)
they who bar from the way of God and desire in it crookedness.
And they, in the world to come,
they are ones who disbelieve. (11:19)
Those will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth,
nor had there been for them—other than God—any protectors.
The punishment is multiplied for them.
Not had they been able to have the ability to hear,
nor had they been perceiving. (11:20)
Those are those who lost their souls.
What they had been devising had gone astray. (11:21)
Without a doubt they in the world to come,
they are the ones who are losers. (11:22)
Truly, those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
and humbled themselves before their Lord,
those will be the Companions of the Garden.
They, ones who will dwell in it forever. (11:23)
The parable of the two groups of people
is as the one unwilling to see, unwilling to hear
and the other, seeing and hearing.
They are not on the same level in likeness.
Will you not, then, recollect? (11:24)

COMMENTARY°

The rest of the passage describes aspects of the psychology of the human being, a remarkable creature who, without faith, remains short-sighted, inconsistent and vacillating: (11:9-11:11)

But those who endured patiently. (11:11) Such people remain steadfast when they enjoy ease and plenty and when they endure adversity. Many people may be too proud to show weakness when they suffer any hardship. But few indeed are those who do not give themselves airs when they enjoy bliss and affluence.

And did as the ones in accord with morality in both situations. *Those, for them is forgiveness and a great compensation* for their commendable attitude in both situations. A serious view of faith, manifested in God-conscious deeds, is the only thing that protects us

from despair during hardship and from arrogance during times of ease and plenty. It is the only factor which helps many adopt a consistent attitude in both situations. With faith we feel our link with God. We are thus not overwhelmed by adversity. Nor are we proud and insolent when we enjoy abundance. To a believer both situations are beneficial. As the Prophet says: Only a believer derives benefit from both situations.

A CHALLENGE NEVER TO BE MET

The ungrateful often claimed that the Quran was a forgery, invented by the Prophet. Here, he is instructed to challenge them to produce ten chapters similar to the Quran, and to that end, they are able to seek the help of whomever they like: *Or they say: He devised it. Say: Approach you, then, with ten chapters of the Quran like it, that which is forged.* (11:12-11:13) The same sort of challenge occurs in the preceding chapter, Jonah, but there they are only challenged to produce one chapter like the Quran. So why are they now challenged to produce ten chapters?

And call to whomever you were able other than God if you had been ones who are sincere. (11:13) The challenge included anyone they cared to call to their aid: their deities whom they claimed to be God's partners, their finest poets as well as those among them who were endowed with the best literary talents. All they had to do to prove their allegation that the Quran was invented, was produce ten chapters like those of the Quran.

But all the help you seek will produce nothing. So, *if they respond not to you* then it should be enough for you to come to know the truth of revelation: *Know that it was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God* (11:14) He alone has the ability to bestow the Quran. Only His knowledge could have produced it the way it is. They must also realize *there is no god but He.* (11:14) This is the net result of the inability of their gods to help compose ten chapters similar to those God revealed. The self-evident conclusion then is that there is only one God who alone is able to reveal such a Scripture.

Having stated this fact, which does not admit any contradiction, the sign concludes with a question which allows for only one answer, unless it be by those who stubbornly refuse to admit the obvious. The question is *Are you, you, then, ones who submit to God?* (11:14)

Despite their failure to meet the challenge, their stubborn rejection of the self- evident truth continued. Their rejection was motivated by their unwillingness to relinquish their privileges in this life. They had the wealth and power to subjugate and deprive others of a chance to respond to the call of freedom, dignity and justice, the call

to believe that there is no deity but God. Therefore, the following sign describes their true situation and their inevitable destiny: (11:15-11:16)

We see all around us people, individuals and communities, whose aspirations do not go beyond this world, and who actually have abundant enjoyment. We need not wonder about and question this. For this is the rule God has established for this life: *Whoever had been wanting this present life and its adornment, We pay their account in full to them for their actions in it.* (11:15-11:24)

These signs with varying rhythm and a multitude of pointers and references, give us an impression of what the small group of early believers faced during that critical period of the Quranic message. It tells us that the situation needed to be clearly defined and faced with positive action.

THE GREATEST LOSERS

To invent any lie is to commit a terrible crime against truth and against the person concerned. How much more terrible the crime becomes then when the lies are fabricated against God? The culprits then: *Those will be presented before their Lord. And the ones who bear witness will say: These are those who lied against their Lord.* (11:18) It is a scene where their crime is publicized and they are disgraced. They are singularly pointed out and everyone is made aware that their lies were *against their Lord.* (11:18). The scene carries an air of lying, and is followed by a suitably appropriate curse: *But the curse of God is upon the ones who are unjust.* (11:18)

This curse is invoked by the witnesses, who are the angels, th messengers and the believers, or probably, all humanity. Thus, hu miliation awaits them on that vast stage where they are brought to account. Or, perhaps, it is God"s final decision in their case along with the humiliation and the disgrace which they are made to endure in front of all people. In this case it should be read not as an invocation, but as a statement of fact: *But the curse of God is upon the ones who are unjust.* The unjust are those who associate partners with God and who fabricate lies against Him in order to debar others from His path.

They who bar from the way of God and desire in it crookedness (11:19) They do not wish to act with honesty and sincerity. They do not like to behave in a straightforward manner. They prefer crookedness and deviousness. The pronoun "it" used here refers to either the path of God or to life generally. The truth about them is emphasized, for they are those "who deny the life to come." The Arabic expression here is much more emphatic, so that the enormity of their

crime is portrayed in sharp relief.

These people, cursed and turned away are: *Those who will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth, nor had there been for them—other than God—any protectors. The punishment is multiplied for them. Not had they been able to have the ability to hear, nor had they been perceiving.* (11:20) God is always able to punish them in this life, if He so wishes. *Nor had there been for them—other than God—any protectors* or support against God. It is, however, His will to defer their punishment to the future life, so that they will endure torment in this world and in the world to come. *The punishment is multiplied for them.* (11:20) They have wasted their senses, and lived as if they were dispossessed of their faculties of hearing and seeing: *Not had they been able to have the ability to hear, nor had they been perceiving.* (11:20) *Those are those who lost their souls.* (11:21)

This is indeed the most terrible loss. For he who has lost his own soul cannot benefit from anything he gains in its place. These people have wasted their lives. They could not appreciate their dignity which is best fulfilled by lifting themselves above submission to anyone other than God. They incurred their loss when they denied the hereafter and fabricated lies against their Lord with the expectation that they would never meet Him. In the life to come they will find that they have lost their souls. *What they had been devising had gone astray.* (11:21) Their fabrications will go amiss. They cannot find the lies they invented against God. They will all disappear. *Without a doubt they in the world to come, they are the ones who are losers.* (11:22) What loss can be greater than theirs when they have lost their own souls both in this life and in the life to come?

Contrasted with their situation is that of those who believe and maintain good and proper action. These are reassured, have total trust in their Lord, undisturbed by any doubt or worry: *Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality and humbled themselves before their Lord, those will be the Companions of the Garden.* (11:23) The Arabic expression used for "*humbled themselves*" also denotes submission, trust and reassurance. It depicts a believer's relationship with his Lord which is one of complete satisfaction, security and freedom from all worry.

We have finally a very vivid image of each of the two groups. The first is like a person who cannot see because he is blind, and cannot hear because he is deaf. He does not put his senses and faculties to their ultimate use, serving his mind, so that he can think, reason and contemplate. He is indeed deprived of all his senses and faculties. The other group are like a person who sees and hears and is, therefore, rightly guided by his senses. *The parable of the two groups of*

people is as the one unwilling to see, unwilling to hear and the other, seeing and hearing. (11:24) This image is then followed by a rhetorical question: *They are not on the same level in likeness. Will you not, then, recollect?* (11:24) The whole issue does not require more than taking heed. It is a simple, straightforward issue.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 11:9-11:24

WHO IS GOD?

God causes human beings to experience mercy from Him. If He removes it, human beings becomes hopeless, ungrateful. If they suffer tribulation and it is removed, they become glad, boastful.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Messenger is told to say to the ungrateful who do not believe the Quranic message is from God: Approach with ten chapters like the Quran that you say is forged and call to whomever you are able for help—other than God—if you are able. If they do not respond to you, then know that the Quranic revelation was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God and that there is no god but He. Then ask: Are you ungrateful, then, ones who submit to God (*muslim*)?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Whoever wants this present life and its adornment will be given it. The end for them is the fire. Whatever they did here on earth is fruitless and in vain. Who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God? They will be presented to God by ones who bear witness who will say: These ar those who lied against their Lord. The curse of God be upon the ones who ai unjust—those who bar from the way of God. They are ones who disbelieve i the world to come. They are ones who have lost their soul. They are the losers. Those who believe and act in accord with morality and humble themselves before their Lord will be the Companions of the Garden. The parable of these two groups of people is the one who is unwilling to see, unwilling to hear and the other, seeing and hearing. They are not on the same level in likeness. Will you ungrateful not recollect?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Using Problem-Based Learning to Answer Questions

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

Examine and try out what you know
Discover what you need to learn
Develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
Improve your communications skills
State and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
Become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
Practice skills that you will need after your education

The Quran says: The curse of God is on the unjust. Who are the unjust? The unjust are those who bar people from the way of God and who do not believe in the Day of Judgment. Not to believe in the Day of Judgment is to be unjust. Injustice is to deny the signs of God. Those who deny the signs of God will receive the punishment on that Day. The Day will come.

Write a Problem Statment

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

Lesson 52(3). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Right Judgment

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

Quranic Chapter 11: Hud (Hud)
Signs 11:25-11:35

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:26)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:27)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:28)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:29)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:30)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:31)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:32)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:33)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:34)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:35)

Quranic Chapter 11: Hud (Hud)
Signs 11:36-11:49

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:36)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:37)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:38)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:39)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:40)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:41)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:42)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:43)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:44)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:45)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:46)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:47)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:48)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:49)

Quranic Chapter 11: Hud (Hud)
Signs 11:50-11:60

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:50)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:51)

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:52)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:53)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:54)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:55)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:56)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:57)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:58)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:59)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:60)

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:61-11:68

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:61)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:62)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:63)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:64)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:65)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:66)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:67)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:68)

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:69-11:83

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:71)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:72)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:75)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:76)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:78)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:79)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:80)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:81)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:82)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:84-11:95

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:84)

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:85)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:86)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:87)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:88)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:89)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:90)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:91)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:92)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:93)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:94)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:95)

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:96-11:109

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh (11:96)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh (11:97)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh (11:98)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh (11:99)
Makkah: *That is from the tidings of the towns*
that We relate to you.
Of them, some are ones that are standing up
and some are stubble. (11:100)
And it was not that We did wrong to them.
Rather, they did wrong themselve:
And their gods availed them n
whom they call to besides God at al
When the command of your Lord drew near
they increased them not
other than in ruination. (11:101)
And, thus, is the taking of your Lord
when He took the towns
while they are ones who are unjust.
Truly, His taking is painful, severe. (11:102)
In that, truly, there is a sign
for whoever feared the punishment of the world to come.
That Day humanity will be one that is gathered together for it
and that will be a witnessed Day. (11:103)
And We postpone it not but for the numbered term. (11:104)
On the Day it approaches no person will assert anything
but with His permission. Then, among them will be
the disappointed and the happy. (11:105)
As for those who were in despair, they will be in the fire.

For them in it is sobbing and sighing, (11:106)
ones who will dwell in it for as long as the heavens
and the earth continued,
*but what **your** Lord willed.*
*Truly, **your** Lord is Achiever of what He wants.* (11:107)
And as for those who were happy, they will be in the Garden,
ones who will dwell in it for as long
as the heavens and the earth continued,
*but what **your** Lord willed, a gift*
that will not be that which is broken. (11:108)
*So be **you** not hesitant as to what these worship.*
They worship nothing but what their fathers worship before.
And We are the ones who pay their share in full
without being that which is reduced. (11:109)

COMMENTARY°

The first comment: (11:100-11:102) directly relates to the historical accounts, and is followed by one which utilizes the punishment meted out to those early communities as a means of inspiring awe of punishment in the hereafter. This is given in a very awesome scene of the Day of Judgment, which is held out before our eyes. (11:103-11:108)

SUMMING UP PAST LESSONS

So far, the chapter has portrayed the suffering which overwhelmed various ancient nations: some were drowned in floods, some perished in a devastating storm, some by an awful cry, and some found the earth under their feet subside, opening up to swallow them and their dwellings. Then when all these scenes of destruction in this world are visible before our eyes, and when our hearts are deeply touched by what has been related of events and punishments, we have the final comment: *That is from the tidings of the towns that We relate to you.* (11:100) In other words, the Prophet, had no knowledge of any of this. He came to know of them only through divine revelation. This is indeed one of the objectives of telling such stories in the Quran.

Of them, some are ones that are standing up. (11:100) Their ruins which still exist testify to the standard of civilization and strength that these communities attained.

Of these the ruins of Aad and Tham d at are the best examples. *And some are stubble.* (11:100) They were wiped out, without a trace, as in the cases of the peoples of Noah and Lot. After all, what are people? And what is civilization? They are but fields of human be-

ings, similar to agricultural fields. Some plants are good and pleasing, others are foul. Some acquire strength and spread, others wither and die.

And it was not that We did wrong to them. Rather, they did wrong themselves. (11:101) They chose to be blind and to stifle their instincts and senses. They turned away from divine guidance, ignored God"s signs and greeted His warnings with contempt. Therefore, they brought on themselves the suffering they received, wronging themselves while no wrong was done them.

*And their gods availed them not whom they call to besides God at all. When the command of **your** Lord drew near they increased them not other than in ruination.* (11:101) This sign states another objective behind relating such historical accounts in the Quran. The chapter opened with a warning to all those who submit to deities other than God.

The same warnings were repeated by every messenger and every prophet. They were told that these false deities could not protect them from God. Their destinies confirmed the earlier warnings. When God's judgement came to pass, none of their deities could avail them of anything. None was able to spare them any portion of the suffering which befell them. Indeed, their false gods could only add to their ruin. This because when they relied on false gods, they added venom and contempt to their opposition to God"s messengers and His messages. Therefore, their punishment was even more severe. This is the meaning of the expression: *They increased them not other than in ruination.* Indeed, those deities could do them neither good nor harm. They were, however, the cause of their increased punishment.

*And, thus, is the taking of **your** Lord when He took the towns while they are ones who are unjust. Truly, His taking is painful, severe.* (11:102) It is only when a community indulges in evil that God takes it to task and brings about its destruction. Punished communities are always bent on evildoing.

Truly, His taking is painful, severe. (11:102) God leaves people to enjoy themselves for a while. He tests them and sends them messengers and clear signs. When, however, evil reigns supreme in a community, and the advocates of truth are only a minority unable to influence the majority, bent on evil-doing; when the small community of believers disassociate themselves from the rest of their people, who are persistent in error, and consider themselves to be a separate community with their own religion, leadership and loyalties; when they make all this plain to the rest of their people and leave them to their destiny, as determined by God, then God brings about His punishment of the evil-doers which is *painful, severe.*

At this point, the chapter portrays scenes from the Day of Judgement, in the familiar Quranic style which relates such scenes to scenes of this world with no gap evident between the two. (11:103-11:108)

In that, truly, there is a sign for whoever feared the punishment of the world to come. (11:103) The severe punishment meted out in this world bears some similarity to the suffering of the hereafter. Therefore, it serves as a reminder of that future suffering. Such reminders, however, are appreciated only by those who fear the punishment in the hereafter. Their fear of God awakens their hearts and opens their eyes. On the other hand, those who are heedless of the hereafter do not respond to any sign. They are blind. They do not appreciate the purpose of creation and re-creation. They only see their immediate situation in this life. Indeed, they do not learn from the lessons presented in this life.

The chapter then proceeds to describe the Day of Judgment: *That Day humanity will be one that is gathered together for it and that will be a witnessed Day.* (11:103) We have here a scene of all humanity being gathered together, leaving them no choice in the matter. They are led to the gathering place. All come forward, and everyone awaits the outcome.

On the Day it approaches no person will assert anything but with His permission. (11:105) A deadly silence continues without interruption. It is a scene full of awe, which overwhelms all. No one dares ask permission to speak. Permission, however, is given by God to whomever He chooses. At this point people are divided into two groups: *Then, among them will be the disappointed and the happy.* (11:105)

As we read on we visualize the wretched in their misery in the fire, where they moan, sigh and sob. The air there is too hot, too suffocating. We also see *the happy* in Paradise, where they receive their reward which continues uninterrupted. Both groups remain in their respective abodes, *ones who will dwell in it for as long as the heavens and the earth continued.* (11:107) This is an expression which imparts a feeling of permanence, which is indeed the intended connotation here.

That continuity is qualified in both cases by God's choice. Indeed, every situation and every law is subject to God's will. It is His will which determines the law but is yet not subject to it. His is a free-will which can change any law whenever He chooses: *But what **your** Lord willed* (sign 107).

You must not entertain any doubt about the falsehood those people followed. This address is made to the Prophet, but the warnings

are given to his people. This approach is perhaps more effective because it implies that the whole matter is something explained objectively by God to His Prophet. There is no argument with anyone. Those who offer such false worship are not directly addressed because they do not deserve to be given attention. Thus, the objective truth, in the manner it is stated, may by itself arouse their interest more than if they were to be addressed directly. *So be you not hesitant as to what these worship. They worship nothing but what their fathers worship before.* (11:109) Therefore, the same suffering awaits them. It is, however, implied here: *And We are the ones who pay their share in full without being that which is reduced.* (11:109) What is due to them is known from what befell other people before them. The chapter has portrayed some examples of this.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 11:100-11:109

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad that these are the news of the towns that the Quran reveals to him. Some are standing. Some are rubble. When the command of your Lord, Muhammad, drew near them, they increased in doing wrong. Thus, your Lord, Muhammad, took them while they were ones who were unjust. Those who were in despair will be in the fire. Your Lord, Muhammad, achieves what He wants. So do not be hesitant, Muhammad, as to what these worship.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves. They called to gods other than God. In this is a sign for whoever fears the punishment of the world to come. Humanity will gather on that Day along with witnesses. Among them will be those who are disappointed and those who are happy. Those who are happy will be in the Garden. They worship nothing but what their fathers worshiped. They will pay their share in full.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says that the ungrateful worship what their fathers worshipped. What did their fathers worship? Their fathers worshipped idols that they themselves named. The ungrateful refuse to change their ways, but continue to worship as their ancestors who had become idolaters worshipped. The ungrateful worship what their idolatrous fathers worshipped instead of worshipping what their monotheistic fathers had worshipped. The ungrateful will receive the punishment at the end of time. The Day will come.

How would your rate yourself in doing the following?

USING PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

Examine and try out what you know
Discover what you need to learn
Develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
Improve your communications skills
State and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
Become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
Practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

LESSON 52(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD CLARITY

The word "clarity" or 'to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:110-11:123

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (11:110)
Makkah: *And, truly, to each his account*
will be paid in full
*by **your** Lord for their actions.*
Truly, He is Aware of what they do.(11:111)
*So go **you** straight as **you** were commanded*
*and those who repented with **you** and be not defiant.*
Truly, He is Seeing of what you do.(11:112)
Then, incline not to those who did wrong so the fire afflict yo
and there will not be for you any protectors other than Goc
Again, you will not be helped.(11:113)
Madinah (11:114)
Makkah: *And have **you** patience,*
for, truly, God wastes not the compensation
of the ones who are doers of good.(11:115)
Why had there not been among the generations before you
imbued with abiding wisdom,
prohibiting corruption in and on the earth,
but a few of those whom We rescue from among them?
And those who did wrong
followed what they were given ease in it.
And they had been ones who sin. (11:116)
Thy Lord had not been causing the towns to perish unjustly
while their people are ones who make things right.(11:117)
*And if **your** Lord willed,*
He would have made humanity one community.

But they cease not to be ones who are at variance, (11:118)
*but on whom **your** Lord had mercy.*
And for that, He created them, and completed
*was the Word of **your** Lord.*
Certainly, I will fill hell with genie
and humanity one and all. (11:119)
*And all that We relate to **you** of the tidings of the Messengers*
*is so that We make **your** mind firm by it.*
*And The Truth drew near **you** in this,*
and an admonishment and a reminder
for the ones who believe. (11:120)
And say to those who believe not:
Act according to your ability.
Truly, We are ones who act. (11:121)
And wait awhile.
We, too, are ones who are waiting awhile. (11:122)
And to God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth.
And to Him is the return of every command,
*so worship Him and put **your** trust in Him.*
*And **your** Lord is not One Who is Heedless*
of what you do. (11:123)

COMMENTARY°

Since judgment has been deferred, everyone will receive the reward due for his actions, whether good or bad, from God, who is aware of all actions.*And, truly, to each his account will be paid in full by **your** Lord for their actions. Truly, He is Aware of what they do.* (11:111) The Arabic expression employed here contains multiple emphasis, so that the delay of accountability and reward should not induce anyone to doubt their inevitability. Such varied emphasis also serves to assert that the beliefs of those people are totally false and that they are akin to the false beliefs of past communities.

A NEEDED REMINDER

The assurance is thus given that God"s laws will not fail, whether they relate to His creation, the religion He has revealed, or to His promises and warnings. Believers and advocates of the Quranic message must, therefore, follow it strictly without deviation or change. (11:112-11:115)

These instructions are given to the Prophet and to those with him who have turned to God in repentance. *So go **you** straight as **you** were commanded and those who repented with **you** and be not defiant.* (11:112) The Prophet felt the power behind the order detail-

ing these tasks and how awesome a responsibility it was. He is reported to have said: This chapter, Hud, has made me grow grey. Here, he is commanded to follow the right path without any deviation. This requires him to always be alert, careful, watchful, and aware of his path. He was to be in full control of his feelings, for these can lead to deviation, major or otherwise. (11:112)

The use of the verb "see" is very apt here, where good and sound judgement are called into action. (11:113) Do not incline towards or have any trust in tyrants who oppress others by their sheer force, making them submit to false gods. If you trust them, or incline towards them, you are endorsing the great evil they practice, and you become party to it. Such deviation would bring about the punishment of hell and leave you without God"s support or protection.

Following the right path during such times may be very hard. Indeed, believers may need to have something to comfort them. God, therefore, guides His Messenger and the believers to what gives them the greatest comfort: (11:114) God knows that this is the source of comfort when every other source fails.

The order to attend to prayers is followed by the statement that good does away with evil. This is a general statement which includes all good deeds. Prayer is one of the best deeds any person can do. Therefore, it is one of the best actions for erasing sin and error. *That is a reminder for the ones who remember.* (11:114) Prayer is, in essence, a method of remembering God, and being thoughtful of Him. Therefore, this comment is very apt here. To follow the right course and to maintain it requires patience. Similarly, awaiting the time God has set for the fulfilment of His promises and warnings requires patience. Therefore, these orders are followed by another one: *And have you patience, for, truly, God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good.* (11:115) To follow the right course is to do good; and to pray at the appointed times is to do good. Moreover, to be patient and to persevere against the ungrateful" schemes is to do good. God will certainly reward those who do good.

WHAT SAVES ERRING COMMUNITIES

If only there had been among the generations that have gone before you some people of virtue to speak out against the spread of corruption on earth, as did the few whom We saved from among them! The wrongdoers pursued what ensured for them a life of comfort and plenty; they were hardened in sin. In truth, your Lord would have not destroyed those cities, without just cause, had their people been God-conscious: (11:116-11:117)

WHY LET DIFFERENCES OCCUR

Then follows a comment on the fact that people have different inclinations and follow different ways. (11:118-11:119)

It is God's will that we are not made of a single community. Therefore, we are bound to differ. Their differences go as far as the basics of faith. Only those who are able to stick to the truth, which is one, by definition, are spared such differences. They, however, differ with the rest of us who have lost sight of the truth.

Completed was the Word of your Lord. Certainly, I will fill hell with genie and humanity one and all. (11:119) From this statement, we deduce that those who stick to the truth enjoy God's grace and have a different end. Heaven will be full of them, in the same way as hell will be full of those who preferred error to the truth.

The signs concludes with an address to the Prophet, explaining the reason behind relating to him such accounts of the histories of earlier communities. It is to strengthen his heart and to provide a reminder for all believers. To those who reject the faith, he should say his final word, indicating the parting of his way from theirs and leaving them to wait for whatever fate God decides for them: ""All that We relate to you of the histories of earlier messengers is a means by which We strengthen your heart. Through these [accounts] there has come to you the truth, as well as an admonition and a reminder for all believers. Say to those who will not believe: (11:120-11:123)

Whatever has been outlined in the chapter of the nature of the Quranic way of life and the histories of earlier prophets and messengers, and the operation of the divine laws, especially as they relate to the fulfillment of God's promises and warnings, is true beyond any shadow of a doubt. *And an admonishment and a reminder for the ones who believe.* (11:120) In such histories, the believers are warned against what befell earlier nations. They are reminded of God"s commandments and His laws.

However, those who are bent on rejecting the truth and do not believe can benefit nothing from such an admonition. There is only one attitude to take towards them, and that is a firm one indicating that there is no common ground between them and the believers. The Prophet is instructed to say to them what one of his prophet brothers, whose story is related in this chapter said to his people before leaving them to their destiny: *And say to those who believe not: Act according to your ability. Truly, We are ones who act. And wait awhile. We, too, are ones who are waiting awhile.* (11:121-11:122) What they are waiting for is known only to God:

And to God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And to Him is the return of every command. (11:123) Everything is

in His hands, including the destiny of the Prophet, the believers and the ungrateful. All power and all authority belong to Him alone. He is, then, the One who deserves to be worshipped: *So worship Him and put your trust in Him.* (11:123) He is the protector of His obedient servants and He alone can give them victory. Moreover, He is aware of everything that every person does, whether good or bad. To each and all He gives their just rewards: *And your Lord is not One Who is Heedless of what you do.* (11:123)

Thus the chapter concludes. It opened with the call to worship God alone, and to turn to Him in repentance, and concludes with the same message of submission. Worship God alone, seek His guidance and follow His instructions. In between, the chapter dwelt at length on matters which relate to the universe, the human soul and the history of nations.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 11:110-11:123

WHO IS GOD?

God will fill hell with genie and humanity. God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good. God does not take the towns unjustly while their people are ones who make things right. To God is the return of every command.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The account of each will be paid in full by your Lord, Muhammad. So go straight as you were commanded and those who repent with you, Muhammad. Have you, Muhammad, patience. If your Lord, Muhammad, had willed He would have made humanity one community. They cease not to be at variance with each other except those on whom your Lord, Muhammad, has mercy. We relate to you, Muhammad, the tidings of Messengers so that We make your mind firm. The Truth drew near you, Muhammad, in this and an admonishment and a reminder for the ones who believe. Say to those who do not believe: Act according to your ability. We are also ones who act. And wait awhile. We too are waiting. Worship Him and put your trust in Him. Your Lord, Muhammad, is not heedless of what they do.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who incline to wrong will be in the fire. They will not be helped. There were ones imbued with wisdom who prohibited corruption in and on the earth, but they were few and they were rescued. Those who did wrong had been ones who sin.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran informs the ungrateful that they face a painful punishment. What does the Quranic message say here to the ungrateful? Act according to your ability and We are ones who act. Wait awhile and We, too, are waiting. The ungrateful deny the Day will come so the Quranic message tells them to act and wait and that God is also acting and waiting. God is always present. The consequences for the acts of the ungrateful who deny the signs will be reckoned with. God is waiting while the ungrateful wait.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others. When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words),

2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words

3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.

4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

Lesson 53. Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Being Fair and Just

Being fair and just is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Being fair and just when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

An Example of the Prophet's Sense of Fairness

Despite Abu Jahl's hostility, hatred, and violence towards the Messenger, God humiliated him before him whenever he saw him. I was told by Abd al-Malik ibn Abd Allah ibn Abu Sufyan al-Thaqafi who had a good memory: A man from Irash brought some camels of his to Makkah and Abu Jahl bought them from him. He held back the money, so the man went to the assembly of Quraysh when the Messenger was sitting at the side of the mosque and said: Who among you will help me to get what is due to me from Abu a-Hakam ibn Hisham? I am a stranger, a wayfarer, and he will not pay his debt.

They said pointing to the Messenger: Do you see that man sitting there? In fact, they were making game of him for they knew quite well of the enmity between him and Abu Jahl.

Go to him. He will help you to your right.

So the man went and stood over the Messenger and said, O Servant of God, Abu al-Hakam ibn Hisham has withheld the money he

owes me. I am a stranger, a wayfarer, and I asked these men to tell me of someone who would help me to my right and they pointed to you, so get my money from him, God bless you. He said, Go to him,' and the Messenger got up and went with him. When they saw this, the men said to one of their number: Follow him.

The Messenger went to his house and knocked on the door. When he asked who was there he said: Muhammad! Come out to me. He came out to him pale with agitation, and the Messenger said: Pay this man his due.

One moment until I give him his money, he said. He went indoors and came out again with the amount he owed and paid it to the man. The Messenger went away saying: Go about your business.

The Irashite went back to the gathering and said: May God reward him, for he has got me my due.

Then the man they had sent after them came back and reported what he had seen.

It was extraordinary, he said. He had hardly knocked on the door when out he came breathless with agitation, and he related what had been said. Hardly had he done so when Abu Jahl himself came up. They said: Whatever has happened, man? We've never seen anything like what you've done.

Confound you, he said. By God as soon as he knocked on my door and I heard his voice I was filled with terror. And when I went out to him there was a camel stallion towering above his head. I've never seen such a head and shoulders and such teeth on a stallion before. By God, if I 'd refused to pay up he would have eaten me.[27]

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)

SIGNS 12:1-12:6

Most of this Chapter is devoted to the story of Prophet Joseph and we have already reviewed it.

> **Makkah:** *We relate to you the fairer of narratives through what We revealed to you of this, the Quran, although you had been before this among the ones who are heedless.* (12:3)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter is a single, complete unit with a clear Makkan character reflected in its subject matter, message and ambience. It reflects the nature of the critical period in which it was revealed. The Prophet was enduring a time when he felt lonely and alienated from his social surroundings, and his followers felt the strains of isolation. With the

revelation of this chapter, God tells His noble Messenger, Muhammad, the story of a noble brother, one Joseph ibn Jacob ibn Isaac ibn Abraham. Joseph too had to endure a series of tests and trials: First, his brothers schemed to get rid of him, then he was thrown into the well where he found himself in fear of his life. This was followed by his becoming a slave sold like an inanimate object, having no say in the matter and losing all the care and love of his parents.

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:7-12:20

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:7)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:8)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:9)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:10)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:11)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:12)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:13)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:14)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:15)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:16)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:17)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:18)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:19)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:20)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:21-12:29

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:21)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:22)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:23)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:24)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:25)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:26)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:27)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:28)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:29)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:30-12:35

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:30)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:31)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:32)

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:33)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:34)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:35)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:36-12:42

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:36)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:37)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:38)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:39)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:40)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:41)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:42)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:43-12:49

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:43)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:44)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:45)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:46)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:47)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:48)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:49)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:50-12:57

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:50)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:51)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:52)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:54)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:55)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:56)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:57)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:58-12:68

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:58)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:59)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:60)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:61)

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:62)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:63)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:64)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:65)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:66)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:67)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:68)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:69-12:79

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:71)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:72)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:75)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:76)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:77)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:78)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:79)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:80-12:93

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:80)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:81)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:82)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:83)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:84)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:85)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:86)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:87)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:88)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:89)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:90)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:91)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:92)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:93)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:94-12:104

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:94)

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:95)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:96)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:97)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:98)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:99)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:100)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:101)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:102)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:103)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:104)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:105-12:111

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:105)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:106)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:107)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:108)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:109)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:110)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:111)

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 54(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

HOW IS POINT OF VIEW DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadow into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs fc every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)

SIGNS 15:1-15:15

Makkah: *Alif Lam Ra. That are the signs of the Book and of a clear Recitation.* (15:1)

It may be those who were ungrateful would wish that they had been ones who submit to God. (15:2)

Forsake them to eat and let them take joy and be diverted with hopefulness. Then, they will know. (15:3)

And We caused not a town to perish but there was
for it a known prescription. (15:4)
No community precedes its term nor delays it. (15:5)
And they say: O you to whom was sent down
the Remembrance,
truly, you are one who is possessed. (15:6)
Why have you not brought angels to us if you had been
the ones who are sincere? (15:7)
We send angels down not but with The Truth.
If they come to the ungrateful,
they would not have been ones who are given respite. (15:8)
Truly, We, We sent down the Remembrance
and, truly, We are ones who guard it. (15:9)
And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you
to partisans of the ancient ones. (15:10)
And approach them not any Messenger
but they had been ridiculing him. (15:11)
Thus, We thrust it into the hearts of the ones who sin. (15:12)
They believe not in it. Surely, passed away before them
a custom of the ancient ones. (15:13)
And even if We opened for them a door from heaven
and they continued going up to it, (15:14)
they would say: Truly, our sight was dazzled.
Nay! We were a bewitched folk. (15:15)

COMMENTARY°

THE UNGRATEFUL INDULGE IN WISHFUL THINKING

This opening passage speaks about the nature of the book which the ungrateful reject as fabrication, adding a threat that they will soon witness a day when they wish they had submitted themselves to God and become Muslims. It tells them that that day has a fixed time, and that is the reason for its delay. It mentions the challenges they make and how they demand that angels be brought to them. It threatens them by stating that when God sends down angels to the ungrateful, He destroys them altogether. Finally the chapter speaks of the real reason for their unbelieving attitude. It is certainly not for lack of evidence, but rather due to their entrenched stubbornness.

Alif Lam Ra. That are the signs of the Book and of a clear Recitation. (15:1) The three separate letters with which these signs starts and similar ones that occur at the beginning of some Quranic signss make up the book, i.e. the Quran. They are available to all. They make the sublime signs, which are inimitable in composition and argument. These letters do not have an intrinsic meaning in them-

selves, but they make up the Quran, which is very clear in its meaning.

People who do not believe in the revelation of this inimitable book, and describe the Quran as fabricated when it is very clear in its import, will come to see a day when they will dearly wish that they had adopted a totally different attitude. They will wish that they had been believers and that their behavior was in line with the teachings of religion. *It may be those who were ungrateful would wish that they had been ones who submit to God.* (15:2)

They may wish so but that will be when no wish is of use. But in fact: *It may be those who were ungrateful would wish*. The way this is expressed implies a threat and a touch of derision. It also implies encouragement to make use of the available opportunity and submit to God before it is too late. For if the chance is lost and the day comes when they wish they had submitted themselves to God and accepted the Quranic message, their wishes will be of no avail.

This is followed by another implicit threat: *Forsake them to eat and let them take joy and be diverted with hopefulness. Then, they will know.* (15:3) Leave them to their carnal desires, eating and enjoying, without reflection, contemplation or thought to what is around them. Leave them with their deluding hopes and deceiving temptations, while life passes away and the opportunity is lost. Leave them so that you do not waste your own time with those who have condemned themselves when they lost their way in idle hopes and desires. The temptation shows them that they have a long life to come and that they will achieve what they covet.

This beguiling hope is a fatal one, and it is to this hope that the Prophet is commanded to leave the ungrateful. *Then, they will know* (15:3) but then it will be too late for such knowledge to be of any benefit to them. The command given to the Prophet implies a threat to them, as well as a strong call aiming to wake them up so that they could see their hope for what it is: a beguiling hope that causes them to overlook their inevitable fate.

But the laws God has set in operation for the world and for human life will continue along their respective courses. The end of each nation will come at the time appointed by God. Then it is the practices of each community that determine how these laws and how God's order will operate: *And We caused not a town to perish but there was for it a known prescription. No community precedes its term nor delays it.* (15: 4-15:5) Therefore, they must not be deluded by the fact that God's punishment has not taken them. God's law will take its well-marked course and operate as God wants it to operate. As for them, they will certainly come to know.

It may be said that there are communities which do not believe or do any good works or implement justice, but they continue to thrive and prosper. But this is nothing but delusion. Such communities must have a fair amount of goodness, even if it is limited to building a good life on earth, dealing justly among its own citizens and taking measures to ensure material prosperity within their own territories. They owe their continued existence to this goodness. When it is exhausted, they face their inevitable destiny. God's law will always operate, and every community has its time: *No community precedes its term nor delays it.* (15:5)

A PROMISE THAT WILL NEVER FAIL

The signs then describe their bad manners in the way they addressed the Prophet, when he had only presented to them the Quran which is a clear reminder of the truth. It helps to reawaken them to face the facts instead of running after beguiling hopes. He also reminded them of God's law and its operation. But they ridiculed him and spoke to him with extreme impudence. (15:6-15:7) Ridicule is apparent in their way of addressing the Prophet, *And they say: O you to whom was sent down the Remembrance.* (15:6) They actually deny the fact of revelation and the Prophet's message altogether, but they make this mocking address.

Their rudeness is carried still further as they insult the Prophet personally: *Truly, you are one who is possessed.* (15:6) This they do in response to his call on them to believe in God, using the Quran in all its clarity to address them. They go on to make unreasonable demands, asking for angels to come down to endorse his message: *Why have you not brought angels to us if you had been the ones who are sincere?* (15:7) The demand for angels is often repeated in this and other signs, and it is put to the Prophet Muhammad as it was put to prophets and messengers before him. This reflects the clear ignorance of those who are ungrateful, for it is he whom God has honored when He assigned prophethood to a few chosen people.

The reply to such ridicule, impudence and ignorance takes the form of re-stating the rule that is confirmed by the fates suffered by past communities. Angels are sent down to a messenger of God only to destroy the ungrateful of his community when their term is up. At this point there can be no more respite and no further delay: *We send angels down not but with The Truth. If they come to the ungrateful, they would not have been ones who are given respite.* (15:8) Is this what they want and demand?

PRESERVATION OF THE QURAN

The signs then call on them to look carefully on God's guidance and reflect on it. God only sends down the angels with the truth. He commands them to establish and implement it. In the case of persistent ungrateful, the truth is to destroy them. Not only do they deserve this, but it is also inevitable. Such destruction, then, is a truth in itself and the angels carry it out without delay. God chooses for them what is better than the choice they make for themselves. He gives them the Reminder so that they may reflect on it and follow its guidance. This is much better than sending down the angels with the final truth, if only they would reflect: *Truly, We, We sent down the Remembrance and, truly, We are ones who guard it.* (15:9)

A GUARANTEE FOR ALL TIME

At the time of the Prophet, this promise to preserve the Quran intact sounded a mere promise. Today, however, after all these great events and long centuries, it is indeed a great miracle confirming the indisputable fact that it is God's revealed book. *Truly, We, We sent down the Remembrance and, truly, We are ones who guard it* (15:9) God certainly tells the truth.

SAME OLD DENIALS

God consoles the Prophet and tells him that he is not unique ir his position among God's messengers who, like him, were the targe of much ridicule and rejection. The ungrateful always show their stubbornness in denying the true faith.

And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you to partisans of the ancient ones. And approach them not any Messenger but they had been ridiculing him. (15:10-15:11) It is the same story. Just like the ungrateful in the communities of old received what God's messengers told them, the same is the case with the ungrateful in your community. They all show the same attitude. Their hearts, having turned away from God's messages and been hostile to God's chosen messengers, are no longer able to reflect or receive a message as it should be received: *Thus, We thrust it into the hearts of the ones who sin. They believe not in it.* (15:12) We let it sink into their hearts as its truth is denied, subject to ridicule, because their hearts cannot receive it except in this way. This applies to all generations and communities, past, present and future. Those who deny the truth of God's message are of the same nature: *Surely, passed away before them a custom of the ancient ones.* (15:13)

It is not proper evidence of the truth of God's message that they lack. They are stubborn, unwilling to change, no matter what signs

and proofs are given to them. At this point, the signs give a particularly rich image of repugnant obstinacy and mean strong-headedness: "If We opened for the ungrateful a gateway to heaven and they had ascended higher and higher, still they would surely say: *And even if We opened for them a door from heaven and they continued going up to it, they would say: Truly, our sight was dazzled. Nay! We were a bewitched folk.* (15:14-15:15) We can imagine them ascending higher and higher into the sky, going through a special door that opens for them, and they climb physically and see with their eyes the open door. Yet their stubborn attitude remains, whereby they deny the truth of what they see and feel, claiming that someone must have cast a spell over them so that they cannot see clearly. They claim that what they see is mere fantasy: *Truly, our sight was dazzled. Nay! We were a bewitched folk.* (15:15) All we see and feel is mere illusion.

This lack of feeling of God's existence despite all the evidence that testifies to His control of the universe clearly indicates that the receptive faculties are impaired. Their persistence in denying God is no less rude and impudent than that painted in the Quranic text: *And even if We opened for them a door from heaven and they continued going up to it, they would say: Truly, our sight was dazzled. Nay! We*

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:1-15:15

WHO IS GOD?

We send angels not but with The Truth. If they had been sent to the ungrateful, the ungrateful would not have been given respite. We sent down the Remembrance and We are ones who guard it. We thrust into the hearts of those who sin the desire to ridicule the Messengers. Even if We opened a door for them, at the end they would admit that they were unseeing and a bewitched folk.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Forsake the ones who are ungrateful to eat and take joy and be diverted with hopefulness. They will know. The ungrateful say to you, Muhammad: O you to whom the Remembrance was revealed, you are one who is possessed. Why have you, Muhammad, not brought us angels if you had been sincere? We sent Messengers before you. Every Messenger we sent was ridiculed.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

It may be that those who were ungrateful wish that they had been ones who submit to God (*muslim*). No community precedes its term nor delays it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says that God sends down the Remembrance and guards it. What is the Remembrance? God has sent down the signs of the Book and of a clear Recitation (Quran). The Remembrance is the Quranic message. God sent Remembrances before with various Messengers who were also ridiculed. Do not be disheartened, Muhammad. Know that God guards the Remembrance. The Remembrance is guarded by God. The ungrateful will be punished because of their denial of the Remembrance and their claim that the Prophet is possessed. That on that Day the ungrateful will wish that they had been among the ones who submit (*muslim*).

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

LESSON 54(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment

that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)
SIGNS 15:16-15:25

Makkah: *And, certainly,*
We made constellations in the heavens
and We made them appear pleasing to the ones who look. (15:16)
And We kept them safe from every accursed satan, (15:17)
but he who had the ability to hear by eavesdropping.
Then, a clear flame pursued him. (15:18)
And We stretched out the earth
and We cast on it firm mountains
and We caused to develop on it
that which was well-balanced of everything. (15:19)
And We made on it for you a livelihood
and for whomever you are not ones who provide. (15:20)
And there is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us
and We send it down not but in a known measure. (15:21)
And We sent fertilizing winds.
Then, We caused water to descend from heaven,
then, We satiated you,
and you are not ones who are its keepers. (15:22)
And, truly, it is We Who give life
and cause to die and We are the ones who inherit. (15:23)
And, certainly, We knew the ones who precede among you
and, certainly, We knew the ones who come later. (15:24)
*And, truly, **your** Lord is He Who assembles.*

Truly, He is Wise, Knowing. (15:25)

COMMENTARY°

This is the first line (15:16) in the great universal scene which tells of God's creative power. The 'constellations' may refer to the stars and planets themselves with their huge entities, or it may refer to their positions which define their orbits. In both cases, they testify to the great power behind their creation and to the accuracy and beauty that they reflect. (15:16)

With the beauty comes preservation, pure and intact: *And We kept them safe from every accursed satan.* (15:17) None, then, can spoil this purity by trying to spread evil in it. Satan is allowed to do his evil work only on earth, to tempt human beings to follow his wicked designs. The sky, which is a symbol for what is exalted and sublime, is beyond his reach. He may attempt to do so, but every attempt he makes is foiled: *but he who had the ability to hear by eavesdropping. Then, a clear flame pursued him.* (15:18)

The second line in this great and awesome scene draws the earth stretched as far as our sight can reach, and made easy to traverse. It shows the mountains giving it firmness and stability, and its plants and vegetation that are necessary sustenance for us and animal: *And We stretched out the earth and We cast on it firm mountains and We caused to develop on it that which was well-balanced of everything. And We made on it for you a livelihood and for whomever you are not ones who provide.* (15:19-15:20)

A CLEAR PLAN FOR ALL CREATION

In fact, the provisions given to every community are determined by God, according to His will. He grants them as He pleases, at the time He chooses, and in accordance with the laws He has set in operation: *And there is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us and We send it down not but in a known measure.* (15:21) No creature owns, or has power over, anything. The resources of everything are with God in His supreme realm. He grants it to His creation, in their respective worlds, according to a defined measure. Nothing is given or provided arbitrarily.

We have here a precise statement: *And there is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us and We send it down not but in a known measure.* (15:21)

Of the things that God sends in accordance with defined measure are winds and water: *And We sent fertilizing winds. Then, We caused water to descend from heaven, then, We satiated you, and you are not ones who are its keepers.* (15:22) The Arabic term, *lawaqih*,

which means heavily loaded has been interpreted by some according to the scientific meaning of 'fertilizing', referring to the fact that the winds carry the pollen from some plants or trees to fertilize the female ones.

What is referred to here is rather the fact that winds carry moisture, just like a she-camel becomes heavy with milk. God then sends down water from that moisture carried by the winds, and He allows us to drink it for our own survival. Yet we cannot retain it all: *You are not ones who are its keepers.* (15:22) It has not come from the storehouses of human beings, but from God's treasures. It has been poured according to a well-defined measure.

The winds move, carry the moisture and pour the water in accordance with the laws of nature. But who has determined all this in the first place? It is all determined by the Creator who has set the original law of the universe which gives rise to all aspects and operates all phenomena: *And there is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us and We send it down not but in a known measure.* (15: 21)

We note here how every move is referred to God, even the drinking of water: *Then, We caused water to descend from heaven then, We satiated you.* (15:22) What is meant here is that we have fashioned you in a way which makes you in need of water, and we made the water suitable for your needs. All this is made according to a measure. It is all set in operation by God's will.

The signs then perfects the attribution of all matters to God alone, stating that life and death, the living and the dead, the resurrection and judgement belong to Him: *And, truly, it is We Who give life and cause to die and We are the ones who inherit. And, certainly, We knew the ones who precede among you and, certainly, We knew the ones who come later. And, truly, your Lord is He Who assembles. Truly, He is Wise, Knowing.* (15:23-15:25)

Thus the second passage complements the first. In the first passage we have the statement: *And We caused not a town to perish but there was for it a known prescription. No community precedes its term nor delays it.* (15:4-15:5) Here, in this passage, it is emphasized that life and death are determined by God, the heir to all life, and He knows whom He has determined to die early and who will have their death delayed. It is He who gathers them all together at the end, for: *Truly, He is Wise, Knowing.* (15:25) He determines the term of every community according to His wisdom. He knows when it dies, and when it is resurrected and all that happens in between.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:16-15:25

WHO IS GOD?

God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. There is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us and We send it down not but in a known measure.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Your Lord, Muhammad, is He who assembles. He is Wise, Knowing.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us that the treasures that God sends down are in a known measure. What are some of the treasures that God sends down? The fertilizing winds and rain water. There are underlying important numbers to be studied in understanding how the universe and the earth work. Everything has a known number. God is the Creator and Originator of the universe.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 54(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists (Salafists) as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists (Salafists) today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-ce tricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students th their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in

the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find

that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egc centric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions und which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interfere with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)

SIGNS 15:26-15:44

Makkah: *And, certainly, We created the human being out of earth-mud of soft wet earth.* (15:26)

And We created the ones who are spirits before

from the fire of a burning wind. (15:27)
*And mention when **your** Lord said to the angels:*
Truly, I am One Who is Creator
of mortals out of earth-mud of soft wet earth. (15:28)
That is when I shaped him
and breathed into him of My Spirit.
So fall down before him as ones who prostrate themselves. (15:29)
The angels prostrated themselves, one and all, (15:30)
but Iblis.
He refused to be with the ones who prostrate themselves. (15:31)
*He said: O Iblis! What is with **you** that **you** be not with*
the ones who prostrate themselves? (15:32)
Iblis said: I will not be prostrating myself
*before a mortal whom **You** created*
out of earth-mud of soft wet earth. (15:33)
*It was said: Go **you** forth from here,*
*for, truly, **you** are accursed!* (15:34)
*And, truly, a curse will be upon **you***
until the Day of Judgment. (15:35)
Iblis said: O my Lord! Give me respite until the Day
they are raised up. (15:36)
*He said: Then, truly, **you** are*
among the ones who are given respite (15:37)
until the Day of the known time. (15:38)
Iblis said: My Lord!
*Because **You** led me into error I will,*
certainly, make the earth appear pleasing to them
and I will lead them one and all into error, (15:39)
*but **Your** servants among them,*
the ones who are devoted. (15:40)
He said: This is the straight path to Me. (15:41)
Truly, as for My servants there is no authority
*for **you** over them,*
*but ones who are in error followed **you**.* (15:42)
And, truly, hell is promised to them one and all. (15:43)
It has seven doors. Then, for everyone,
a door set apart, is for them. (15:44)

COMMENTARY°

THE ORIGINS OF CREATION OF THE HUMAN BEING

At the outset difference in the two natures is clearly stated. (15:26-15:27) The dry clay which gives off a sound when knocked and which is originally black mud given a specific shape is totally

different from the fire described here as scorching, blowing fiercely. We learn later that another element is added to our nature, namely, the breathing of God's spirit into it. Satan's nature, however, remained that of the fire of scorching winds. (15:28-15:35)

THE ENCOUNTER AND THE FALL

God said to the angels: (15:28-15:29) And what God said immediately took effect, for His word expresses His will, and His will is always done. We cannot question how the breath of God's eternal spirit mixed with the clay that has limited life. Such arguments are no more than idle play. It is indeed a child's play with our intellect itself. It forces the human mind out of its own realm in which it may exercise its powers of perception, reflection and comprehension. All the controversy that has been raised over this issue, past and present, betrays ignorance of the nature of the human mind, its characteristics and limitations. It simply forces the human mind to try to measure God's work by human standards. It is an altogether wrong premise.

What happened after God issued His order to the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam? *The angels prostrated themselves, one and all.* (15:30) That is in the nature of this aspect of God's creation, the angels. They obey God's orders whatever they are, without argument or delay. However, something else also took place at the same time: *But Iblis. He refused to be with the ones who prostrate themselves.* (15:31)

Iblis belongs to a different type of creation, separate from the angels. He is created out of fire while they are created out of light. They do not disobey God, whatever His command may be. He, on the other hand, disobeyed God, rejecting His command. For certain, then, he is not, and never was, one of the angels. That we have here a form of exception, more strongly pronounced in the Arabic text, refers to what is called in Arabic linguistics 'inconsequential exception'. It is acceptable to say in Arabic: "The Joneses have come except for Ahmad", when you know that Ahmad does not belong to the Jones family, but is always with them. Now since the order stated here has been issued to the angels, how could it apply to Iblis? That the same order was issued to Iblis is clearly stated in Chapter 7. There the order to Iblis is mentioned in a later sign, when God questions him: *He said: What prevented you from prostrating yourself when I commanded you?* (7:12) This is clear proof that Iblis was given the same order. He might have been included in the order given to the angels, if he was with them at the time, or perhaps a separate order was issued to him. However, this is not mentioned here and this shows that he is of a far lesser position than the angels. Furthermore,

the texts we have, and Satan's own behavior, all demonstrate that he was not one of the angels.

*[God] said: What prevented **you** from prostrating **yourself** when I commanded **you**? Satan said: I am better than he. **You** had created me of fire and **You** had created him of clay.* (15:32-15:33) Thus the nature of this creature, who was created out of the fire of scorching winds, has surfaced. We see that arrogance, conceit and disobedience are part of his nature. Iblis mentions the clay and mud, but does not mention the sublime spirit that mixes irrevocably with that mud. In his insolence he declares that a great creature like him could not prostrate himself to a human being whom God has created out of mud molded into shape.

Such an attitude leads to its natural consequence: *It was said: Go **you** forth from here, for, truly, **you** are accursed! And, truly, a curse will be upon **you** until the Day of Judgment.* (15:34-15:35) This is a just reward for disobedience and rebellion.

At this point, his evil characteristics come out in full force. We see how he nurses his grudges and how he plans to spread evil: *Iblis said: O my Lord! Give me respite until the Day they are raised up. He said: Then, truly, **you** are among the ones who are given respite until the Day of the known time.* (15:36-15:38) He requests respite to the Day of Judgment, but not to have the opportunity to repent of his sin which he has committed in the presence of God Almighty. It is not to atone for his sin that he wants to be spared death until the Day of Judgment, but rather to exact revenge on Adam and his offspring. He is avenging himself against humanity for his expulsion and the curse that he has incurred. He thus blames Adam for his expulsion, instead of acknowledging that it was the result of his own sinful insolence.

*Iblis said: My Lord! Because **You** had led me into error I will, certainly, make the earth appear pleasing to them and I will lead them one and all into error, but **Your** servants among them, the ones who are devoted.* (15:39-15:40) It is Iblis himself who has chosen the battleground, which is the earth. *I will, certainly, make the earth appear pleasing to them.* (15:39) He also states what he will use for a weapon. He will simply tempt humanity by making what is foul appear to be fair, so that they are tempted to do it. In fact, no human being resorts to foul things unless these seem fair to him by some trick perpetrated by Satan. Thus he sees such foul things in a guise which is different from what they truly are. Therefore, people should always remember the weapon which Satan uses. If they find something attractive and are tempted, they should make sure lest it has been made to appear so by Satan. Proper refuge is to ensure that their

link with their Lord is kept in fine tuning by worshipping Him as He should be worshipped. Even according to his own statement, Satan has no power over God's faithful servants: "I shall most certainly beguile them all into grievous error, except for those of them who are truly Your faithful servants." (Signs 39-40) God chooses from among His servants those who purge themselves of all evil and worship Him alone, as though they see Him. It is over such people that Satan holds no sway.

Satan knows that this condition which he himself has stated is one which he cannot change because it is part of the laws governing human nature. Therefore, the reply to Satan's words: (15:41-14:42) This is the way established by the will of God as a final arbiter with regard to guidance and going astray. *Truly, as for My servants there is no authority for you over them, but ones who are in error followed you.* (15:42) They are immune to your devices and schemes, as they close all entry points to their minds and hearts. They always look to God for guidance, and they know what pleases Him by their nature which they purge of all sin. Satan has power only over 'those who choose to follow' him, as they have been in error, going far astray. Those who dedicate themselves to God will not be left without guidance.

The outcome is also clear. It is stated right at the beginning: *And, truly, hell is promised to them one and all. It has seven doors. Then, for everyone, a door set apart, is for them.* (15:43-15:44) For those who go astray are of different categories. Each gate to hell will have its portion from among them, according to the nature of their deeds.

This ends the scene of the beginning of human life, putting great emphasis on the lesson to be learnt. It tells how Satan finds his way into the human soul, trying to overpower the sublimity of the spirit breathed into us with the characteristics of our clay origin. Those who maintain their links with God, emphasizing their spirit characteristics will have nothing to fear from Satan.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:26-15:44

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The passage is about the creation of the human being and the role that Satan played in refusing to bow down.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?s
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here speaks of the creation of the human being and Satan's arrogance. How did Satan show his arrogance? He refused to bow down to the first human being when commanded to do so by God. Satan thought that he was better than the human being because he was made of fire and the human being was created of clay. Satanic forces may show forth through our ego when we think that we are better than something or someone else. God loves not the arrogant. Satanic forces exist and may influence our actions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

> *Those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them. We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin! For them is a despised punishment.* (3:178)

LESSON 54(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

The Quran cautions:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

> When Amr and Abd Allah went back to Makkah, not having been able to bring back the Messenger's Companions who had migrated to Abyssinia and having received a sharp rebuff from the Negus, Umar had become a Muslim in the month of Dhu al-Hijja, he being a strong, stubborn man whose proteges none dare attack. The Messenger's Companions were so fortified by him and Hamza that they got the upper hand of the Quraysh.
>
> Abd Allah ibn Masud used to say: We could not pray at the Kabah until Umar became a Muslim, and then he fought the Quraysh until he could pray there and we prayed with him. We were on the point of setting out for Abyssinia, and Amir had gone out for something we needed, when Umar came and stopped beside me, he being an idolater at the time, and we were receiving harsh treatment and affliction from him.
>
> He said: So you are off, O mother of Abd Allah. Yes, I said, we are going to God's country. You have violently ill-treated us until God has given us a way out.
>
> He said: God be with you, and I saw in him a compassion which

I had never seen before. Then he went away, and I could see plainly that our departure pained him; and when Amir came back with the thing he needed I said to him: O father of Abd Allah, I wish you had seen Umar just now and the compassion and sorrow he showed on our account.

When he asked me if I had hopes of his becoming a Muslim, I replied that I had, to which he answered: The man you saw will not become a Muslim until al-Khattab's donkey does. This he said in despair of him because of his harshness and severity against the Quranic message.

Umar's sister was Fatima bint al-Khattab. She was married to Said ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl, both of whom had early on become Muslims and concealed the fact from Umar.

Now Nuaym ibn Abd Allah al-Nahham, a man of his tribe from Adiyy ibn Kab clan, had become a Muslim and he also concealed the fact out of fear of his people. Khabbab ibn al-Aratt used often to come to Fatima to recite the Quran to her.

One day Umar came out, girt with his sword, making for the Messenger, and a number of his Companions, who he had been informed had gathered in a house at al-Safa, in all about forty, including women. With the Messenger was his uncle Hamza and Abu Bakr and Ali from among the Muslims who stayed with the Messenger and had not gone out with those who went to Abyssinia.

Nuaym met him and asked him where he was going. I am making for Muhammad, the apostate, who has split up the Quraysh, made mockery of their traditions, insulted their faith and their gods, to kill him.

You deceive yourself, Umar, he answered, do you suppose that the Abdu Manaf clan will allow you to continue walking upon the earth when you have killed Muhammad? Had not you better go back to your own family and set their affairs in order?

What is the matter with my family? he said.

Your brother-in-law, your nephew Saad, and your sister Fatima, have accepted the Quranic message and followed Muhammad in his religion, so you had better go and deal with them.

Thereupon, Umar returned to his sister and brother-in-law at the time when Khabbab was with them with the words from chapter 20: TaHa, which he was reciting to them. When they heard Umar's voice, Khabbab hid in a small room, or in a part of the house, and Fatima took the page and put it under her thigh.

Now Umar had heard the recitation of Khabbab as he came near the house, so when he came in he said: What is this balderdash I heard?

They answered: You have not heard anything.

He said: By God, I have, and I have been told that you have followed Muhammad in his religion. He seized his brother-in-law Said, and his sister Fatima rose in defense of her husband, and he hit her and wounded her.

When he did that they said to him: Yes, we are Muslims, and we believe in God and His Messenger and you can do what you like.

When Umar saw the blood on his sister he was sorry for what he had done and turned back and said to his sister: Give me this sheet which I heard you reading just now so that I may see just what it is which Muhammad has brought, for Umar could write.

When he said that, his sister replied that she was afraid to trust him with it.

Do not be afraid, he said, and he swore by his gods that he would return it when he had read it.

When he said that, she had hopes that he would become a Muslim, and said to him: My brother, you are unclean in your polytheism and only the clean may touch it.

So Umar rose and washed himself and she gave him the page in which was TaHa, and when he had read the beginning he said: How fine and noble is this speech.

When he heard that, Khabbab emerged and said: O Umar, by God, I hope that God has singled you out by His Messenger's call, for but last night I heard him saying: O God, strengthen faith by Abul Hakam ibn Hisham or by Umar ibn al-Khattab. Come to God, come to God, O Umar.

At that Umar said: Lead me to Muhammad so that I may bear witness. Khabbab replied that he was with a number of his Companions. So Umar took his sword and girt it on, and made for the Messenger and his Companions. He knocked on the door.

When they heard his voice, one of the Companions got up and looked through a chink in the door, and when he saw him girt with his sword, he went back to the Messenger in fear, and said: It is Umar with his sword on.

Hamza said: Let him in; if he has come with peaceful intent, we will treat him well; if he has come with ill intent, we will kill him with his own sword.

The Messenger gave the word and he was let in. The Messenger rose and met him in the room, seized him round the girdle or by the middle of his cloak, and dragged him along violently, saying: What has brought you, son of Khattab, for by God, I do not think you will cease (your persecution) until God brings calamity upon you.

Umar replied: O Messenger of God, I have come to you to be-

lieve in God and His Messenger and what he has brought from God.

The Messenger gave thanks to God so loudly that the whole household knew that Umar had become a Muslim.

The Companions dispersed, having become confident when both Hamza and Umar had accepted the Quranic message because they knew that they would protect the Messenger, and that they would get justice from their enemies through them.[28]

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)
SIGNS 15:45-15:60

Makkah: *Truly, the ones who are God-conscious*
will be amidst gardens and springs. (15:45)
Enter them in peace as ones who are safe! (15:46)
And We will tear out any grudges from their breasts.
They will be as brothers/sisters on couches, one facing the other.
(15:47)
In it neither fatigue will afflict them
nor will they be ones who are driven out. (15:48)
Tell My servants that I am The Forgiving, The Compassionate (15:49)
and that My punishment, it is a painful punishment. (15:50)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:51)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:52)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:54)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:55)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:56)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:57)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:58)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:59)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:60)

COMMENTARY°

Finally we come to what God touchingly says about the righteous: (15:45-15:48)

This Quranic message does not try to change human nature or to make humanity a different sort of creation. It acknowledges that in this life people experience malice and grudges. This is part of their human nature which faith does not totally eradicate. It simply works on it to reduce its intensity, and then elevates its domain so that believers love and hate for God's sake only. But in heaven, where their humanity attains its most sublime standard, the very sense of malice and grudge is removed. Here, people experience only pure love and brotherhood.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:45-15:50

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The God-conscious will be rewarded amidst gardens and springs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Here the Prophet is told to tell the servants of God that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. How will the servants of God be treated in the next life? They will be amidst gardens and springs. They will enter in peace as ones who ar safe. God will reward His servants. Those who are the servants of God wi receive a great compensation. The consequences for those who are servants of God will be eternal peace. The servants of God will be rewarded.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

LESSON 54(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment just as Umar al-Khattab had been regarding the conversion of the people around him. What were they listening to? What was Muhammad telling them: Why would my sister and her husband have converted? What is special about this message?.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

TUFAYL AMR IBN AL-DAUS AND THE QURAYSH

In spite of his people's behavior the Messenger was continually giving them good counsel and preaching salvation from their evil state. When God protected him from them they began to warn all new-comers against him. Al-Tufayl Amr ibn al-Daus used to say that he came to Makkah when the Messenger was there and some of the Quraysh immediately came up to him. (Tufayl was a poet of standing and an intelligent man.) They told him that this fellow (Muhammad) had done them much harm; had divided their community and broken up its unity; in fact he talks like a sorcerer separating a man from his father, his brother, or his wife. We are afraid that he will have the same effect on you and your people, so don't speak to him or listen to a word from him.

They were so insistent that I decided not to listen to a word or to speak to him and I went so far as to stuff cotton in my ears when I went to the mosque fearing that I might overhear a word or two against my will. When I got to the mosque there was the Messenger of God standing at prayer by the Kabah, so I stood near him. God had decreed that I should hear something of his speech and I heard a beautiful saying. So I said to myself: God bless my soul! Here am I, an intelligent man, a poet, knowing perfectly well the difference between good and evil, so what is to prevent me from listening to what this man is saying? If it is good I shall accept it; if it is bad I shall reject it.

I stayed until the Messenger went to his house. I followed him and entered his house with him. I told him what his people had said and that they had so scared me that I had stuffed cotton in my ears lest I should hear what he was saying. But God had not allowed me

to remain deaf and I heard a beautiful saying. I said: So explain the matter to me. The Messenger explained the Quranic message to me and recited the Quran to me. By God I never heard anything finer nor anything more just. So I became a Muslim and bore true witness.

I said: O Prophet of God, I am a man of authority among my people and when I go back and call them to the Quranic message, pray to God to give me a sign which will help me when I preach to them. He said: O God give him a sign.

So I went back to my people and when I came to the pass which would bring me down to the settlement a light like a lamp played between my eyes and I said: O God, not in my face! for I fear that they will think that a dire punishment has befallen my face because I have left their religion. So the light moved and lighted on the top of my whip. The people began to look at that light attached to my whip like a candle while I was coming down from the pass to them.

When I got down my father came to me (he was a very old man) and I said: Be off with you, father, for I have nothing to do with you or you with me!

But why, my son? said he.

I said: I have become a Muslim and follow the religion of Muhammad.

He said: All right, my son, then my religion is your religion.

So I said: Then go and wash yourself and clean your clothes; then come and I will teach you what I have been taught.

He did so; I explained the Quranic message to him and he became a Muslim.

Then my wife came to me and I said: Be off with you, for I have nothing to do with you or you with me.

Why? she said: My father and mother be your ransom!

I said: The Quranic message has divided us and I follow the religion of Muhammad.

She said: Then my religion is your religion.

I said: Then go to Dhu al-Shara and cleanse yourself from it.

Now Dhu al-Shara was an image belonging to Daus and the *himd* was the temenos which they had made sacred to him; in it there was a trickle of water from a rivulet from the mountain.

She asked me urgently: Have you any fear from Dhu al-Shara on my account?

No, I said: I will go surety for that.

So she went and washed and when she returned I explained the Quranic message to her and she became a Muslim.

Then I preached the Quranic message to Daus, but they held back. I went to the Messenger in Makkah and said: O Prophet of

God, frivolous preoccupation has been too much for me with Daus, so invoke a curse on them. But he said: O God, guide Daus! Go back to your people and preach to them gently.[29]

LEAVING THE HOUSE OF ARQAM AND GOING PUBLIC

After Hamza and Umar bear witness, the Messenger leaves house of Arqam and practices openly in the Kabah. Of such great importance was the conversions of Hamza and Umar, that the Muslims were not able to practice openly and without fear in Makkah. The Messenger abandoned the house of Arqam and no longer concealed their formal prayers within their own homes. They would assemble together around the Kabah. This caused further dread among the Quraysh idolaters.[30]

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR) SIGNS 15:61-15:79

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:61)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:62)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:63)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:64)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:65)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:66)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:67)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:68)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:71)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:72)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:75)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:76)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) Companions of the Woods (15:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) Companions of the Woods ((15:79)

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR) SIGNS 15:80-15:99

Makkah: Book 25: Companions of the Rocky Tract (15:80)
Makkah: Book 25: Companions of the Rocky Tract (15:81)

Makkah: Book 25: Companions of the Rocky Tract (15:82)
Makkah: Book 25: Companions of the Rocky Tract (15:83)
Makkah: *And availed them not what they had been earning.* (15:84)
And We created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is in between them but with The Truth. And, truly, the Hour is one that arrives.
So overlook with a graceful overlooking. (15:85)
*Truly, **your** Lord is The Knowing Creator.* (15:86)
Madinah: (15:87)
Makkah: *And stretch not out **your** eyes*
for what We gave of enjoyment in this life
to spouses among them, nor feel remorse for them,
*but make low **your** wing in kindness to the ones who believe.* (15:88)
And say: Truly, I am a clear warner, (15:89)
even as We caused to descend on
the ones who are partitioners, (15:90)
those who made the Quran into fragments. (15:91)
*So by **your** Lord, We will, certainly, ask them one and all* (15:92)
about what they had been doing. (15:93)
*So call aloud what **you** are commanded:*
Turn aside from the ones who are polytheists! (15:94)
*Truly, We sufficed **you** against the ones who ridicule,* (15:95)
those who make with God another god. But they will know. (15:96)
*And, certainly, We know that **your** breast became narrowed, injured in spirit, because of what they say.* (15:97)
*So glorify the praises of **your** Lor*
and be among the ones who prostrate themselves (15:98)
*and worship **your** Lord until the certainty approaches **you**.* (15:99)

COMMENTARY°

The comment stating the truth which sustains the heavens and the earth, and which was the basis of their creation has great significance. (15:85-15:86) It is given in a remarkable expression. Let us look at what this verse implies: *And We created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is in between them but with The Truth. And, truly, the Hour is one that arrives. So overlook with a graceful overlooking.* (15:85) It implies that the truth is central to the design, structure and management of the universe, central to its destiny and the destiny of all that it contains.

WHEN THE PROPHET IS IN DISTRESS

The Prophet is told to show kindness to the believers. The Quran expresses this sentence in a figurative way, telling the Prophet to "*but*

*make low **your** wing in kindness to the ones who believe.*" (15:88) This is an image denoting gentle treatment and good care of the believers. The Prophet is also instructed to say: "I am indeed the plain warner." This is the essential method of advocating the divine message. The warning is mentioned here on its own without adding the rejoinder of giving good and happy news. The warning is more suited here as the context mentions those who deride the truth, indulge in their worldly enjoyments and never contemplate the truth which is the basis of both the divine message and the existence of the universe.

"And say: *And say: Truly, I am a clear warner.* (15:89) This is the word every messenger has said to his people, including those who remain from old communities to whom messengers were sent with a reminder similar to the one Muhammad brought. Among such people in Arabia were some Christians and Jews who were not ready to accept the Quran with complete submission. They accepted parts of it and rejected others, as their prejudice dictated. These are the ones whom God describes here as the ones who break [God's revelation] into parts.

Just as We have bestowed from on high on those who later broke it into parts, and declare the Quran to be a confused medley. But, by your Lord, We will call them all to account for whatever they have done. (15:90-15:93) This chapter is a Makkan revelation, but the Quran addresses mankind generally. These were human beings who divided the Quran into parts, and they are responsible for their actions. The Quran has served a clear warning on them, as did their own scriptures. The Quran and the Prophet were not unfamiliar to them. God had formerly revealed scriptures to them. Therefore, they should have received the new revelations with acceptance and submission.

At this point the address turns directly to the Prophet, instructing him to continue along the way defined for him, proclaiming what God has commanded him to convey to people. Making the proclamation is described in Arabic as a term which also means 'break', to denote a strong and solid stand. He must not be deterred from making such a proclamation or be deflected from his way by the unbelief of an idolater or the ridicule of those who deride his message. God will protect him against these: *So call aloud what **you** are commanded: Turn aside from the ones who are polytheists! Truly, We sufficed **you** against the ones who ridicule, those who make with God another god. But they will know.* (15:94-15:96)

The Prophet is a human being who cannot help but be distressed when he hears people ascribing divinity to beings other than God, or deriding his message. He is eager to defend the truth and his message,

and is upset at all the falsehood and idolatry around him. He is, therefore, instructed to glorify his Lord and praise Him. Such glorification and worship will shield him against the evil he hears. Hence he should not stop praising his Lord and extolling His glory until that which is absolutely certain, i.e. death, arrives and he is gathered to His Lord: *And, certainly, We know that your breast became narrowed, injured in spirit, because of what they say. So glorify the praises of your Lord and be among the ones who prostrate themselves and worship your Lord until the certainty approaches you.* (15:97-15:99)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:84-15:99

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

God gave you, Muhammad, seven often repeated parts of the sublime Quran. Be kind to ones who belive. Say: I am a clear warner. Turn aside from the idolaters. Call aloud, Muhammad, what you are commanded. We suffice you against the ones who ridicule. We know that your breast, Muhammad, became narrow, injured in spirit, because of what they say. Glorify the praises of your Lord. Be among the ones who prostrate themselves. Worship your Lord, Muhammad, until the certainty approaches you.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

All will be asked about what they were doing.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran reiterates that the Hour is that which will come. How does the Quranic message tell the Prophet to behave towards the ungrateful? Be graciously forgiving of them as their fate rests with God. The fate of everyone is in the hands of God. We are not responsible for the actions of others. We are each responsible for our own actions. The Hour will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes Ie worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO *BOOK YEAR 6*

1. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad.*
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhri from Abu Bakr ibn Abdul-Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi from Umm Salama d. Abu Umayya ibn al-Mughayra wife of the Messenger said this.
18. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad.*
19. See Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation.*
20. Ibid.
21. See *Book Year 12* regarding the Journey by Night.
22. The Prophet says in regard to 17:34: Everything that belongs to a Muslim is forbidden to be taken away by another: His blood, honor and property.
23. The Prophet says in regard to 17:35: Anyone who is able to secure unlawful gain yet abandons this for no reason other than fearing God will certainly receive from God what is better than such gain here in this life, before they receive their reward in the life to come.
24. Refrain from assumption, for assumption is the basis of the worst lies. Another hadith related by Abu Dawud quotes the Prophet as saying: It is indeed a bad practice for a person to always begin his statements with, 'it is claimed." In another hadith the Prophet said: The worst falsehood is that a person makes his eyes see what they have not seen.
25. Abu Bakr al-Harithi informed us> Abul-Shaykh al-Hafiz> Muhammad ibn Sulayman> Abd Allah ibn Hazim al-Ayli> Badal ibn al- Muhabbar> Shubah> Aban> Mujahid who said this regarding this sign.
26. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civiliation in Islam.*
27. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad.*
28. Al-Bakka said: Misar ibn Kidam from Sad ibn Ibrahim said that Abdullah ibn Masud said this; Abdul Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Abdullah ibn Ayyash ibn Abu Rabia from Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullah ibn Amir ibn Rabia from his mother Umm Abdullah bint Abu Hathma said.
29. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 232.
30. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad.*

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 1

Laleh Bakhtiar

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 7 of the Revelation (7 BH/615-616 CE)

Revised Edition

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 7

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

The Year 7, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 7 BH/September 30, 615 CE-September 18, 616 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

to be significant: ahl)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: 'dhara'a)
7. Right Judgment (rushd)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**
   - Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqlī*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqlī*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

Obstacles to Correct Reasoning

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a*

clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and

taqlid and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment,

but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations

of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today

are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on compre-

hension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 7*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 7* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 7*, we begin with Lesson 55, that is, Quran Chapter 6 which is the 55th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapter 37, Lesson 56.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 55(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment. They need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and offers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

HISTORY

Ibn Ishaq says regarding 6:8: I have heard that the Messenger passed by al-Walid ibn al-Mughayra and Umayya ibn Khalaf and Abu Jahl ibn Hisham and they reviled and mocked him, and this caused him distress. So God sent down to him concerning this: (6:10)

The Messenger called his people to the Quranic message and preached to them: To Zamaa ibn al-Aswad, al-Nadr ibn al-Harith, al-Aswad ibn Abd al-Yaghuth, Ubayy ibn Khalaf, and al-As ibn Wail said: O Muhammad, if an angel had been sent with **you** to speak to men about **you** and to be seen with **you**! Then God sent down concerning these words of theirs: (6:8-6:9)

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:1-6:10

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God*
Who created the heavens and the earth
and made the shadows and the light.
Again, those who were ungrateful to their Lord,
they equate others to Him. (6:1)
It was He Who created you from clay,
and, again, decided a term,
a term, that which was determined by Him.
Again, you contest. (6:2)
And He is God in the heavens and in and on the earth.
He knows your secret and what you openly publish
and He knows whatever you earn. (6:3)
And a sign not approaches for them
from the signs of their Lord
but they would be ones who turn aside from it. (6:4)
Then, surely, they denied The Truth
when it drew near to them.

Then, tidings approach them of what
they had been ridiculing of it. (6:5)
Consider they not
how many a generation before them We caused to perish?
We established them firmly in and on the earth
such as We firmly establish not for you.
And We sent abundant rain from heaven.
And We made rivers run beneath them.
So We caused them to perish for their impieties
and We caused to grow after them other generations. (6:6)
*And if We sent down to **you** a Book on parchment,*
then, they would have stretched towards it with their hands.
Those who were ungrateful would have said:
This is nothing but clear sorcery. (6:7)
And they said: Why was an angel
not caused to descend to him?
And, certainly, if We caused to descend an angel,
the command would be decided.
Again, no respite would be given to them. (6:8)
And if We made him an angel, certainly,
We would have made him as a man
and We would have confused them
when they are already confused. (6:9)
*And, certainly, Messengers were ridiculed before **you**.*
So those who derided them were surrounded
by what they had been ridiculing. (6:10)

COMMENTARY°

A FRAMEWORK IS SET

The three opening signs strike the basic notes as they lay the foundation for the subject matter of the section, namely, faith. (6:1-6:3)

The section begins with praising God and glorifying Him as only He, the Creator and Originator of all things, deserves to be praised and glorified.

It then wonders at those people who behold this awesome existence, itself a great testimony to the infinite ability of the Supreme Creator and His faultless planning, but who still refuse to believe in God, acknowledge His Oneness or praise Him. Instead, they associate partners with Him whom they allege to be His equals: *Again, those who were ungrateful to their Lord, they equate others to Him.* (6:1)

The picture continues to unfold with its reference to human existence which follows the existence of the universe and the two phe-

nomena of darkness and light. This is a remarkable Quranic touch taking us from the darkness of clay to the light of active life. We perceive here the full artistic harmony at work, with the reference to darkness and light made at the outset.

Another closely intertwined subtlety prepares us for a first term appointed for death and a second term appointed for resurrection known only to God. We, thus, have two contrasting notions to contemplate, namely idleness and movement and a dull clay contrasted with life created by God. The gap between these opposites both in time and nature, is wide indeed. All this should inspire every human heart with the certainty that it is all part of God's scheme and that we will all be gathered to Him. Yet those who are addressed by this section continue to have doubts: *Again, you contest.* (6:2)

A third touch in these short signs combines the two previous ones within the same framework, making it clear that God is the only deity in the whole universe, including the human world: *And He is God in the heavens and in and on the earth. He knows your secret and what you openly publish and He knows whatever you earn.* (6:3)

The ungrateful Arabs addressed initially by this section did not deny God's existence altogether. Indeed, they acknowledged His existence and that He was the Creator who provided sustenance to His creation, and who owned the universe and caused life and death. They acknowledged many of His attributes as the Quran states. The reason then for classifying them as ungrateful was their unwillingness to come to the logical conclusion of God's actual existence, in other words, that God must be given authority over their whole lives, without their associating any partners with Him in that.

This passage of the section portrays this unreasonable stubbornness, issuing on the one hand a stern warning and on the other a reminder of the fate of earlier rejecters. The admonition is stacked with various but highly effective touches that follow the initial jolt that shakes people's hearts at the outset of the section.

SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND THE DECLINE OF NATIONS

Signs (6:4-6:6) are clear that turning away from the truth is an obstinate position taken by the ungrateful and this in the face of all the evidence pointing to its error. They do not lack signs and pointers which guide people to faith, nor do they lack evidence to prove the truth of the message and the genuine honesty of the Messenger conveying it, nor do they lack evidence of God. These are the basic concepts they are called upon to accept.

All they lack is the will to respond to clear evidence, overcome irrational stubbornness and reflect on the truth presented to them:

And a sign not approaches for them from the signs of their Lord but they would be ones who turn aside from it. (6:4) Such deliberate obstinacy against all evidence and clear signs needs the threat of severe punishment to jolt them out of their attitude, remove the barriers of their conceit and reawaken their natural responses: *Then, surely, they denied The Truth when it drew near to them. Then, tidings approach them of what they had been ridiculing of it.* (6:5)

Their attentions and minds are drawn to the calamities that befell past nations which, like them, rejected the truth. They even had some knowledge of those nations and what happened to them in the remains of the people of Aad of al-Ahqaf and Thamud of al-Hijr. The Arabs of Makkah used to pass by these remains when they went on their winter and summer journeys to Yemen and Syria respectively. They also passed by the destroyed towns of the Prophet Lot's people, Sodom and Gomorrah, and were aware of the tales that were in circulation concerning what happened to those people. They should, therefore, reflect on these peoples' fate: *So We caused them to perish for their impieties and We caused to grow after them other generations.* (6:6)

People are often deceived when they see a despotic ruler, a corrupt or atheist person enjoying power on earth, able to escape punishment. But people are hasty. They see only the beginning or the middle of the route but not its end to which such person arrives at the appropriate time. We can see examples of it in how ancient generations who defied God and His messengers were destroyed. In the Quran, our attention is drawn to their fates so that we realize that the end is not what we see at a particular point in time. The statement: *So We caused them to perish for their impieties* is often repeated in the Quran in a variety of ways. Such repetition aims to establish a certain fact and to clarify a part of the Quranic interpretation of historical events. It shows that sins do destroy sinners and that it is God who brings about their destruction. This is a law which remains in operation although an individual or a generation may not see it within their own limited life span. It simply engulfs nations when they allow sins to become an essential part of their lifestyle.

STUBBORN REJECTION OF EVIDENT FACTS

The section goes on to describe the nature of obstinate rejection, delineating for us a very strange type of people whom we meet in every age and every community. These are people who deny what is so clear and undeniable. The Quran depicts this type of people in its own inimitable style, using only a few words to bring it to life in front of our eyes: *And if We sent down to you a Book on parchment,*

then, they would have stretched towards it with their hands. (6:7)

What causes them to turn away from God's revelations is not the lack of strong and clear evidence of their truthfulness. They are only being unreasonably stubborn. Their denial is firmly held as though it was a matter of principle. Such an attitude allows no consideration of any evidence or proof. Had God chosen to send down the Quran to His Messenger by means other than revelation, which they cannot see, and put it on paper which they can feel and see, and had they touched this paper with their own hands, they would still reject the evidence of their own hands and eyes. They would emphatically claim: *Those who were ungrateful would have said: This is nothing but clear sorcery.* (6:7)

The section then gives us an example of the suggestions made by the ungrateful, and this reveals both their hardened stubbornness and their ignorance. They suggest that an angel could have accompanied the Prophet in conveying his message to give proof that he was truly God's Messenger. The reply shows how ignorant they were of the angels' nature and why God sent them to do the tasks He assigned to them. It is only because of His mercy that God does not act on their suggestion: (6:8-6:9)

This was not a new suggestion made by the Quraysh ungrateful. Many communities before them had muted the same as we are told in the Quran. The suggestion and the Quranic reply to it at this point raise a number of issues, as we will presently see.

Firstly, the pagan Arabs did not deny God altogether, but they wanted proof that the Prophet Muhammad was truly His Messenger and that the book he recited to them was truly revealed to him by God. They wanted a particular proof, namely, that an angel be sent to him to confirm his claim. This was just one of the numerous suggestions reported in the Quran.

Moreover, they had in the Quran itself a proof which was more telling than the material proofs they demanded. In itself, and in its inimitable style, the Quran tells that it has been revealed by God whose existence they did not deny. Most assuredly, they realized this and knew it for certain. They possessed a fine literary and artistic sense which must have made it clear to them that, in its excellence, the Quran greatly surpassed the farthest limits of human ability. A person who has the gift of artistic expression is better able to recognize and appreciate this than one who has not. Anyone with this gift will tell us clearly that the Quran surpasses all that human literary excellence can produce. No one denies this except a person who deliberately tries to suppress what he knows.

Moreover, the contents of the Quran, i.e. the concepts of faith

and the method it utilises to drive these concepts home to people, as also its touches and influences, were all totally new to human minds. They were unknown in human artistic expression. The Arabs were not unaware of all these facts. They recognized them within themselves. Their statements and attitudes showed that they did not doubt that the Quran was revealed by God.

All this makes it clear that, in point of fact, their suggestions were not made to seek a proof. They were simply born out of an unyielding stubbornness. Their position was truly as God describes in the preceding sign: (6:7)

A World of Creation Beyond Human Senses

The second issue was that the Arabs knew about the angels and requested that God should send down an angel to support His Messenger and confirm the truth of his message. They knew nothing, however, of the nature of this type of creation, i.e. the angels, which is known only to God. Therefore, they formulated their own arbitrary conceptions of these creatures and the sort of relationship which existed between them and their Lord on the one hand, and with the earth and its inhabitants on the other. The Quran refers to the Arabian misconceptions about the angels and the legends of pagan nations. It points out their errors so that anyone who is guided to accept the Quranic message will revise their concepts about the universe and its creatures.

One of the Arabs' ill-conceived concepts, identified in the Quran as having been formulated in their pre-Quranic days, was their belief that the angels were God's daughters. As such, they believed angels were able to intercede with God and their intercession was never refused. It is thought that some of the more important idols were symbols of angels.

The Quran also provides the true facts, correcting the erroneous concept of the ungrateful about the angels' nature. This is provided in these two signs in this section as it is given elsewhere in the Quran: *And, certainly, if We caused to descend an angel, the command would be decided. Again, no respite would be given to them.* (6:8) This is part of the information provided in the Quran on the nature of the angels created by God.

The other part of the definition of the angels as God's own servants is provided by the second sign: *And if We made him an angel, certainly, We would have made him as a man and We would have confused them when they are already confused.* (6:9)

Therefore, if God wanted to send an angel to confirm His Prophet's message, that angel would have appeared to humanity in

the form of a person, not in his own angelic form. This would have made the confusion persist, especially when Muhammad would sometimes say to them: I am Muhammad whom you have known very well. God has sent me as a messenger to warn you and give you happy news. How much greater would their confusion be if an angel came to them in the form of a person whom they did not know and said: I am an angel sent by God to confirm the message preached by His Messenger? To them, that angel would only appear as a person like them. They were confusing simple facts. If God were to send an angel, He would have given it human form and would have confused the very thing the ungrateful were themselves confusing. They would not have been able to see right guidance.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that previous Messengers were also ridiculed. What happened to those who ridiculed the Messengers? All Messengers were ridiculed. Those who ridicule the Messengers will be surrounded themselves by what they ridicule. Ridiculing or deriding others is not a good deed. Messengers in the past were ridiculed. Those who ridicule will be surrounded by what they had ridiculed.

ONE POSSIBLE EXAMPLE

Purpose: Previous Messengers were also ridiculed. **Question:** What happened to those who ridiculed the Messengers? **Fact:** All Messengers were ridiculed. **Interpretation:** Those who ridicule the Messengers will be sur-

rounded themselves by what they ridicule. **Concept:** Ridiculing or deriding others is not a good deed. **Assumption:** That Messengers in the past were ridiculed. **Implication:** Those who ridicule will be surrounded by what they had ridiculed.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. Most of us waste some time; that is, fail to use all of our time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 55(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

HISTORY

Let us now consider a number of Hadith which give us an insight into how the Prophet portrayed God's purpose so as to make it properly appreciated by ordinary people.

Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet as saying: When God created His creation, He wrote in a book which He keeps with Him above the Throne: My grace overspeeds My anger.[1]

In another version related by al- Bukhari, the last sentence is quoted as: My grace oversteps My anger.[2]

Both al-Bukhari and Muslim relate on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that God's Messenger said that: God has made mercy into one hundred parts. He then retained ninety-nine parts and placed on earth one part. It is from that one part that creatures show mercy to one another, to the extent that a female animal lifts its hoof away from its young in order not to harm it.

Muslim also relates on the authority of Salman that God's Messenger said: God has one hundred acts of mercy. One of these is the one by which creatures show mercy to one another. The other ninety-nine parts are reserved to the Day of Judgment.[3]

In yet another hadith related by Muslim,[4] we read: When God created the heavens and the earth, He also created one hundred mercies, each one of them filled the space between the heavens and the earth. He placed one mercy on earth. It is through this that a mother is compassionate to her baby, and so are wild beasts and birds. On the Day of Judgment, God complements them with this one mercy.[5]

This is an inspiring description by the Prophet, one which makes it easy for the human mind to visualize the extent of God's grace. We only need to reflect on how mothers are so kind-hearted to their youngsters and the sympathy and kindness people show towards the very young and very old, the sick and the invalid, and to relatives

and friends. We should also contemplate how birds and animals sometimes manifest their mercy to one another in amazing ways. Now let us consider that all this mercy is the result of a single part out of one hundred parts of God's mercy. We can, thus, appreciate the extent of God's abounding, and inexhaustible grace.

Having taught his Companions this important fact and its great significance in such an inspiring way, God's Messenger moved them on another step so that they became merciful in their dealings with others and so that they were compassionate to one another and to all living things. The Prophet wanted them to enjoy the happiness of being merciful, just as they were happy to appreciate the extent of God's grace.

Abd Allah ibn Amr quotes the Prophet as saying: The merciful are granted mercy by God. Show mercy to those on earth so that you are shown mercy by the One in heaven.[6] Jarir quotes God's Messenger as saying: God does not bestow His grace on those who do not show mercy to people.[7] Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet as saying: No one but a miserable creature is deprived of mercy.[8]

In teaching his Companions, the Prophet did not stop at extending mercy to humanity. He was fully aware that God's grace encompasses everything, and that the believers are required to cultivate within themselves the moral principles which form the attributes of God. We do not attain our full humanity unless we are merciful to every living thing. The Prophet's instructions in this regard were, as always, highly inspiring.

Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet as saying: A man was traveling along a road when he was very thirsty. He found a well, so he went down into it to drink. As he came up he found a gasping dog who was apparently so thirsty that he licked the dust. The man thought: This dog is now as thirsty as I was a short while ago. Therefore, he went down the well again and filled his shoe with water. Holding it in his mouth, he came up and gave the water to the dog to drink. God rewarded him for his action by forgiving him. The Prophet's audience asked: Messenger of God, are we to be rewarded for kindness to animals? He answered: You get a reward for every kindness you do to any living creature.[9]

Such was the Prophet's method in cultivating among his Companions a keen sense of appreciation of Quranic guidance. This enabled them to appreciate how limitless God's grace is, through their own mercy to one another. It was clear to them that all aspects of mercy in their world come only from one out of a hundred parts of God's mercy.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:11-6:20

Makkah: *Say: Journey through the earth;*
again, look on how had been
the Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (6:11)
Say: To whom is whatever is in the heavens and the earth?
Say: To God. He prescribed mercy for Himself.
He will, certainly, gather you on the Day of Resurrection.
There is no doubt in it. Those who lost themselves that Day,
then, they will not believe. (6:12)
And to Him belongs whatever inhabited
the nighttime and the daytime.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (6:13)
Say: Will I take to myself, other than God, a protector,
One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth?
And it is He who feeds and He who is never fed.
Say: Truly, I was commanded:
that I be the first who submitted to the One God.
*And **you** have not been*
among the ones who are idolaters. (6:14)
Say: Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord,
the punishment of the tremendous Day! (6:15)
He who is turned away from it on that Day,
then, surely, He had mercy on him.
And that is the winning the clear triumph. (6:16)
*And if God touches **you** with harm,*
then, no one will remove it but He.
*And if He touches **you** with good, then,*
He is Powerful over everything. (6:17)
He is The One Who is Omniscient over His servants.
And He is The Wise, The Aware. (6:18)
Say: Which thing is greater in testimony?
Say: God is Witness between me and you.
And this, the Quran, was revealed to me
that I should warn you with it and whomever it reached.
Truly, are you bearing witness
that there are other gods with God?
Say: I bear not such witness.
Say: He is not but One God
and I am, truly, free from partners you ascribe with Him. (6:19)
Madinah (6:20)

COMMENTARY°

Immediately after that another wave begins, defining the truth of God as it is clearly reflected in God's ownership of everything in the heavens and earth, and what takes its rest at night or day. It is also seen in the fact that God is the only one who provides for all creation, the one who feeds them and is fed by none. Hence, He is the only guardian and the only protector, to whom all creatures must submit themselves. It is He who punishes the disobedient ones in the life to come, who can bring benefit and cause harm, and who has power over all things: (6:12-6:19)

The early passages in this chapter sound like waves following one another in quick succession. Rising high and with a deep, mysterious rhythm, this third wave comes after a discussion about denying the truth of the Quranic message, turning away from it, meeting its advocates with derision and ridicule. The discussion in the earlier passage included very strong threats and a reminder of the fate of earlier nations that took a similar attitude to God's messages. The first passage, representing the first wave, discussed the truth of God as reflected in the creation of the wide universe and highly complex human beings. This new wave also discusses the same truth of God but it includes different aspects, employing different rhythms and a new inspiration. Thus, the discussion on denying the truth comes in between the opening and the present passages, and this adds to its unpleasant reality.

When the presentation is completed, the conclusion is given with increased rhythm, calling out witnesses to God's Oneness and denouncing the very thought of associating partners with Him, all this within a clear demarcation of positions. Here again the strong rhythm is enhanced by the repeated order, 'Say... Say... Say...'. Thus, the passage delivers a sense of awe and seriousness.

A COMMITMENT MADE BY GOD

Here (6:12-6:13), the section adopts an attitude of confrontation that aims to state the issues very clearly before drawing the lines that separate the believers from all others. It gives the Prophet certain instructions to take up this confrontation with those who are fully aware that God is the Creator of the whole universe, but who, nevertheless, worship other beings even though these have no power to create anything equal to Him. That is, they associate partners with Him whom they claim have a say in how they conduct their lives. The Prophet is instructed to confront them with a question about the ownership, which follows creation, of everything in the heavens and

on earth. As the question is put, it is meant to include every single element in the whole universe. It is followed by a statement of fact over which they did not and could not argue. The Quran tells us elsewhere that they used to acknowledge it fully: (6:12)

The Quranic sign follows this statement asserting God's ownership of the heavens and earth by stating that: *He prescribed mercy for Himself.* (6:12) He is the sole, undisputed owner of the whole universe. He, however, out of His generosity and by His own will, has committed Himself to bestow grace and mercy. No one could suggest this exercise of bestowing grace to Him or require it of Him, apart from His absolutely freewill and His compassionate lordship over the universe.

If we were to try to make an exhaustive list of the incidents and occasions wherein God bestows His mercy and how it is reflected in life, we would need to devote our whole lives to it. Indeed, generations can come and go before this task could be accomplished. In every moment God's grace is showered over people. We have only identified that mercy which is reflected in hard tests, because often people do not see it as such. We have no intention to attempt a full list of the occasions and the incidents where God's mercy is brought into action. We will instead only make some brief references to it. However, we need to reflect a little on the way this Quranic statement is phrased: *He prescribed mercy for Himself.* (6:12) The same statement is repeated again in Verse 54 of this chapter with a slight variation: *Your Lord prescribed mercy for Himself.* (6:54)

When All Gather for Judgment

Before God favored the Arabs with this religion and elevated them to its noble level, they used to deny the Day of Resurrection in the same way as the proponents of the present-day tribal honor deny it. Hence, this fact of gathering God's creatures has been expressed in the most emphatic style: *He will, certainly, gather you on the Day of Resurrection. There is no doubt in it. Those who lost themselves that Day, then, they will not believe.*(6:12)

The only losers on that day are those who have not believed during this life. These shall not gain anything to compensate for their loss, because they have lost everything. Indeed, they have lost themselves and are no longer capable of anything. After all, we try to make a gain for ourselves. When we have lost our own soul, what can we gain? And for whom? *Those who lost themselves that Day, then, they will not believe.* (6:12)

The section then refers to all creatures in terms of time, as it has referred to them in terms of place in the preceding sign. It states that

God, limitless is He in His glory, owns them all, has full knowledge of them and hears everything they say and do: *And to Him belongs whatever inhabited the nighttime and the daytime.* (6:13)

The Arabic term used in the Quranic sign and rendered here by the phrase: Takes its rest also means in inhabit. The reference in the sign is then made to every creature that rests at night or in the day. As such, it includes all creatures. The Quranic sign states the fact that they all belong to God alone. This is the second statement of this fact although it came in the first sign in terms of place: *Say: To whom is whatever is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To God.* (6:12) The reference here, in the second sign, is made in terms of time: *And to Him belongs whatever inhabited the nighttime and the daytime. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (6:13) This tendency to include all, and to use every aspect, is perfectly familiar in the Quran.

The final comment is that which concerns God's attributes of The Hearing and The Knowing. It implies having complete and perfect knowledge of all these creatures and all that is said about them by the ungrateful. The ungrateful Arabs used to acknowledge that the Creator and the Owner is one.

GOD'S ONENESS: THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

So far, the basic fact that God is the only Creator and the only owner of everything that exists in the universe has been established. This is now followed by a strong denunciation of seeking support from, or addressing worship to, anyone other than God. All such deeds contradict the fundamental fact of submission to God since they are acts of idolatry that do not fit with the Quranic message. A number of God's attributes are also stated here, including that He is the Creator of the heavens and earth, the sustainer of all, the Almighty. The general air of awe is enhanced by a mention of God's severe punishment: (6:14-6:18)

This is, indeed, the basic issue: taking God alone for our Master, or *wali*, in every sense of the word. He alone is the Lord to be worshipped. We submit to Him as He is the only Sovereign. No support may be sought from anyone other than Him. In every grave situation, we appeal to Him alone for help.

This fundamental issue is stated in these signs in the strongest terms and is contained within a powerful rhythm: *Say: Will I take to myself, other than God, a protector, One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth? And it is He who feeds and He who is never fed.* (6:14)

This Quranic sign reflects human nature's powerful logic. To whom does mastery belong and who alone is to be viewed as patron,

if not the Creator who has originated the heavens and the earth? To whom, if not to the One who provides sustenance and nourishment to every creature in the heavens and on earth while He Himself needs none? *Say: Will I take to myself, other than God, a protector, One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth?* when such are His attributes? What logic allows that anyone other than God be taken as master?

This is followed by another instruction to the Prophet: *Say: Truly, I was commanded: that I be the first who submitted to the One God And you have not been among the ones who are idolaters.* (6:14) To submit oneself to God and not to associate partners with Him means that we must not accept anyone other than God as a master. To do so is to be guilty of idolatry and idolatry cannot be equated with the Quran.

The Prophet was commanded to make this powerful and decisive denunciation of their beliefs and to state the principles of the Quranic message in the clearest of terms. He was also ordered to warn and frighten the ungrateful, declaring at the same time how seriously he viewed the whole issue and how he dreaded God's punishment, should he be guilty of disobedience to Him: *Say: Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord, the punishment of the tremendous Day! He who is turned away from it on that Day, then, surely, He had mercy on him. And that is the winning the clear triumph.* (6:15-6:16)

But why should the human being take a master for himself other than God? Why does he allow himself to sink into ingratitude when he has been forbidden to do so? Why does he not do what he is commanded to do, namely to submit himself to God? Why does he expose himself to the grievous torment which follows upon such disobedience? Does he think that people will come to his help if he experiences misfortune? Or does he hope to receive kindness from them? All this can only be granted to him by God, who has supreme power and who can cause everything to happen and who holds sway over all His creatures. It is He alone who grants and denies people's wishes according to His wisdom and His knowledge of their conditions: *And if God touches you with harm, then, no one will remove it but He. And if He touches you with good, then, He is Powerful over everything. He is The One Who is Omniscient over His servants. And He is The Wise, The Aware.*(6:17-6:18)

Here we see how the Quran penetrates the depth of the human soul to touch on its latent desires and innermost fears. It brings all this into the open and subjects it to the light of faith which distinguishes good from evil. It presents the issues clearly and defines the

nature of God succinctly. This fits well with the importance of the central question with which the section deals at this point and which the Quran tackles on many occasions.

A TESTIMONY TO SETTLE ALL ISSUES

Now comes the climax of this passage, which employs a profound rhythm so as to re-emphasize the right attitude of a believer. The final sign of the passage serves as a clear statement of position, a warning and a move away from everything that has an element of setting partners with God. The style here is both strong and decisive: *Say: Which thing is greater in testimony? Say: God is Witness between me and you. And this, the Quran, was revealed to me that I should warn you with it and whomever it reached. Truly, are you bearing witness that there are other gods with God? Say: I bear not such witness. Say: He is not but One God and I am, truly, free from partners you ascribe with Him.*(6:19)

These signs are made up of a series of short statements which follow each other in very quick succession. This, to give us quick images of the different attitudes which can be held in relation to the central issue. Nevertheless, the painting is so vivid that we can see all expressions on the faces of the characters drawn and we can even penetrate their thoughts. What we see first is a command given by God to His Messenger. This is immediately followed by a scene wherein God's Messenger confronts the ungrateful who are associating partners with God and who want him, i.e. the Prophet, to endorse their falsehood before they accept his message. They imagine that such an exchange is feasible and that the Quran and idolatry can exist side by side in someone's heart. It is sad to say that some people still think that this is possible. They argue that a person can submit himself to God while he conducts his life on the basis of teachings he receives from other sources and while he acknowledges the authority of other powers and seeks the help and patronage of other beings.

Thus, God's Messenger confronts the ungrateful. He makes it clear to them that he and they follow two separate roads that cannot meet. He outlines the difference between what he advocates of believing in God's Oneness and submitting to Him and their beliefs and practices which associate partners with God. He tells them that the starting points of both camps are so wide apart that no compromise between them can be worked out unless they abandon their beliefs and accept His faith.

This confrontation is depicted in a public scene calling for an open testimony: *Say: Which thing is greater in testimony?* (6:19)

Who is the best witness in the whole universe? Who is the One whose testimony refutes every other argument? Who has the final word? In order to make the generalization total so that nothing in the whole universe is discounted as a possible witness, the question is asked in this manner: *Say: Which thing is greater in testimony?* (6:19)

The Prophet is ordered to put the question, and he is also ordered to provide the answer. The addressees themselves acknowledge that there is no other answer to give: *Say: God is Witness between me and you. And this, the Quran, was revealed to me that I should warn you with it and whomever it reached.* (6:19)

Having declared this indisputable fact, that God's testimony is strongest and weightiest, the Prophet declares that God Almighty is the witness between them and Him in this central issue: *Say: God is Witness between me and you.* (6:19) The Arabic text admits a break in this statement, making it more in line with the general scene and giving it a more powerful and dramatic effect. In the first instance, the sentence is given in the same way as it is rendered in the translation: *Say: God is Witness between me and you.* (6:19) If we break it up, it reads as follows: *Say: Which thing is greater in testimony? Say: God is Witness between me and you.* (6:19)

When the principle of referring to God for arbitration in this central issue has been established, the Prophet declares to the ungrateful that God's testimony is included in the Quran which He has revealed to him to warn them as well as everyone who comes to know of the Quran during the Prophet's lifetime or subsequently. Thus, the Quran is taken in evidence against them and against all those whom it reaches, because it contains God's testimony in this central issue which provides the basis of human existence and universal existence as a whole. *And this, the Quran, was revealed to me that I should warn you with it and whomever it reached.* (6:19)

Having made it clear to them that God's testimony is included in the Quran, the Prophet goes on to sum up this testimony in a challenging way which discards the ungrateful' own testimony, since it is fundamentally at variance with God's own. The Prophet also declares to them that he totally rejects their assertions and believes them to be false. He further declares that he firmly believes in the Oneness of God, the Supreme Lord of the universe. As such, he parts company with them at the outset and dissociates himself most emphatically from their polytheism: *Truly, are you bearing witness that there are other gods with God? Say: I bear not such witness. Say: He is not but One God and I am, truly, free from partners you ascribe with Him.* (6:19)

With such powerful rhythm and short, emphatic sentences, the

Quranic text touches people's hearts in a way no other style can do.

A PERFECTLY CLEAR ATTITUDE

The situation of humanity today is in many ways identical to what it was at the time when the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. At that time, the Quran, as a faith and a code of living was established on a central principle which required people to declare their acceptance that there is no god other than God. *Say: Truly, I was commanded: that I be the first who submitted to the One God And you have not been among the ones who are polytheists.* (6:14)

Such reflection would bring home to them that to take anyone other than God for a patron or master, submitting to him and seeking his help, is contrary to the Quran. It is, indeed, the sort of idolatry from which the Quran endeavours to free humanity. They will also come to know that the first manifestation of such a relationship is to accept laws enacted by any being other than God, whether they relate to faith or practical life. Needless to say, all humanity are in this position today. Therefore, the advocates of the Quranic message must define their objective to free all humanity from subservience to other creatures so that they submit to God alone.

Moreover, the advocates of the Quranic message need to contemplate the basic facts outlined in the following signs: (6:15-6:18)

Anyone who faces ignorance, its tyranny, might, deviousness, arrogance, corruption and wickedness needs to keep these facts in mind and preserve these feelings in his heart as a precaution against falling into sin as also to ward off the terrible punishment which awaits sinners. This will enhance his conviction that the only one who can benefit or harm him is God, who holds sway over all His servants and whose judgment cannot be overturned. The task of establishing the Quranic message in the face of the overwhelming opposition posed by tribal honor is hard indeed, requiring a long and enduring struggle. It cannot be undertaken by anyone who does not keep the above facts in mind and who does not nurture the aforementioned feelings. They should say what God's Messenger was commanded to say in this position, and to confront tribal honor with it in the same way as the Prophet did in fulfilment of what he was bidden by God: *Say: He is not but One God.* (6:19)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells the Prophet to say to the people that he was commanded to be the first who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God. He was not among the polytheists, the ungrateful who worshipped more gods than there are. There is only One God and a Muslim is one who submits to the One God. To submit means that one does not rebel against God's will. To submit to the One God is to be saved. That Muhammad was commanded to be the first one [among you] who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God.

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

LESSON 55(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

HISTORY

In order to give more credence to their false description of the Quran and to turn people away from it, a man like Malik ibn al-Nadr, who had learnt some Persian epics about Rustam and other Persian legendary heroes, used to sit at a short distance from the Prophet when he recited the Quran. After the Prophet Muhammad had finished, Malik ibn al-Nadr used to say to his audience: "If Muhammad could tell you some fables of the ancients, I can tell you better ones." He would then relate to them some of the epics and histories he had learnt, hoping that in this way, he could prevent them from listening to the Quran. Indeed, the chiefs of Makkah who commanded a position of authority and respect used to forbid others to listen to the Quran, and they tried to stay away from its reading so that they did not submit to its powerful logic and irrefutable argument. In other words, they feared to be influenced by it: *And they prohibit others from it. And they withdraw aside from it.* (6:26)

In this battle between the powerful authority of truth and the feeble structure of falsehood, it was not enough that a man like Malik ibn al-Nadr sat down to relate the epics and histories of the ancients. Instead, the Quraysh chiefs forbade their followers from listening to the Quran and they also distracted themselves lest they too be unable to resist its influence.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:21-6:30

Makkah: *And who does greater wrong*
than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs.
Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper. (6:21)
And on a Day We will assemble them altogether.
Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God:
Where are your ascribed associates with God

whom you had been claiming? (6:22)

Madinah (6:23)

Makkah: *Look on how they have lied against themselves.*
Went astray with them that which they had been devising. (6:24)
And among them are those who listen to ***you****.*
But We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they not understand it
and in their ears is a heaviness.
And if they are to see every sign they will not believe in it.
So that when they drew near ***you****, they dispute with* ***you****.*
Those who were ungrateful say:
This is nothing but fables of the ancient ones. (6:25)
And they prohibit others from it.
And they withdraw aside from it.
And they cause to perish, no doubt, none but themselves,
but they are not aware. (6:26)
And if ***you*** *would see when they would be stationed*
by the fire,
they will say: Would that we be returned to life.
Then, we would not deny the signs of our Lord
and we would be among the ones who believe. (6:27)
Nay! Shown to themselves will be
what they had been concealing before.
And even if they were returned,
they would revert to what they were prohibited from there
and, truly, they are the ones who lie. (6:28)
They said: There is nothing but this, our present life
and we are not ones who will be raised up. (6:29)
And if ***you*** *would see when they would be stationed*
before their Lord.
He would say: Is this not The Truth?
They would say: Yea, by Our Lord.
He would say: Then, experience the punishment
for what you had been ungrateful. (6:30)

COMMENTARY°

This new wave or round takes us back to the confrontation with the ungrateful who deny the truth of the Quran and refuse to believe in resurrection and life after death: *And who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs. Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper.* (6:21) This time, however, it does not describe their stubborn rejection; nor does it remind them of the destruction of earlier generations who took the same attitude before

them. Instead, it holds before their eyes their destiny on the Day of Resurrection which they deny, and the recompense they will be made to suffer in their next life which they refuse to accept, both described in the most vivid of scenes. It confronts them with all this when they are gathered together, putting to them questions full of reproach, and loaded with amazement at their attitude: *And on a Day We will assemble them altogether. Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God: Where are your ascribed associates with God whom you had been claiming?* (6:22) They are overwhelmed by fear, realizing their weakness, helpless and bewildered. They swear by God, acknowledging that He is the only Lord: *Again, their dissent will not be but that they would say: By God! Our Lord! We had not been ones who are polytheists.* (6:23)

Once again they are confronted with their past attitude as they stand before the fire. Worried, afraid, repentant and full of sorrow, they say: *And if you would see when they would be stationed by the fire, they will say: Would that we be returned to life. Then, we would not deny the signs of our Lord and we would be among the ones who believe.* (6:27) The same confrontation is repeated again as they stand before their Lord, overwhelmed by shame, sorrow and fear. He, in His majesty, will ask them: *Is this not The Truth?* (6:30) They will humbly answer: *They would say: Yea, by Our Lord.* (6:30) But this admission will have come too late to be of any benefit to them, for God will say to them: *He would say: Then, experience the punishment for what you had been ungrateful.* (6:30)

A Contention Contrary to Reality

God denounces those who deny and describes denial as the worst injustice: *And who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs.* (6:21) Reference is made here to idolatry as injustice in order to enhance its most horrible image. Indeed, it is the most frequent description of idolatry in the Quran. Moreover, it is accurate since idolatry is an act of injustice perpetrated against the truth, against oneself and against humanity in general. It is an offense against God's own right to be worshipped alone, without partners, and against oneself as it leads the perpetrator to ruin. It is also an offense against humanity who are thus led away from the path of submission to God alone in order to establish regimes and conditions that ruin human life altogether. As such, idolatry is a great injustice, as it is described by the Lord of all the worlds. Neither idolatry nor the idolaters will, however, achieve any success: *Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper.* (6:21) Here God states the full facts and the end result of idolatry and the idolaters, or

injustice and the wrongdoers. What short-sighted people may see of the affluence that some enjoy in the short run cannot be described as success or prosperity because it is no more than a short-lived situation which leads to eventual ruin. Who can be more truthful than God?

As an example of their loss, their situation on the Day of Resurrection is described very vividly: (6:22; 6:24)

There are numerous forms and types of idolatry and idolaters and the partners they associate with God. A naive image of people worshipping statues, stones, trees, etc. is by no means the only form of idolatry. In essence, associating partners with God is to acknowledge any one of the qualities attributable to God alone as belonging to others as well, whether such quality relates to His conduct or control of events, destinies, or to the offering of worship rituals. All these are forms of idolatry practised by different groups of ungrateful who associate different forms of partners with God.

In this scene of gathering and confrontation, all types of idolaters are questioned about the partners they associate with God. These other deities are nowhere to be seen, nor can they avail their worshippers of anything: *And on a Day We will assemble them altogether. Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God: Where are your ascribed associates with God whom you had been claiming?* (6:22) We almost behold the scene with our own eyes: the gathering of all creatures and the question to which no answer is given.

The Prophet is invited to wonder at their situation as God states that they have lied to themselves when they associated partners with God, for He has no partners. On the Day of Judgment, their falsehood fails them and they have no option but to acknowledge the truth: *Look on how they have lied against themselves. Went astray with them that which they had been devising.* (6:24)

The section goes on to describe how some of the ungrateful stubbornly block their minds as they listen to the Quran. Having resolved to reject it altogether, they argue with the Prophet alleging that the Quran is nothing but fables told by the ancients. They turn away from it and they forbid others to listen to it. Having depicted the attitude they adopt in this life, the Quran describes their miserable state as they are made to stand before the fire of hell, facing the horror of their destiny, powerless, and without support. The only thing they can do is wish to go back to life in order to change those views and practices which led them to this horrible end. Their wishes, however, are rejected as petty and childish: (6:25-6:28)

Here, we have two contrasting scenes: the one in this life is char-

acterized by stubborn rejection, while the other, in the hereafter, is a situation of profound regret. They are portrayed in such a way so as to help awaken human nature that has been left to rust for a long time. If only human nature would open up to the Quran and reflect on its message, it would gain the chance to be spared a fearful destiny.

And among them are those who listen to you. But We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they not understand it and in their ears is a heaviness. And if they are to see every sign they will not believe in it. So that when they drew near you, they dispute with you. Those who were ungrateful say: This is nothing but fables of the ancient ones. (6:25) This is a description of a particular type of people who listen but do not understand as if they do not have minds to help them comprehend, or ears to help them hear. This type of person may exist any time, anywhere. Their listening to what is being said has no effect whatsoever. Their ears do not function and their comprehension is sealed, so that the meaning of what they hear does not register with them.

Their eyes are open, but they do not seem to see, or what they see delivers no message to their minds. What has happened to them, then? What prevents them from responding when they have ears, eyes, and minds? God tells us: *But We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they not understand it.* (6:25) It is God who has willed that their faculty of comprehension remains unable to grasp the truth and that their hearing does not function. We should try, then, to understand the wisdom behind God's will.

All indicators to the truth and pointers to the right way and to faith were displayed in front of the idolaters. The Quran repeatedly drew their attention to countless signs and indications which they recognize within themselves and in the world around them. Had they only thought objectively about these, they would have awakened to the truth and responded to it. But they have made no effort to receive guidance. On the contrary, they suppressed their own nature, and in consequence, God placed a veil between them and proper guidance. They did not go to the Prophet with open hearts, ears and eyes in order to listen, see and reflect. They went to argue and dispute: *This is nothing but fables of the ancient ones.* (6:25)

TRUTH AND FABLES

All this effort which they exerted to refrain and prevent others from listening to the Quran and allowing themselves to be influenced by it or respond to it was a recipe for disaster: *And they cause to perish, no doubt, none but themselves, but they are not aware.* (6:26)

Whom would a person ruin if all his efforts were geared towards preventing himself and others from listening to proper guidance and following the right way that ensures salvation?

A Wish Availing Nothing

This (6:27) is the scene which contrasts with their situation in this life. Now they are in a state of regret, humility and total loss. This is compared with their attitude when they turned away from guidance, using their power to force others to also turn away, and boasting about their own strength and influence.

Now they cannot turn away, use their argumentation, or repeat their falsehoods. If we were to see them ourselves in such a position, we would be sure to see something fearful. Their dearest wish would be: *Would that we be returned to life.* (6:27) They know that the Quran is God's revelation, and their desire to return to earth is such that they may have a second chance when they no longer deny these revelations. They claim that they would make sure that they would be among the believers.

All these are wishes that have no way of coming true. They do not know their own nature, which will always reject the faith. When they say that if they could return they would be believers is nothing but a lie, because it does not match with what they would do if their wishes were answered. They only make these assertions because they have come to realize how wicked and evil they are. What they used to conceal from their followers in order to portray an image of themselves as successful and prosperous is now laid bare: *Nay! Shown to themselves will be what they had been concealing before. And even if they were returned, they would revert to what they were prohibited from there and, truly, they are the ones who lie.* (6:28)

God knows their nature very well and He is fully aware that they will stubbornly continue in their falsehood. He is also fully aware that it is only the fearsome situation in which they find themselves as they stand by the fire that causes them to utter such wishes and to make these promises. But the real situation is this: *And even if they were returned, they would revert to what they were prohibited from there and, truly, they are the ones who lie.* (6:28) They are, thus, left to their miserable destiny. This answer confronts them with the truth as they endure their humiliation. (6:29-6:30)

In their ignorance, as much as because of it, the ungrateful Arabs could not conceive of a second life or believe in it. They could not simply imagine another world, different from this present one of ours. They could not conceive how a human being could aspire to horizons beyond the physical world. Their concepts and feelings

were not much different from those of animals. It is the same situation we witness today in the modern type of tribal honor, whose exponents describe as 'scientific': *They said: There is nothing but this, our present life and we are not ones who will be raised up.* (6:29)

CONTRASTING CONCEPTS AND VALUES

The section now opens two new pages to draw two contrasting scenes. The first looks at this present life where the ungrateful make their assertions that there will be no resurrection, accountability or reward. The other is in the hereafter when they are stood before their Lord, and He asks them about the positions they adopted in their first life: *Is this not The Truth?* (6:30) The very question jolts them violently.

This accounts for the strong and deep rhythm which we notice in this part of the section which runs like a very fast river. God knows well that it is within human nature to respond to such a strong and deep rhythm. It opens up its receptive elements, awaiting instructions, in order to respond to them. We must not forget, however, that everything that is mentioned about the hereafter is simply the truth. (6:30)

This is the eventual destiny of those who claimed that there was nothing beyond our present life and that they would never be raised up again. It is a miserable, shameful, humiliating destiny as they are brought before their Lord, having persistently denied that they would face Him. They cannot stir. They are depicted as if they were led by the neck until they are stood in that awesome surrounding, facing the questioning: *Is this not the truth?* (6:30) What a humiliating question! There is only one possible reply: *They would say: Yea, by Our Lord.* (6:30) Now they are face to face with their Lord, on the occasion that they most stubbornly refused to believe in.

In a summary way, which most befits the awesome scene, the divine order is given, sealing their fate: *Then, experience the punishment for what you had been ungrateful.* (6:30) This is the most suitable destiny for those who denied themselves the comfort of a wider human concept, following instead an exceedingly narrow material concept. They have refused to raise themselves to the level that fits a noble humanity. They conducted their lives on the basis of their profane, hollow concept. By so doing, they actually earned their own punishment and this fits with the nature of those who deny the hereafter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful what the result of their denying the signs of God will be. What is the result of the ungrateful's denial of the signs of God? On the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful will wish that they could be returned to this life in order to accept the signs of God. When before their Lord, they would admit that the Quran is stating the Truth. It would be too late to avoid the punishment. Those who deny the Last Day will not be returned to this life to change their ways and even if they were to be returned to this life, they still would not believe. The Day of Judgment is the Day when each person will be judged for what they did. Those who deny the Day of Judgment in this life will be punished in the next life. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

LESSON 55(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

HISTORY

An incident reported by Ibn Ishaq took place close to the pilgrimage season. A meeting attended by a large number of Makkans and chaired, as it were, by al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, defined their strategy for a defamation campaign. In his opening address, al-Walid said: Now that the pilgrimage season is approaching, people will start arriving from all over the place. They must have heard about your friend [meaning the Prophet]. So you had better agree what to say when you are asked about him. We must guard against having too many opinions, particularly if they are mutually contradictory.[10]

When his audience asked his advice as to what they should say, he preferred to listen to their suggestions first. What concerned al-Walid most was that the opinion they would come out with should take account of the fact that Muhammad was asking people to listen to the Quran, God's message, expressed in the most beautiful lan-

guage and employing the most powerful of styles. The description they would attach to Muhammad should also account for his persuasive, eloquent argument.

Descriptions like 'fortune-teller', 'madman', 'poet' and 'magician' were proposed. None was considered convincing by al-Walid, who pointed out weaknesses in each, one after the other. He told his people that what Muhammad said was nothing like what was said by such men. When nobody could suggest anything more plausible, they asked al-Walid to come up with a better suggestion.

He said: What Muhammad says is certainly beautiful. It is like a date tree with solid roots and rich fruit. Every one of these suggestions you have made is bound to be recognized as false. The least disputable one is to claim that he is a magician who repeats magic words which make a man fall out with his father, mother, wife and clan. They all approved of al-Walid's suggestion and set about preparing their propaganda campaign to make the pilgrims wary of Muhammad and unwilling to meet him.

Another version of this story suggests that when al-Walid showed signs of appreciating the Quran some people in Makkah said: If al-Walid will desert his religion, all the Quraysh people will follow suit. Abu Jahl then said: I will take care of him. He then went to him and said what we have learned of in the above reports. When al-Walid came up with his ill-conceived suggestion, he justified it in the following words: It is sorcery. We all see how it causes friction between a person and his family, children and members of his household. All these reports confirm that these ungrateful did not think that the Prophet Muhammad was telling them something untrue when he conveyed God's message to them. They only persisted with their disbelief for the sort of reasons indicated in these reports and because they realized that the triumph of Muhammad's message meant that they would have to give up their authority which rightly belonged to God, and which they had unfairly and unjustifiably usurped. They knew their language very well and they perfectly understood the meaning of the declaration that there is no deity other than God, which is the cornerstone of the Quranic faith. They simply did not want to put that declaration into practice, because it meant an all-out rebellion against any authority, other than that of God, which aimed to regulate human life. God certainly tells the truth when He says: We know too well that what they say grieves you. Yet it is not you that they charge with falsehood; but it is God's revelations that the wrongdoers deny. The term 'wrongdoers' refers to the ungrateful, and is frequently used in the Quran in this context.[11]

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:31-6:41

Makkah: *Surely, those lost*
who denied the meeting with God
until when the Hour drew near them suddenly,
they would say: What a regret for us that we neglected in it!
And they will carry heavy loads on their backs.
How evil is what they bear! (6:31)
And this present life is nothing but a pastime and diversion.
And the Last Abode is better for those who are God-conscious.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (6:32)
Surely, We know that what they say disheartens ***you****.*
Truly, they deny ***you*** *not.*
Rather the ones who are unjust negate the signs of God. (6:33)
And, certainly, Messengers before ***you***
were denied yet they endured
patiently that they were denied
and they were maligned until Our help approached them.
And no one will change the Word of God.
And, certainly, there drew near ***you*** *tidings*
of the ones who are sent. (6:34)
If their turning aside had been troublesome to ***you****,*
then, if ***you*** *were able, be looking for a hole in the earth*
or a ladder to heaven so that ***you*** *would bring them some sign.*
If God willed, He would have gathered them to The Guidance.
Be ***you*** *not among the ones who are ignorant.* (6:35)
It is only those who hear who respond.
As for the dead, God will raise them up.
Again, they are returned to Him. (6:36)
And they said: Why was a sign not sent down to him
from his Lord?
Say: Truly, God is One Who Has Power
over what sign He sends down,
except most of them know not. (6:37)
And there is no moving creature in or on the earth,
none that is a fowl flying with its two wings,
but they are communities like yours.
We neglected not anything in the Book.
Again, they will be assembled to their Lord. (6:38)
And those who denied Our signs
are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak.
They are in the shadows.

Whomever God wills, He causes to go astray.
And whomever He wills, He lays on a straight path. (6:39)
Say: Considered you that if the punishment of God
approached you
or the Hour approached you,
would you call to any other than God
if you had been ones who are sincere? (6:40)
Nay! To Him alone you would call
and He would remove that for which you call to Him
—if He willed—and you will forget
whatever partners you ascribe with Him. (6:41)

COMMENTARY°

WHAT THE UNBELIEVERS ACTUALLY REJECT

The scene portraying the final outcome decreed by God is now complemented with a statement of the truth of its causes: *Surely, those lost who denied the meeting with God until when the Hour drew near them suddenly, they would say: What a regret for us that we neglected in it!* (6:31) It is indeed an utter loss because it includes the loss of this world, since they have spent their lifetime caring only for what is petty, low and profane, and the loss of the hereafter as we have already seen. Those deluded, ignorant people have not taken any precautions against what comes to them as a sudden shock: *And they will carry heavy loads on their backs. How evil is what they bear!*(6:31)

The passage then portrays a terrible scene which strikes fear in the listener's heart, followed by one of complete and utter loss. These two scenes are then followed by a statement of the real weight and value of this life and the life hereafter according to God's measure: *And this present life is nothing but a pastime and diversion. And the Last Abode is better for those who are God-conscious. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (6:32)

The nature of the hereafter is something which has not been explained to us in detail. Therefore, believing in it gives us a broader vision and nobler thinking. To work for it ensures better results for the God-conscious which can easily be recognized by those who use their reason: *Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (6:32)

In this new round or wave (6:33-6:39), an address is made to the Prophet. It begins with God consoling and comforting him. He, honest and truthful, was particularly distressed ' at the charges of falsehood that were laid at his door. Here, he is told by his Lord that they never thought him a liar, but used this as a ploy to maintain their

stubborn denial of God's signs and their rejection of the faith. He is also comforted with the information that earlier messengers of God were similarly accused of falsehood and subjected to abuse, and that they endured all this with patience. Eventually, they were given God's help to triumph, in accordance with the consistent laws He has set in operation. When the comforting and reassurance are over, the address makes clear the essential truth concerning God's message. It moves according to God's will and His laws. Its advocates have nothing to do with it other than to convey it to people and to make it clear. Other than that, it is God who decides what happens to it. Hence, its advocates, including the Prophet himself, have nothing to decide other than to continue with their task, without hastening its moves or suggesting anything to God. They are not to pay any attention to people's suggestions concerning its strategy, the proofs that may be given of its truth or the miracles needed to prove it. The point is that those who are alive and have the power of hearing will respond. On the other hand, those whose hearts are dead will not. The ultimate decision belongs to God: He may give people life or keep them dead until they return to Him on the Day of Judgment.

The people the Prophet was addressing demanded a miracle like the ones granted earlier Prophets. God is certainly able to give them such a miracle, but He, in His wisdom, does not wish to do so. If the Prophet is so distressed by their turning away, then let him try, by his own human effort, to bring them such a miracle. God is the Creator of all living creatures, and He knows all their secrets and the differences in their nature. He leaves those human beings who reject His message to wander in the deep darkness, deaf and dumb. He leaves some to go astray and guides others to the truth, according to His infallible knowledge of His different creatures.

HONEST NO DOUBT

Surely, We know that what they say disheartens thee. Truly, they deny you not. Rather the ones who are unjust negate the signs of God. (6:33)

The ungrateful Arabs with their idolatrous beliefs, particularly those of them who took upon themselves the unworthy task of opposing the message of the Quran, had no doubt that Muhammad was telling the truth. They have known him to be truthful and honest. They knew that he had never told a lie before starting to convey God's message. Those who were most hardened in their opposition to him did not doubt the truthfulness of his message either. They knew that the Quran could not have been authored by a human being. They, nevertheless, stubbornly refused to declare their belief or to

embrace a new faith. Their reason for rejecting it was not that they could not believe the Prophet; rather, it was their realization that his message threatened their positions and influence. Hence, they decided to deny God's revelations and to stick to their idolatrous beliefs. There are numerous reports that clearly state the reasons behind the Quraysh's attitude. We will now look at just a few of these.

KNOWING THE TRUTH WHO GIVES A FAVORABLE RESPONSE?

Having given the Prophet this consolation, the section reminds him of what happened to past messengers, some of whose history is given in the Quran. They endured abuse and hardship with patience and moved along the way God had shown them until they were granted victory by God. This is, then, an assertion that meeting affliction was only natural for God's messengers. The outcome must never be precipitated even though the advocates of the divine message may be subjected to torture, abuse, denial and other hardships: *And, certainly, Messengers before **you** were denied yet they endured patiently that they were denied and they were maligned until Our help approached them. And no one will change the Word of God. And, certainly, there drew near **you** tidings of the ones who are sent.* (6:34)

Advocates of God's message have continued along the same difficult way, overcoming numerous hurdles. They move along with steady steps, opposed by wrongdoers of all sorts, rejected by those who have chosen to go astray and their followers. Harm may be inflicted on some of those advocates, pressure, torture, and death. Yet the advocates of the truth will move on, maintaining their way, undeterred. The outcome remains the same, long as it may take. At the end of the road awaits victory, granted by God: *And, certainly, Messengers before **you** were denied yet they endured patiently that they were denied and they were maligned until Our help approached them.* (6:34)

Seriousness is further heightened in order to counter what might have been entertained by God's Messenger of a keen, kindly desire to make his people recognize guidance. It also deals with any hope he may have entertained that their request for a sign, so that they may accept God's message, might be answered. The same desire was similarly entertained by other Muslims at the time, as later signs in this section explain. This was a perfectly natural human desire. However, in order to make a final statement about the nature of this message, its method, the roles of earlier messengers and people in its promotion and progress, the Quran makes this very clear delineation of the

right attitude: (6:35-6:36)

These are majestic words, portraying an awesome scene. We cannot appreciate fully the whole idea unless we recall vividly that these are words addressed by God, the Lord of all worlds, to his noble Prophet who has shown maximum perseverance and who is one of the small number of messengers endowed with the strongest resolve. He patiently endured all that his people tried to inflict on him.

However, in His superior wisdom, God has created us for a particular purpose of His own, giving us certain abilities that are different from those of angels. This has meant that we should contain within ourselves varying ability to receive guidance and pointers to faith and able to make different responses to them. We have a range of ability to determine our direction so that justice is maintained, as we receive reward for following guidance or punishment for our deliberate error. For this reason, God has not brought all humanity together to His guidance by a decree He promulgates. He has only commanded us to follow His guidance, and given us the ability to choose either to obey or disobey Him. At the end, everyone will have his fair reward. The Prophet is told to keep this in mind and not to ignore it: *If their turning aside had been troublesome to you, then, if you were able, be looking for a hole in the earth or a ladder to heaven so that you would bring them some sign. If God willed, He would have gathered them to The Guidance. Be you not among the ones who are ignorant.* (6:35)

This is followed by an explanation of the nature God has given to humanity, and their different attitudes to His guidance which lacks no proof: *It is only those who hear who respond. As for the dead, God will raise them up. Again, they are returned to Him.* (6:36)

In their attitude to the truth sent down by God from on high and preached by His Messenger, people can be divided into two groups: one who are alive, opening up their receptive faculties and responding to divine guidance. They find such guidance to be strong, clear, consistent with human nature and easily heard. Hence, there is no problem with responding to it: *It is only those who hear who respond.* (6:36)

The other group are dead, their nature out of order and, as such, they cannot listen or respond. They do not lack any evidence of the truth, because the evidence is inherent in it. Once it touches human nature, response is certain. What this group actually lack is to have their nature awakened and their responses activated. The Prophet can do nothing to such people. Proofs have no use for them. Their case is left to God. He may raise them up if they show that they deserve to be brought to life. By the same token, however, He may not raise

them up at all in this life. He may leave them dead despite their moving about in this world, until they return to Him in the hereafter: *As for the dead, God will raise them up. Again, they are returned to Him.* (6:36)

This is, then, the full explanation of responding to guidance or rejecting it. It sets out all the issues clearly, outlining the role of God's Messenger and leaving the ultimate decision to God who accomplishes what He wills.

WHO NEEDS MIRACULOUS EVIDENCE?

The section then refers to the request of the ungrateful that a sign in the form of something supernatural be sent down to the Prophet. It points out that such a request betrays ignorance of God's law and the mercy. He shows them by not responding to their request. Were they to continue with their rejection after a supernatural sign is given them, they would be destroyed.

The section mentions their request and comments that most of them do not know what it entails or the reason for its rejection. It states that God is certainly able to give them the miraculous sign they want, but His wisdom and grace have stopped the woeful doom that is certain to follow: *And they said: Why was a sign not sent down to him from his Lord? Say: Truly, God is One Who Has Power over what sign He sends down, except most of them know not.* (6: 37)

The Quran then begins another gentle approach to awaken their senses, inviting them to reflect on the numerous pointers to faith which they see all around them: *And there is no moving creature in or on the earth, none that is a fowl flying with its two wings, but they are communities like yours. We neglected not anything in the Book. Again, they will be assembled to their Lord.* (6:38)

This round concludes with a statement that God's will and law remain operative when people choose either to follow His guidance or to go astray: *And those who denied Our signs are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak. They are in the shadows. Whomever God wills, He causes to go astray. And whomever He wills, He lays on a straight path.* (6:39)

This is indeed a reiteration in a new form, using a different scene, of what has been stated earlier in this passage concerning the fact that only those who listen attentively will respond, while those who are unwilling to hear or speak can make no response.

A SYSTEM BEARING NO COMPARISON

We see in this passage how the Quran tackles the issue. It states that those who reject this faith and try to suppress it know full well

that they are only called upon to follow the truth. They realize that the Messenger who conveys it to humanity tells the truth. Nevertheless, they refuse to respond. Indeed they persist, for certain ulterior motives, in their stubborn rejection. They realize that this truth has an intrinsic evidence to support it: it addresses human nature which responds to it positively once it is alive and receptive: *As for the dead, God will raise them up. Again, they are returned to Him.* (6:36) Those, on the other hand, who oppose the truth have dead hearts and they themselves are: *And those who denied Our signs are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak. They are in the shadows.* (6:39)

The Quran also defines the role of God's Messenger, as also successive generations of advocates of the Quranic message. All that is required of them is to convey God's message and to follow the road God has chosen for them, despite the hardships they may have to face. People's responses to the same are beyond their terms of reference. People follow guidance or error in accordance with a divine law that will never change, even to accommodate God's Messenger's desire to get some of those whom he loves to follow the guidance he brings them from God. Nor will this law change as a result of his distress at what is done by those whom he must confront. His own person is not considered here. He will not be accountable for the number of those who follow guidance as a result of his efforts. He is judged on the basis of his efforts and his obedience of his instructions. What happens to people afterwards is determined by their Lord: *Whomever God wills, He causes to go astray. And whomever He wills, He lays on a straight path.* (6:39) *If God willed, He would have gathered them to The Guidance. Be you not among the ones who are ignorant.* (6:35)

The Quranic directive in this passage makes it clear to God's Messenger and the believers that they must not entertain any desire to have a miraculous sign given to them, regardless of its type. The Prophet is told in plain terms: (6:35-6:36)

THE QURANIC DOCTRINE'S STARTING POINT

In this passage, we have one of the various ways in which the Quran addresses human nature. It establishes a link between human nature and the existence of the universe, leaving the latter to work its full inspiration on it. God knows that when such inspiration, profound and strong as it is, touches human nature it will certainly respond: *It is only those who hear who respond.* (6:36)

The pattern which we have in this passage begins in this way: *And they said: Why was a sign not sent down to him from his Lord? Say: Truly, God is One Who Has Power over what sign He sends*

down, except most of them know not.(6:37) This sign reports what is said by those who denied God's revelations and demanded a miracle which would have had a temporary effect on their own generation. It then refers to the destruction which would have followed, had the suggestion been acted upon. God is certainly well able to accomplish any miracle, but it is the bestowing of His mercy that prevents it. It is His wisdom that precludes acting on their suggestion. Then, suddenly, their attention is made to turn from their little world to the wide expanse of the universe with all the great signs which they see in the universe around them and which are far greater than the one they demanded. The signs in the universe are permanent, available for all generations to behold: *And there is no moving creature in or on the earth, none that is a fowl flying with its two wings, but they are communities like yours. We neglected not anything in the Book. Again, they will be assembled to their Lord.* (6:38)

This is a great fact which at that time, when humanity had not developed and regulated its branches of science, they could understand by mere observation alone. They could see animals, birds and insects grouping in communities, each of which has its own characteristics and rules. As human knowledge develops, this fact has greater application, but human knowledge cannot add to its basis. Relevant to it, however, is the fact that God's knowledge is absolute and total and it is He who manages everything in the universe. The facts that people can observe around them testify to the great truism of God's Oneness and His Lordship over all the universe. Could the physical miracle they demanded provide more than that? They have the great miracle of creation in front of them. They see its manifestations and effects in every direction they turn.

In this particular example, the Quranic method presents human nature neither with theoretical or dialectic argument, nor any material or logical theory. It only puts it face to face with practical existence, what is perceptible of it and what is imperceptible. It then invites human nature to react to it and respond to its inspiration within a well-defined and regulated system, so that it does not lose its way.

It then provides the following comment on the attitudes of those who deny such magnificent signs: *And those who denied Our signs are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak. They are in the shadows. Whomever God wills, He causes to go astray. And whomever He wills, He lays on a straight path.* (6:39) What an apt description of the rejecters for they are indeed deaf and dumb, groping along in darkness. The Quranic sign states God's law with regard to guidance and error, stating that God's will operates either way in accordance with the nature God has given to man.

We, thus, have a full concept of man's position. We have a clear idea of the appropriate method of presenting the Quranic message to others. We also have a definitive statement of how an advocate of the Quranic way should operate and make his address to human beings in all situations and at all times.

THE ONLY HOPE

Here(6:40-6:41) we have one of the various methods the Quran employs to address human nature. We have already seen how the Quran draws people's attentions to the elaborate system of life and the multitude of living creatures, and how God's knowledge is total, flawless, absolute. Here, the Quranic address makes use of God's power and how human nature reacts when it reflects on any aspect of God's might, shaking off all traces of idolatry. Thus, human nature regains its freedom and tears off what used to prevent it from acquiring proper knowledge of its Lord and believing in His Oneness: *Say: Considered you that if the punishment of God approached you or the Hour approached you, would you call to any other than God if you had been ones who are sincere?* (6:40)

Human nature is, thus, put face to face with the possibility of total destruction which may come as punishment in this life, or with the totally unexpected arrival of the Last Hour. Once human nature is made to visualize this eventuality, it responds positively to the truth. God knows that such a positive response remains latent within it. Human nature is shaken as it must own up to the truth it knows. God puts the question to the ungrateful, demanding a verbal answer to express their true, natural feelings: *Say: Considered you that if the punishment of God approached you or the Hour approached you, would you call to any other than God if you had been ones who are sincere?* (6:40)

The section then states the true answer which corresponds to their natural feelings, although they may not give it verbal expression: *Nay! To Him alone you would call and He would remove that for which you call to Him—if He willed—and you will forget whatever partners you ascribe with Him.*(6:41)

Thus, all thoughts of idolatry are forgotten. The fearful prospect lays human nature bare, and thus it turns to God alone for security. Its knowledge of the true Lord is deeply rooted within it. Idolatrous beliefs are no more than a superficial, thin covering that beclouds human nature through external factors. When human nature is shaken by this fearful prospect, this covering falls off and the truth comes to the surface. Thus, our natural reactions operate and we turn to our Lord, praying to be spared that fate to which it has no answer.

Within this description of the natural human reaction to the prospect of God's punishment, we are told of God's response. He may, if He so pleases, respond to their supplication and remove what they fear. His will is free, unrestrained. It is His choice whether to respond to them or not and whether to remove the ill they fear in full or in part. In this, the only operative factors are His knowledge, wisdom and will.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

QURANIC SIGN 2:260

When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how You shall give life to the dead. He said: Shall you (Abraham) not believe? He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest. He (God) said: Then take four birds and twist them to yourself. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach you coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise. (2:260)

QUESTIONS 2:260:

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?

What example does it give?

Is this an example of everyone having to agree?

What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

You can use a number of techniques to learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just finding a definition of a word, try to paraphrase the word or concept to something that you already understand. You can also add examples from your classmates to the list.

Rewrite passages, making them clear to yourself. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

LESSON 55(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[12]

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam) Signs 6:42-6:50

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent to communities*
that were before ***you****.*
Then, We took them with desolation and tribulation
so that perhaps they will lower themselves to Us. (6:42)
Then, why when drew near them Our might,
they lowered not themselves?
Rather, their hearts became hard.
And Satan made appear pleasing to them
what they had been doing. (6:43)
So when they forgot about what they were reminded in it,
We opened to them the doors of everything.
Until when they were glad with what they were given,
We suddenly took them.
That is when they were ones who are seized with despair. (6:44)
So cut off were the last remnant of the folk who did wrong.
And The Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds. (6:45)

Say: Considered you that if God took
your having the ability to hear
and your sight and sealed over your hearts,
what god other than God restores them to you?
Look on how We diversify the signs!
Again, they still drew aside. (6:46)
Say: Considered you
that if the punishment of God approached you
suddenly or publicly, will anyone be caused to perish but the folk,
the ones who are unjust? (6:47)
We send not the ones who are sent,
but as ones who give good tidings and ones who warn.
So whoever believed and made things right,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (6:48)
But those who denied Our signs,
the punishment will afflict them because
they had been disobeying. (6:49)
Say: I say not to you: With me are treasures of God
nor that I know the unseen nor say I to you
that I am an angel.
I follow only what is revealed to me.
Say: Are they on the same level
— the unwilling to see and the seeing?
Will you, then, not reflect? (6:50)

COMMENTARY°

The communities whose history God relates to His Messenger and his followers have benefited nothing by the trials to which they were put. They made no appeal to God. They did not mend their erring ways but persisted with their rejection of the truth, which Satan portrayed to them as good and proper. God then allowed them a respite and gave them provisions in plenty: (6:44)

God's punishment befell them when they were fully drunk with the pleasures of this life. They were left confused, hopeless, unable to think where to turn. They were destroyed: (6:45) The Arabic text refers to the very last one of each of these communities. If this one was wiped out then everyone else faced the same destiny. The phrase, 'the wrongdoing people', means here those who associated partners with God. This is a frequently used expression in the Quran referring to idolatry as wrongdoing and idolaters as wrongdoers: *So cut off were the last remnant of the folk who did wrong. And The Praise be-*

longs to God, Lord of the worlds. (6:45)

As this scene sends a shiver into people's hearts, it shows how hollow and erroneous the concept of idolatry is. The section wonders at those who are shown different, wide-ranging and multi-faceted signs, beckoning them to faith, and yet still they turn away: (6:46)

They are hardly allowed to take their breath before they are put face to face with another possibility that may well not be far away from them. They are shown their own destruction as they are indeed the wrongdoers, a term which is often used interchangeably with those who associate partners with God. The scene here paints the destruction of the wrongdoers when they are taken unawares or when God's punishment is inflicted on them in open daylight: (6:47)

When this passage of warning has reached its peak, having portrayed several scenes, making inspiring comments on each of them and giving serious warnings which have their effect on people's hearts, it is concluded with a statement outlining the task of God's messengers. Their communities demand supernatural miracles but their duty is merely to convey a message, bringing happy news and giving stern warnings. They have no say in people's fate, which is determined by the attitudes people choose to adopt for themselves: (6:48-6:49)

DETAILED ANALYSIS

The fact remains that human nature recognizes its Lord well and submits to Him declaring its belief in His Oneness. Should it fall for a while under a covering that screens facts and prevents it from seeing them, all that covering will fall off once human nature is shaken by a calamity. It regains its vision and returns to its Lord, humble, submissive, believing. All the schemes of the enemies of faith require no more than a clear declaration of the truth, and they will soon collapse. Human nature thus returns to faith. Evil will not have total mastery while there remains on the face of this earth people who will make this declaration. By the grace of God, there will always remain people to make this declaration of the truth, no matter how the advocates of falsehood try to wipe them out. (6:42-6:45)

These signs place before our eyes an historical example of how people expose themselves to God's might and what happens to them in consequence. God gives them one chance after another and issues them with successive reminders, but they still forget. If the trials they encounter do not persuade them to turn to God and implore Him, and if His grace which they enjoy does not prompt them to be grateful and to guard against evil, then their nature has become irremediably corrupt and their lives are no longer worth extending. God's punish-

ment befalls them and their world is destroyed: (6:42-6:43)

In these signs we have a full outline of an example that has repeated itself several times: communities that have received God's messengers but rejected their messages. God then tested them with hardship and tribulation that involved their lives, properties and general situations. Such hardship and tribulation obviously fell short of the punishment of total destruction to which reference is made in the preceding sign.

The hardship did not soften their hearts, open their minds and help them rid themselves of their stubbornness. Satan continued to portray their erring ways to them as fair and appealing:*And Satan made appear pleasing to them what they had been doing.* (6:43)

The communities whose history God relates to His Messenger and his followers have benefited nothing by the trials to which they were put. They made no appeal to God. They did not mend their erring ways but persisted with their rejection of the truth, which Satan portrayed to them as good and proper. God then allowed them a respite and gave them provisions in plenty: *So when they forgot about what they were reminded in it, We opened to them the doors of everything. Until when they were glad with what they were given, We suddenly took them. That is when they were ones who are seized with despair.* (6:44)

We have here a wonderful scene depicting a state full of life in the inimitable style of the Quran. *We opened to them the doors of everything.* (6:44) They enjoyed abundance of provisions and endless luxuries, but showed no gratitude to God for the grace He had bestowed on them. All they cared for was to indulge in the pleasures of this world, leaving no room in their lives for higher concerns. This corruption of their hearts and morals was followed by a corruption of their systems, and this naturally led to corruption being the mark of their lives. That was enough to trigger God's law which never fails: *We suddenly took them. That is when they were ones who are seized with despair.* (6:44)

God's punishment befell them when they were fully drunk with the pleasures of this life. They were left confused, hopeless, unable to think where to turn. They were destroyed: *So cut off were the last remnant of the folk who did wrong.* (6:45) The Arabic text refers to the very last one of each of these communities. If this one was wiped out then everyone else faced the same destiny. The phrase, `the wrongdoing people', means here those who associated partners with God. This is a frequently used expression in the Quran referring to idolatry as wrongdoing and idolaters as wrongdoers. *So cut off were the last remnant of the folk who did wrong.* (6:45)

The Prophet certainly tells the truth as he says: When you see that God has given a person plenty of what he likes in this world, despite his sinful practices, know that it is only a temptation and a test. He then quoted the Quranic sign: *So when they forgot about what they were reminded in it, We opened to them the doors of everything. Until when they were glad with what they were given, We suddenly took them. That is when they were ones who are seized with despair.*[13] (6:44)

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR REFLECTION

As the section moves on, it puts those who associate partners with God face to face with His might and how it may strike them personally, taking away their hearing and eyesight and sealing their hearts. They are defenseless against it, and they can find no deity other than God to return what God may take away from them. The scene depicted here is very vivid, showing them their total powerlessness against God's might. It also paints for them the stark reality of those partners they associate with God when they have to face a truly grave situation. The scene shakes them violently. God, the Creator of human nature knows how far it is affected by this scene and the truth it describes. Human nature realizes that God is able to take away people's hearing and sight and seal their hearts. None of these organs can then function at all. Should He do this, there is no other deity to reverse what He has done.

They are hardly allowed to take their breath before they are put face to face with another possibility that may well not be far away from them. They are shown their own destruction as they are indeed the wrongdoers, a term which is often used interchangeably with those who associate partners with God. The scene here paints the destruction of the wrongdoers when they are taken unawares or when God's punishment is inflicted on them in open daylight: *ay: Considered you that if the punishment of God approached you suddenly or publicly, will anyone be caused to perish but the folk, the ones who are unjust?* (6:47)

When this passage of warning has reached its peak, having portrayed several scenes, making inspiring comments on each of them and giving serious warnings which have their effect on people's hearts, it is concluded with a statement outlining the task of God's messengers. Their communities demand supernatural miracles but their duty is merely to convey a message, bringing happy news and giving stern warnings: (6:48-6:49)

Ignorant communities, including those that deviated from the proper concept elaborated by the divine messages, were rife with

such false ideas about the nature of prophethood and prophet. People expected anyone who claimed to be a prophet to come up with such miracles. They required him at times to make prophecies and at other times to influence natural phenomena, either through fortune-telling or sorcery. Indeed, it was in this vein that the pagan Arabs in Makkah made their demands of the Prophet Muhammad. To rectify such misconceptions, the Quran makes repeated statements on the nature of the divine message and the Messenger conveying it. One of these statements is the one we are currently discussing: *Say: Are they on the same level— the unwilling to see and the seeing? Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50)

WHICH PATH THE PROPHET FOLLOWS

The Prophet is, therefore, ordered to present it to people as it is, without adornment or temptation. It requires none of these. Those who adopt it should know that they are not going to gain any material wealth or position by it. They shall have no distinction over other people except through their good actions. They are only opting for divine guidance which is much more valuable than wealth, position or distinction: *Say: Are they on the same level—the unwilling to see and the seeing? Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50)

When they accept and adopt this, they should know that they bring themselves out of darkness and blindness into light and enlightenment: *Say: Are they on the same level— the unwilling to see and the seeing? Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) Besides, following divine revelations is, in itself, following proper guidance. A person who is left without such guidance remains blind. This is stated plainly in this sign. What role, then, is left to the human mind?

From the Quranic point of view, the answer to this question is very simple. The mind with which God has endowed us is able to receive His revelation and comprehend it. This is its role. Moreover, it is the opportunity available to us to follow God's guidance and to be equipped with the proper, infallible criterion.

Equipped with divine revelation and guidance, our human mind can see things clearly. Deprived of them, it is blind. We note that in the Quranic sign, the statement that the Prophet follows only what is revealed to him from on high is immediately followed by a reference to blindness and clear sight. It concludes with an exhortation to think and reflect:*I follow only what is revealed to me. Say: Are they on the same level— the unwilling to see and the seeing? Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) Such a sequence is particularly significant. Reflection is certainly needed, and the Quran calls on people to reflect. However, reflection must be guided by divine revelation so that it remains

enlightened. There is no virtue in reflection that is blind, groping in the dark, without guidance.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

LESSON 55(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

HISTORY

It is reported that some of the Arabian 'notables' felt it unbecoming of them to respond to the Quranic call because the Prophet Muhammad kept his door open to poor and unsupported people such as Suhayb, Bilal, Ammar, Khabbab, Salman, Ibn Masud and others. These were poor people who could not change their sweat-stained clothes when they visited him. Their social position did not qualify them to be in the same meeting place as the Quraysh chiefs. Therefore, the chiefs asked the Prophet to drive them away, but he refused. They suggested to him that he should meet the two groups separately in order to give the chiefs their privileges, just as they enjoyed them in pre-Quranic society. Keen as he was to persuade them to accept the message, the Prophet considered the possibility of granting their request. His Lord made His command clear to him: *And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.* (6:52)

Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, a prominent Companion of the Prophet, reports: Six of us were with the Prophet when the ungrateful said to him: Drive away these so that they are not encouraged to go above their standing with us. With me were Abd Allah ibn Masud, a man from the Hudhayl, Bilal and two others.

The Prophet felt whatever God might have let him feel. He was deep in thought when God revealed to him the sign stating: *And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.*[14]

Al-Tabari relates on the authority of Ibn Masud: A group of Quraysh notables passed by the Prophet when he was with a group of Muslims who were of low status in Makkan society, including Suhayb, Ammar, Bilal and Khabbab. The notables said to the Prophet: Muhammad, are you happy to be with these from among your people? Are these the ones upon whom God has bestowed His favor from among us? Are we to follow these? Drive them away, for if you do so, we may follow you.

God then revealed the Quranic signs which states: *And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.* (6:52) *Thus, We tried some of them with others that they should say: Is it these to whom God showed grace from among us? Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

Al-Tabari also attributes to Khabbab, one of the Prophet's Companions, the following report of the incident which led to the revelation of 6:52:

Al-Aqra ibn Habis of the tribe of Tamim and Uyaynah ibn Hisn of the Fazar once found the Prophet sitting with Bilal, Suhayb, Ammar, Khabbab and others who commanded no influence in Arabian society. They looked on them with contempt. They said to the Prophet: We would like you to establish a special time for us so that the Arabs will recognize our high position. Delegations come to you from all parts of Arabia and we feel ashamed to be seen with such people. When we come to see you, tell them to leave. When we depart, you may sit with them if you wish.

The Prophet agreed. They said: Could you put this in writing for us. The Prophet asked for a sheet of writing material and called Ali to write the same down. We were sitting a little further away. Then Gabriel, the angel, was sent down with these signs: (6:52-6:54)

The Prophet dropped the sheet and called us. We went to him and he said: Peace be upon you. Your Lord has committed Himself to bestow grace and mercy.

Thereafter, we used to sit with him. When he wished to leave, he would stand up and go. But then God revealed to him the sign: *And have you patience yourself with those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance. And let not your eyes pass over them wanting the adornment of this present life. And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28) After that God's Messenger would sit with us. When it was his usual time to leave, we would leave first so that he could leave, if he so wished.

Subsequent to the revelation of these signs, the Prophet would always be the first to greet them, every time he saw them. He would say: Praise be to God who has made among my followers some people whom I am ordered to be the first to greet.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:51-6:55

Makkah: *And warn with the Quran*
those who fear
that they will be assembled before their Lord.
Other than He there is neither a protector nor
an intercessor, so that perhaps they will be God-conscious. (6:51)
And drive not away those who call to their Lord
in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.
*Their reckoning is not on **you** at all.*
*And **your** reckoning is not on them at all.*
*If **you** are to drive them away, then,*
***you** would be among the ones who are unjust.* (6:52)
Thus, We tried some of them with others that they should say:
Is it these to whom God showed grace from among us?
Is not God greater in knowledge
of the ones who are thankful? (6:53)
*And when drew near **you**, those who believe in Our signs,*
say: Peace be to you. Your Lord prescribed mercy for Himself
so that anyone of you who did evil in ignorance
—again, repented afterwards and made things right—
then, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate. (6:54)
And, thus, We explain Our signs distinctly
so that the way is indicated for the ones who sin. (6:55)

COMMENTARY°

A WARNING LOUD AND CLEAR

It is a mark of the Quranic way of life that it pays little regard to worldly values and petty human considerations. (6:51-6:54) God's Messenger has been commanded to present it to human beings as it is, without decoration, adornment or tempting promises. He was also commanded to pay particular attention to those who are likely to respond positively to his call and to ally himself with those who receive it well, willing to make a sincere effort to win God's pleasure. He was not to attach any weight to the values of a tribal honor society. His task was to warn those who fear what may happen to them when they are gathered to their Lord, on the Day of Resurrection, when

they shall have none to support or intercede for them. The fact remains that no one can intercede with God unless he is given permission to do so. Even with this permission, he can only intercede on behalf of those for whose benefit God allows intercession. Those who genuinely fear what will happen on that day have a strong claim to know the warning with which God's Messenger has been sent. They are more likely to benefit by it and respond to it.

If the Prophet explains it to them, they may be able to avoid in this life what may expose them to God's punishment in the life to come. The warning with which the Prophet has been sent outlines to them what they must avoid and gives them the motivation to do so: (6:51-6:52)

The Prophet is also ordered : *And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.* (6:52) This is an example of dedication, love and good manners. A person does not address his worship and supplication to God alone unless he is truly dedicated. He does not seek only God's pleasure unless he profoundly loves Him. When he combines the two qualities of worshipping God alone and seeking only His pleasure, he will have adopted the sort of manners worthy of a true believer.

Those Quraysh chiefs spoke ill of the poor whom the Prophet received well. They pointed to their poverty and weakness and claimed that their presence with God's Messenger was the reason behind the negative attitude adopted by the upper classes towards the Quranic message. God gave his final ruling on this question, totally refuting their claims: *Their reckoning is not on you at all. And your reckoning is not on them at all. If you were to drive them away, then, you would be among the ones who are unjust.* (6:52)

The arrogant Quraysh chiefs were not impressed. They wondered: how could God choose the poor and the weak to grant them guidance in preference to us? Had it been true that the message Muhammad preached was a message of goodness, they would not have been ahead of us in embracing it. God would have certainly guided us to it before them. They wondered: is it possible that God would grant them His favors in preference to us, when we are the people exercising power and enjoying wealth and high position in this city. This was, indeed, a test God set for those proud people. They were hardened on account of their wealth and distinguished family backgrounds. Yet they fared very badly because they could not appreciate the true nature of this faith and the type of social order it wanted people to establish. Needless to say, the social order that the Quranic message establishes takes humanity by the hand to elevate it to heights it cannot attain through any other means. When the

Quranic message was allowed to have its full play in the life of Arabia, the Arabs rose to heights they could not have imagined possible at the time. Indeed, even today, they cannot be imagined possible even by the most advanced of democratic systems.

THE MOST DESERVING OF GOD'S GRACE

It is an answer (6:53) loaded with pointed connotations. It clearly suggests that following right guidance is a reward given by God to those whom He knows to be truly grateful. In this way, they are favored with this particular aspect of divine grace. No amount of gratitude is sufficient in return for this act of grace. God, however, accepts the best that His servants can do and rewards them for it. His reward is always exceedingly generous.

It is clear from God's answer to that arrogant question that it is those people's sheer ignorance that gives rise to their objection to the selection of people on whom God bestows His grace. *Thus, We tried some of them with others that they should say: Is it these to whom God showed grace from among us? Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53) Those who raise the question do not realize that God bestows this favor on the basis of His perfect knowledge. It is He who knows those who deserve such a favors from among His servants. Such ignorant objections also betray the objectors' bad manners.

God commands His Messenger to be the one who starts by greeting those on whom God has bestowed the grace of being among the early Muslims; the very ones whom the Quraysh chiefs ridiculed. The Prophet is further commanded to give them the happy news that God has committed Himself to grant them His mercy, as He will forgive those among them who mend their ways after having committed any bad deed out of ignorance: *And when drew near you, those who believe in Our signs, say: Peace be to you. Your Lord prescribed mercy for Himself so that anyone of you who did evil in ignorance—again, repented afterwards and made things right—then, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (6:54)

Having given them the blessing of adopting the faith, and promised them easy reckoning on the Day of Judgment, God now honors them with His mercy. Indeed, He commits Himself to showing mercy to those who believe in Him. He also commands His Messenger to convey to them this commitment.

TEARING OFF THE MASKS OF EVILDOING

The final sign in this passage is expressed in two short clauses: the first refers to all signs of guidance, pointers to faith and state-

ments of the truth that have been given so far in this section: *And, thus, We explain Our signs distinctly.* The second clause in this short sign fills us with wonder: *So that the way is indicated for the ones who sin.* (6:55)

This statement tells us that the Quranic approach endeavors to clarify the truth and states it very plainly, but its purpose is not merely to make the path of the believers clearly distinct. It also endeavors to clearly and plainly portray falsehood so that the path of the evildoers is also clearly distinct. Clarity of the one necessitates clarity of the other.

This approach of the Quran has been chosen by God as it is most effective with the human mind. God knows that believing in the truth requires knowledge of falsehood and adding total certainty to faith requires a clear-cut distinction between falsehood and evil on the one hand and truth and goodness on the other. The momentum a believer requires in his advocacy of the truth is not merely generated by his feeling that he follows the truth. The extra power is given by realizing that opposition to his efforts comes from falsehood, advocated by the evildoers, who have always been the ones to oppose prophets. As God states in another sign: *And, thus, We assigned for every Prophet an enemy of the ones who sin.* (25:31) Thus, the Prophet Muhammad and the believers know for certain that those opposing them are none other than evildoers.

It is an important objective of the Quranic approach we listen carefully to the Quran where that evil and falsehood are very clearly identified, so that the truth and goodness become clear and distinct. Confusion about the first may lead to confusion about the second because the two move along paths that cannot meet. Therefore, every Quranic movement should begin with a clear identification of the methods and features of the believers, as well as those of the evildoers. This identification should be based on what we see in the real world, not confined to theories and an abstract world.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance ... (6:52) the Quranic message tells us. Who is one who drives them away? Those who drive them away are the unjust. It is unjust to drive away anyone who calls on his or her Lord in the morning or evening wanting His Countenance, His Presence. This behavior is the sign of a believer no matter what his social status may be. Their reckoning is not on us and our reckoning is not on them. Therefore, a believer knows the answer to the Quranic question: *Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR LISTENING CRITICALLY ARE:

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying. Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

LESSON 55(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[15]

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:56-6:60

Makkah: *Say: I was prohibited that I worship those whom*
you call to other than God.
Say: I will not follow your desires,
for, then, I would have gone astray.
I would not be of the ones who are truly guided. (6:56)
Say: I am with a clear portent from my Lord
and you denied it.
I have not of that which you seek to hasten.
The determination is with God.
He relates The Truth.
And He is Best of the ones who
distinguish truth from falsehood. (6:57)
Say: Truly, if with me was what you seek to hasten,
the command would be decided between me and between you.
And God is greater in knowledge
of the ones who are unjust. (6:58)
With Him are the keys of the unseen.
None knows them but He.
And He knows whatever is on dry land and in the sea.
Not a leaf descends but He knows it,
nor a grain in the shadows of the earth,
nor fresh nor dry thing, but it is in a clear Book. (6:59)
It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime
and He knows what you were busy with by daytime.
Again, He raises you up in it so that the term,
that which is determined, is decided.

Again, to Him is your return.
Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing. (6:60)

COMMENTARY°

It is clear in the Prophet's heart that he has clear evidence given him by God. He is absolutely certain of this evidence, and his firm belief will not admit any doubts as a result of the attitude of the ungrateful who deny his message. Therefore, he devotes himself to his faith, and takes his stand away from his people. His certainty that they are in deep error is as strong as his certainty of the truth that he is rightly guided: (6:56-6:57)

The nature of God manifests itself in God's forbearance when He does not act on the ungrateful' requests for a physical miracle. Should He give them such a miracle and should they continue to disbelieve, their continued rejection of the truth would ensure their total destruction. Had the Prophet been able to grant them what they hastily demanded, he would have done so. As a human being, he would have been fed up with their stubborn rejection. To allow them an indefinite chance is an aspect of God's grace, one which reflects His God: *Say: Truly, if with me was what you seek to hasten, the command would be decided between me and between you. And God is greater in knowledge of the ones who are unjust.* (6:58)

Again, the nature of God is clearly reflected in God's knowledge that encompasses everything that takes place throughout the universe. This is described in a way that cannot apply to anyone other than God, and cannot be painted by anyone but Him: *With Him are the keys of the unseen. None knows them but He. And He knows whatever is on dry land and in the sea. Not a leaf descends but He knows it, nor a grain in the shadows of the earth, nor fresh nor dry thing, but it is in a clear Book.* (6:59)

Whatever good or evil we do, and whatever our hands take or leave, is known to God. None of our movements is left out: *It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime and He knows what you were busy with by daytime. Again, He raises you up in it so that the term, that which is determined, is decided. Again, to Him is your return. Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* (6:60)

BEYOND OUR PERCEPTION

We need now to say a word about the first clause in this sign, which states: *With Him are the keys of the unseen. None knows them but He.* (6:59)

It is important to define what we describe in English as lying

"beyond the reach of human perception" and the keys to it as being known only to God. This expression is given in the Arabic text in one word, *ghayb*, which is an essential element of the Quranic message, existence and life. The term is derived in Arabic from a root which denotes "absence, disappearance, hiding, shielding from people's senses and understanding".

We need to speak about *ghayb* because it is frequently contrasted nowadays with 'science' and what is 'scientific'. The Quran states that there is something to describe as *ghayb* which lies beyond the reach of human perception, and that the keys to this world are known only to God. The Quran also states that the knowledge we have been given is scanty, but sufficient for us and appropriate for our potential. Beyond the factual knowledge given them by God, people only indulge in guesswork, which is no substitute for the truth. God states that He has set into operation certain laws for this universe, and He has taught us how to understand some of these laws and deal with them according to our ability. He further states that He will reveal to us of these laws what strengthens our faith. This does not violate the unchangeable laws of nature or affect the world that remains beyond the reach of human perception. Nor does it affect God's absolute will or the fact that everything occurs in accordance with His will. We will now touch briefly on these facts.

To believe in God is to believe in what lies beyond the reach of human perception. It is not possible for human beings to comprehend the nature of God. When they believe in Him, they recognize the results of His actions, but they cannot conceive His nature or what He works. Similarly, the life to come also lies beyond the reach of human perception. Everything that relates to the Day of Judgment: the reckoning, the reward, and the punishment—all belong to the world beyond. We believe in all these because God has told us about them.

The *ghayb* which we are required to accept in order to have true faith includes other facts mentioned in the Quran as God describes the believers and their faith: *The Messenger believed in what was caused to descend to him from his Lord as do the ones who believe. All believed in God and His angels and His Books and His Messengers saying: We separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers. And they said: We heard and we obeyed, so grant **Your** forgiveness, Our Lord! And to **You** is the Homecoming.* (2:285) Every believer, then, must also believe in what God has revealed to His Messenger which includes some knowledge of the *ghayb* which God imparts to His Messenger, in a measure He determines, as explained in another Quranic sign: *He is The One Who Knows of the unseen! And He discloses not the unseen to anyone.* (72:26-72:27)

Believing in the angels is also part of believing in the imperceptible, because we only know about angels what God has chosen to tell us. In addition, we have to believe in God's will and its operation. That is also part of *ghayb*.

We are, however, surrounded by imperceptibles in every direction. Part of this relates to time: past, present and future. Another part exists within us ourselves, and more is available in the universe. What do we know about the origin of this universe, its existence, nature and motion? What do we know about life and its cycles? All this lies beyond his perception. Indeed, we do not know what occurs within us at the present moment, let alone what occurs during the next moment or in the universe with its atoms and electrons, etc.

The human intellect floats in an ocean of the unknown, stopping every now and then at little islands which, to us, represent the landmarks of our world. Without God's grace and His will to make this world subservient to us and to teach us a number of the rules of nature, we would not have been able to do anything. But we remains ungrateful to God: *But few of My servants are grateful.* (34:13) Indeed, some of us these days boast of the scanty knowledge God has given us and the laws of nature He has shown them to claim that "we stand alone" and that we are in no need of God. Sometimes, our boasting suggests that science is the opposite of the imperceptible and that scientific thinking contrasts with imperceptibility. The two, as he claims, are opposite extremes.

We arrive at our conclusions through experiment and analogy. We begin with a limited experiment and then generalize our conclusions by comparison, all of which can only lead a scientist to admit a probability, not a certainty. One way of arriving at a certainty is to apply the result of a particular experiment to everything with the same nature, occurring at any time and under any conditions. This is not available to us. The only way to arrive at a certainty and absolute truism is through divine guidance. What this boils down to is that we have the certainties that God has chosen to give us through His messengers. Beyond these, human knowledge remains within the range of what is probable, not what is certain.

Ghayb exists all around us, beyond the realm of our knowledge which continues to be based on probabilities. We look at the universe around us and continue to work out hypotheses and theories about its origin, nature and movement, and about time and place, their interrelationship with each other and with what takes place in the universe. We also try to think about life: its source, origin, nature, continuity, the factors and forces that influence it and how it relates to material existence. We also thinks about our self: how are we dif-

ferent from matter and what distinguishes us from other living things? How did we come to exist on this earth; and how do we behave? What is human intellect, and what are its distinctive features? What happens to him after death? Even if we take the human body: what occurs inside it of chemical interactions at every moment and how do such interactions happen?

Before we conclude we need to say a few words on the nature of *ghayb* as understood in the Quranic context.

The Quran states very clearly that there is a world beyond the reach of human perception and another world that can be perceived. Not everything around us is *ghayb*, and not all forces of the universe are unknown. There are certain laws that operate in the universe without fail. We can know some of these in as much as this knowledge can be tolerated or is needed by us to fulfil his role on earth.

God has given us the power to know this much of the laws of the universe and to manipulate these forces in accordance with these laws. We will then be able to accomplish our mission and make use of the potentials of the earth and promote life.

Side by side with these constant laws, God's will operates free of all restrictions. It is God's will that sets these laws in operation every time they operate. Theirs is not a purely automatic motion. Although they operate in accordance with the rules God has set for them, it is God's will that operates them. That will is part of *ghayb*, which is not known to anyone with any degree of certainty. The maximum that people can know of it remains within the range of assumptions and probabilities. Science readily admits this.

There is only one certainty, which is that of the world that lies beyond the reach of human perception. Everything else belongs to the world of probabilities. There is also one inevitability, which is that God's will shall come to pass. His will is part of the *ghayb* known only to Him. Nevertheless, there are constant laws of nature which we may study and recognize, and even utilize for our benefit. At the same time, the door remains open for God's will to operate as He chooses. This is the absolute certainty. *Truly, this, the Quran, guides to what is upright.* (17:9)

Having emphasized that God's knowledge includes everything in the universe, the section cites one aspect of this absolute knowledge which relates to us, and another aspect which asserts God's absolute power over everything in the universe: *It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime and He knows what you were busy with by daytime. Again, He raises you up in it so that the term, that which is determined, is decided. Again, to Him is your return. Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* (6:60) In a few simple

words, this sign explains that all human life is in God's hands, within His knowledge and subject to His will. This includes people's sleep and awakening, death and resurrection, reckoning and judgment. The description follows the inimitable method of the Quran in portraying everything vividly, alive. Thus it is able to touch people's hearts with every image drawn and every movement described.

It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime. (6: 60) It is then a form of death that occurs to people when they are overtaken by sleep. Their senses do not operate, their minds stop functioning and their consciousness stops. Human beings cannot yet discover the secret of what happens to them when they sleep, although they know its effects. This is, then, one of the numerous forms of ghayb that engulfs human life. As they sleep, human beings lose all their power, including their consciousness. They are in God's hands, as they are certainly all the time. He alone can bring them back to life. How weak we are in comparison to Him.

He knows what you were busy with by daytime (6:60) Whatever good or evil we do, and whatever our hands take or leave, is known to God. None of our movements is left out.

Again, He raises you up in it so that the term, that which is determined, is decided. (6:60) It is He who awakens you in the day from your slumber so that you complete the term He has appointed for each one of you. This covers the status of human beings within the range set by God. His will is inescapable.

Again, to Him is your return. (6:60) You return to Him just like sheep coming back to their shepherd at the end of the day. *Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* (6:60) This is when the record that includes everything is laid open. Absolute justice is then administered to all.

Although this is a short sign composed of a few words, it nonetheless includes a long sequence of scenes and images, statements of fact and wide-ranging connotations. Who other than God can produce such a style? What is miraculous if this is not a miracle? Yet those who reject the faith choose not to see it in its true color. They demand instead a physical miracle despite the fact that this would inevitably be followed by God's punishment, should they continue to reject Him afterwards.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here contains three "say" verses, messages the Prophet is specifically told to relate regarding faith. What are the three? To worship other than God is to go astray; to follow the desires of another is to go astray; God has sent the Prophet with a clear sign by which He distinguishes truth from falsehood that the ungrateful deny. If the command that the ungrateful wish to hasten to come were to arrive, the command of God would already have been decided. "Say" verses are an important concept in the Quran as a means of Quranic commands—imperatives—to be followed. Knowing the Quran as the first source for information about the Prophet is essential. This will give us a "new view" into his life.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

LESSON 55(8). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:61-6:70

Makkah: *And He is The One Who Is Omniscient*
over His servants.
And He sends over you recorders
until when death drew near one of you.
Our messengers gathered him to themselves
and they neglect not. (6:61)
Again, they would be returned to God,
their Defender, The True.
Is not the determination for Him?
And He is The Swiftest of the ones who reckon. (6:62)
Say: Who delivers you from the shadows
of the dry land and the sea?
You call to Him humbly and inwardly:
*If **You** were to rescue us from this,*
we will be of the ones who are thankful. (6:63)
Say: God delivers you from them and from every distress.
And, again, you ascribe partners with Him. (6:64)
Say: He is The One Who Has Power to raise up on you

a punishment from above you, or from beneath your feet
or to confuse you as partisans
and to cause you to experience the violence
of some of you to one another.
Look on how We diversify the signs
so that perhaps they will understand! (6:65)
*And **your** folk denied it and it is The Truth.*
Say: I am not a trustee over you. (6:66)
For every tiding there is an appointed time.
And you will know it. (6:67)
*And when **you** had seen those who engage in idle talk*
about Our signs, then, turn aside from them
until they discuss in conversation other than that.
*And if Satan should cause **you** to forget,*
then, after a reminder, sit not with the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (6:68)
There is not on those who are God-conscious
anything of their reckoning,
but a reminder so that perhaps they will be God-conscious. (6:69)
Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life
as a pastime and as a diversion
and whom this present life deluded.
But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up
to destruction for what it earned.
Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor.
Even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it.
Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned.
For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment
because they had been ungrateful. (6:70)

COMMENTARY°

An important feature of God is that which combines absolute power over all creation and a constant, alert watch. That which combines the predetermination of the life span of every individual, and our inescapable destiny with the final reckoning which is both prompt and unfailing. All this belongs to the realm of those imperceptibles which encompass human life. (6:61-6:62)

This is all portrayed in a short, fast, clear scene, producing a profound effect. They are reminded that great distress is not limited to the Day of Resurrection when they have to face their reckoning. They, indeed, go through periods of great distress in the deep darkness of land and sea. At such moments, they turn only to God, rec-

ognizing that only He can save them. Still they revert to their erring ways in periods of ease: (6:63-6:64) At times, it is sufficient to visualize danger and remember distress to soften people's hearts and help them restrain their wild desires. People can then remember their feelings of weakness as they remember God's grace when He alleviates their distress. *If You were to rescue us from this, we will be of the ones who are thankful.* (6:63)

God commands His Messenger to remind them of the truth: *Say: God delivers you from them and from every distress.* (6:64) There is no one to respond to them other than He, and no one else to remove their distress. But the Prophet is also commanded to remind them of their singularly strange attitude: *And, again, you ascribe partners with Him.* (6: 64)

The section reminds them of God's power which could smite them after they have been saved. It is not like a momentary distress which is not replaced once it is over. They are reminded of God's unlimited ability to bring about suffering that they cannot endure: (6:65)

Your people have rejected the Quran. *And your folk denied it and it is The Truth. Say: I am not a trustee over you.* (6:66)

God then instructs His Messenger to dissociate himself from his people, making his attitude clear to them. He is also to inform them that he has no say over their fate. Neither is he responsible for their behavior, nor can he guide their hearts. That is not up to him. Once he has conveyed to them his message, he has discharged his duty and he has to leave them to their inevitable destiny: *For every tiding there is an appointed time. And you will know it.* (6:67)

If he were to do otherwise, his action could be construed as an implicit acceptance of what they do. Alternatively, it may be taken as a carelessness with the faith, when a Muslim should place his religion at the top of what he cherishes. Should he forget all this and sit with them, he must immediately upon remembering the correct approach rise up and leave their company: (6:68-6:69)

The section continues to reiterate the complete distinction between the two communities, outlining the limits within which dealings and interactions may be conducted. *And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.*(6:70)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)?**
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What does the Quranic message say we should do with those who take their way of life (din, religion) as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded? *Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up to destruction for what it earned. Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor. And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (6:70)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what we are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question myself and others.

Lesson 55(9). Critical Thinking Strategy
Reasoning Dialectically: Comparing Interpretations

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam)
Signs 6:71-6:82

Makkah: *Say: Will we call to other than God*
what can neither hurt nor profit us?
And are we to be repelled on our heels
after God guided us like one whom the satans
lured, bewildered in and on the earth
although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying:
Approach us? Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance.
And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds (6:71)
and to perform the formal prayer
and be God-conscious of Him.
And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.(6:72)
And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth with The Truth.
And on a Day He says: Be! Then, it is!
His saying is The Truth.
And His is the dominion on a Day when the trumpet will be blown.

He is One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible.
And He is The Wise, The Aware.(6:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:75)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:76)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:77)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:78)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:79)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:80)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:81)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:82)

COMMENTARY°

We have a strong denunciation of this absurdity which no human intellect can accept once it is freed of inherited traditions and prevailing values and is allowed to judge objectively for itself. To emphasize the association of partners with God and to strengthen its denunciation, the section portrays these beliefs in contrast to the concept of God's Oneness and submission to Him alone. It is to this concept that He has guided the believers: *Say: Will we call to other than God what can neither hurt nor profit us?* (6:71)

To revert to idolatry is, then, a turning back on one's heels in a retrogressive movement after one has achieved considerable progress. This is followed by a vividly realistic and inspiring scene: *And are we to be repelled on our heels after God guided us like one whom the satans lured, bewildered in and on the earth although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying: Approach us?* (6:71)

The scene is full of life. It describes the loss and bewilderment that inevitably overwhelms any person who reverts to idolatry after having believed in God's Oneness. He finds himself torn between believing in the Supreme Lord who has no partners, and numerous deities who are powerless. He is confused, unable to determine where to turn for guidance. He is lost, bewildered. How miserable is his lot for being lured away, perplexed and for committing blunders. The word 'lure' is highly descriptive. The person we see in this scene does not follow the direction into which he is lured in order to establish a well-defined objective, even though it leads to error.

He has, on the other side, friends and companions who have followed proper guidance, and who beckon him to come over to them. Between the lure of the devils and the beckoning of his guided companions this person continues to blunder along, unable to determine

where to go and which side to join. His psychological suffering looms large, so much so that we actually feel it as it is described.

The scene is followed by a clear statement outlining the right way which all people should follow: *Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance. And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds and to perform the formal prayer and be God-conscious of Him. And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.* (6:71-6:72)

This decisive statement fits perfectly with the psychological situation described here. When someone fully appreciates the type of bewilderment the Quranic sign describes and the suffering of anyone who so experiences such bewilderment, he is ready to receive with reassurance such a decisive statement and accept it without hesitation. *Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance.* (6:71) This is an absolute certainty.

Guidance followed by complete submission God has given us the ability to recognize and appreciate some of the laws of nature, its forces and potentials so that we may be able to use these in discharging the task assigned to us of building the earth and promoting human life and civilization. But we have not been granted by God the ability to get to the core of the absolute truths of the universe or to fathom the world which lies beyond the reach of his perceptions. This world includes the workings of our own mind sand soul, and even the workings of our own organs and the causes which enable our body to function properly, according to a definite system and a particular fashion. Hence, we are in need of divine guidance concerning everything that relates to our own nature, including faith, morals, values and standards, systems and laws. Only with such guidance can we regulate our life as it should be regulated.

Whenever we adopt God's guidance, we find ourselves following the right track, because *"God's guidance is the only guidance"*. Whenever we abandon God's guidance completely or deviates from it partially in order to replace it with something else, we lose our way. This is due to the fact that whatever is in conflict with God's guidance represents error and loss. There is simply no third cause: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray?* (10:32)

Humanity continues to endure the terrible effects of going astray, for these are inevitable when mankind moves away from God's guidance. Indeed, this is the one historical inevitability which is certain to take place because, unlike those inevitabilities claimed by the advocates of different philosophies, this one is determined by God.

Anyone who wishes to look closely at the misery to which people expose themselves when they deviate from God's guidance does not need to look far. That misery is everywhere for us to see. Those

who are endowed with insight and intelligence continue to raise their voices to warn against it. The Quranic sign states clearly that human beings must submit themselves to God alone, offer worship to Him and continue to fear Him alone: *And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds and to perform the formal prayer and be God-conscious of Him. And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.* (6:71-6:72)

The instructions given to the Prophet Muhammad are such that he has to declare in absolute clarity that God's guidance is the only guidance. As such, we are commanded to submit to the *Lord of all the worlds*, because to Him alone all the worlds submit. Why should we be the only exception out of all creation when everything in the universe submits to God's absolute Lordship?

The reference made here to the fact that God is *the Lord of all the worlds* comes at the right time. It emphasizes an undeniable fact that all the worlds, whether known or unknown to us, submit to the laws God has set in operation and cannot break away from them. Biologically, man is also subject to the laws of nature. What we need to do, then, is to submit also in the area in which we have been given a choice: to follow guidance or to sink in error. When we choose to submit to God in the same way as we do biologically, all our affairs will be set aright, because harmony will be established between our constitution and our actions, between our body and our soul, between our present life and our life to come.

The most essential thing, then, is complete submission to God and the acknowledgement of His Lordship over the universe. The offering of worship and the molding of conscious attitudes follow from this, because these cannot be done properly unless they are based on the solid foundation of our submission to God. The final note in this passage brings together a number of essential components of the concept of faith, namely, resurrection, creation, wisdom and awareness of all that takes place in the universe. All these are attributes so that our concept of God is properly formulated: *And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. And on a Day He says: Be! Then, it is! His saying is The Truth. And His is the dominion on a Day when the trumpet will be blown. He is One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible. And He is The Wise, The Aware.*(6:73) This fact applies to God's word, "*Be*", which causes creation.

This His commandment that all creation should submit to Him alone, this His word providing legislation for mankind to implement, and this His word which tells us about the past, present and future, the origin of creation, resurrection, reckoning and reward. In all this, His word is the truth. Hence, those who associate with Him partners

that can cause no benefit or harm, those who follow the bidding of anyone other than Him, or who adopt any philosophy other than that of the divine faith, or who implement any legislation other than His code are advised to surrender themselves to Him alone. *And His is the dominion on a Day when the trumpet will be blown.* (6:73)

On the Day of Resurrection, the trumpet is sounded in a way that no human being has thus far heard. It is part of what God has kept to Himself. The nature of that trumpet and how people respond to it remain unknown to anyone other than God. The reports available to us suggest that it is a horn-like trumpet, made of light. It is blown by an angel. As the dead in their graves hear it, they immediately rise up. Indeed, this is the second blow given on that trumpet. The first one causes all creatures in the heavens and on earth to be stunned, with the exception of those God chooses to exempt.

On that day when the trumpet is sounded, even the rejecters and the blind will begin to see and realize that all sovereignty belongs to God alone. No one has any power other than Him. No will can operate other than His. Hence, those who in this life refuse to submit to Him willingly are well advised to change their attitude before they have to submit to His absolute power on the day when the trumpet is blown. *He is One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible.* (6:73)

His knowledge is perfect, absolute. It includes everything that is kept away from us as well as that which we see in the universe. Nothing of people's affairs and no part of their lives can be hidden from Him. Again, they will follow good counsel if they surrender themselves to Him, worship Him and be God-conscious. This fact is mentioned here for its own sake and is used as something with which to influence those who reject the faith.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret**

the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us here in an exchange of the believers to the ungrateful: *Say: Will we call to other than God what can neither hurt nor profit us? And are we to be repelled on our heels after God guided us like one whom the satans lured, bewildered in and on the earth although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying: Approach us? Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance. And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds* (6:71) *and to perform the formal prayer and be God-conscious of Him. And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.* (6:72)

Analyze this sign based on the Quranic Critial Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialectical reasoning after studying these verses.
I understood that the guidance of God is The Guidance.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:83-6:90

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:83)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph; Book 25: Noah; Book 28: David, Solomon, Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron (6:84)
Makkah: Book 28: Zechariah, Yahya, Jesus, Elias (6:85)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael, Lot; Book 25: Elisha; Book 28: Jonah; (6:86)
Makkah: Book 24: Prophets (6:87)
Makkah: Book 24: Prophets (6:88)
Makkah: Book 24: Prophets (6:89)
Makkah: Book 24: Prophets (6:90)

LESSON 55(10). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:91-6:94

Madinah (6:91)
Makkah: *And this is a Book*
We caused to descend
—that which is blessed—and that which establishes as true
what was before it and for you to warn the Mother of Towns
and who are around it and those who believe in the world to come
believe in it.
And they over their formal prayers are watchful. (6:92)
Madinah (6:93)
And, certainly, you drew near Us one by one
as We created you the first time.
And you left what We granted you behind your backs.
We see not your intercessors with you,
those whom you claimed as your ascribed associates.
Certainly, the bonds between you were cut asunder.
And gone astray from you is what you had been claiming. (6:94)

COMMENTARY°

There is a strong rebuke by God Himself (6:92) about whom they asserted their fabrications. They stand in front of Him in a position of total misery: *And, certainly, you drew near Us one by one as We created you the first time.* (6:94) You have nothing except your own selves, and you come as individuals, each one for himself. That

is how you face your Lord, just as He created you: each is born alone, naked, helpless. You have left behind everything you have had; everybody else has deserted you; you have no power or authority over anything God had given to you: *And you left what We granted you behind your backs.* (6:94) All your wealth, children, prestige, position and power you have left behind because you could not bring them with you, even if you had so wished. *We see not your intercessors with you, those whom you claimed as your ascribed associates.* (6:94) You used to claim that those beings would intercede on your behalf anytime you go through a hardship. You used to assign to them a portion of your lives and a share of your wealth, claiming that they would intercede for you with God. This is similar to their claim in defense of their idolatrous practices, when they said: These assumed intercessors may take different shapes and forms. They may be human, such as priests and people of power and authority, or they may be statues of stone, idols, jinn, angels, planets or indeed any being, which symbolized their gods.

Now that they have come to their Lord individually, each on his or her own, they are asked where have those partners and intercessors gone? The answer is given in the Quranic sign in these terms: *Certainly, the bonds between you were cut asunder.* (6:94) Every link, and every tie has been broken. There is no longer anything to group them together in any way or form. *And gone astray from you is what you had been claiming.* (6:94) They used to make all sorts of assertions, including what they maintained about those beings whom they claimed to be partners with God or whom they alleged to be able to intercede with God. All these claims are now proven false. All trust they had put in anyone or anything has failed them. They are totally powerless. This scene violently shakes the human heart as it holds out a vivid and awesome image, imparting its overtones to us so that we are able to contemplate its powerful message. This is just one example of the inimitable style of the Quran.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of

the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

LESSON 55(11). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:95-6:100

Makkah: *Truly, it is God who is One Who Causes to Break Forth*
the grain and the pit of a date.
He brings out the living from the dead
and is One Who Brings Out the dead from the living.
That is God.
Then, how you are mislead. (6:95)
He is One Who Causes to Break Forth the morning dawn
and He made the night as a place of comfort and rest
and the sun and the moon to keep count.
That is the foreordaining of The Almighty, The Knowing. (6:96)
And it is He Who made the stars for you
so that you will be truly guided by them
in the shadows of dry land and the sea.
Surely, We explained distinctly the signs
for a folk who know. (6:97)
And it is He Who caused you to grow from a single soul,
then, a temporary stay and a repository.
Surely, We explained distinctly
the signs for a folk who understand. (6:98)
And it is He Who caused to descend water from heaven.
Then, We brought out from it every kind of bringing forth.
Then, We brought out herbs from it.
We bring out from it thick-clustered grain
and from the date palm tree, from the spathe of it,
thick clusters of dates,
that which draws near and gardens of the grapevines
and the olives and the pomegranates, like each to each
and not resembling one another.
Look on its fruit when it bore fruit and its ripening.
Truly, in this are signs for a folk who believe. (6:99)

And they made as associates with God—the jinn—
although He created them.
And they invented for Him sons and daughters
without knowledge. Glory be to Him!
Exalted is He above what they allege. (6:100)

COMMENTARY°

THE RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

Most of all we need to remember how its waves follow close on the heels of each other in an endless flow, and how its scenes are portrayed in a breathtaking splendor, coupled with a superbly inspiring rhythm.

This section tackles its subject matter in a unique way. At every turn, in every situation or scene, it brings out in sharp relief all the awesome splendor of what is being portrayed, keeping us spellbound, breathless. We follow its scenes and changing, powerful rhythm.

In its quick flow of scenes, inspirations, rhythms, images and shades, it resembles a fast, wide river flowing with white water. As one wave reaches its breaking place, the next one follows very closely, almost reaching out to the one that has just gone by. The flow remains continuous, unending.

In every one of these flowing and closely successive waves, the same rich splendor is there to see. And in all the scenes portrayed, we have superb harmony. Thus, we are absolutely enchanted; first by the splendid scenes, then their lively images, the powerful music, the inimitable expression, the flood of inspiring figures of speech. The section addresses our heart and mind from every angle and in every way possible.

All these features are seen at their clearest in this passage. The reader feels as though the scenes spring to life, with all their color and brightness, jumping up in front of us just as the rhythm flows with the words that are recited, striking a note of perfect harmony. Each scene spreads itself before us like a bright spark appearing from the distance, and gradually exhibiting its full, captivating splendor before our very eyes. Another spark is then produced by the very expressions that are used, and its rhythm strikes harmony between the scenes portrayed and the meanings illustrated. Consistency is felt in the flow of expression and harmony is unmistakable in the brilliantly painted scenes.

Beauty is the main feature here: The section attains its breathtaking climax, with scenes that are chosen for their beauty and wording and construction that are meticulously selected for their rhythm and power of expression. In addition, even the ideas floated here ad-

dress the basic truth of the Quranic message, with its infinitely rich meaning, and all from the angle of beauty. Thus, this truth appears to swim in a sea of absolute perfection.

Once the section has portrayed this universal scene with all its pointers to God's existence and His ability and perfect design, it then describes the beliefs of those who ascribe partners to God. Against this inspiring set up, these beliefs appear so singular. Their assertions are shown to be revolting delusions, and they are strongly denounced: *And they made as associates with God—the jinn—although He created them. And they falsely attributed to Him sons and daughters without knowledge. Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above what they allege.* (6:100)

Some of the Arabs in the pre-Quranic days of ignorance used to worship the jinn while not knowing exactly who those jinn were. These were merely the delusions of paganism. When a human being deviates from believing in the absolute Oneness of God, even partially, he is bound to increase his deviation. At first, the point of diversion seems to be too small to notice, but then the gap grows wider and wider. Those ancient Arabs used to follow the faith preached by the Prophet Ishmael, which was based on the belief in God's Oneness as preached by the Prophet Abraham. They subsequently deviated from this sound concept. Their deviation must have started in a small way, but then it went as far as to consider the jinn partners with God, when He Himself created them: *And they made as associates with God—the jinn.* (6:100)

Different forms of pagan communities were aware that there were evil beings, i.e. something similar to devils, and they feared those beings, whether they considered them evil spirits or evil creatures. Therefore, they used to provide offerings to them in order to circumvent their fury. Thereafter, they began to worship them. This form of paganism that prevailed in Arabia before the Quranic message is just one of many forms in which such misconceptions flourished and led to the worship of the jinn describing them as God's partners. The section uses a very simple sentence, conveyed in the Arabic text by just one word, to describe the stupidity of such beliefs: *Although He created them..* (6:100) The sarcasm here is very clear. If it is God, the Glorious who has created them, how is it, then, that they are His partners, sharing with Him the qualities of God and Lordship of the universe?

Their misconceptions were not confined to this aspect alone. Once idolatry or polytheism takes root, deviation never stops and delusions become rife. *And they invented for Him sons and daughters without knowledge. Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above what they*

allege. (6:100) It is all their inventions. The Quran uses here a particularly expressive word to denote 'invention', one which gives an impression of physical fabrication.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message (6:95-6:100) calls for the deep questioning of our believes. What information are we given about the creation? Can it be interpreted as coming from any other than God? How many concepts of creation can you nae from these verses? Can one assume that God had the jinn as associates in this endeavor? What are the implications of such a belief when God created them?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 55(12). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATION

HOW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM) SIGNS 6:101-6:110

Makkah: *He is Beginner of the heavens and the earth.*
How would He have a child when He is without a companion and He created everything
and He is Knowing of everything? (6:101)
That is God, your Lord. There is no god but He

—the One Who is Creator of everything—so worship Him.
For He is Trustee over everything. (6:102)
No sight overtakes Him, but He overtakes sight.
And He is The Subtle, The Aware. (6:103)
Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord.
So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul.
Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul.
Say: And I am not a guardian over you. (6:104)
And, thus, We diversify the signs and they will say:
***You** received instruction and We will make the Quran*
manifest for a folk who know. (6:105)
*Follow **you** what was revealed to **you** from **your** Lord.*
There is no god but He.
*Turn **you** aside from the ones who are idolaters.* (6:106)
And if God willed, they would not have
ascribed partners with Him,
*We made **you** not a guardian over them,*
*nor are **you** a trustee for them.* (6:107)
And offend not those who call to other than God
so that they not offend God out of spite without knowledge.
Thus, We made to appear pleasing the actions
of every community.
Again, to their Lord is their return.
Then, He will tell them what they had been doing. (6:108)
And they swear by God the most earnest sworn oaths
that if a sign would draw near them,
they would, certainly, believe in it.
Say: The signs are only with God.
And what will cause you to realize that
even if the signs were to draw near,
they would not believe? (6:109)
We will turn around and around their minds
and their sight as they believe not in it the first time.
And We will forsake them in their defiance,
wandering unwilling to see. (6:110)

COMMENTARY°

A CLEAR CONCEPT OF THE CREATOR

The section puts these allegations face to face against the absolute truth of God. It makes its arguments against these misconceptions in such a way that reveals how hollow they are: *He is Beginner of the heavens and the earth. How would He have a child when He*

is without a companion and He created everything and He is Knowing of everything? (6:101)

Here the section makes use of a recognized fact in order to address their minds, giving them examples that are relevant to their own lives and what they see around them. Moreover, the section gives special emphasis to the fact that all beings are created in order to disprove any suggestions of a multiplicity of gods. What is created can never be a partner to the Creator. The essence of the Creator and that of the created are totally different. The section speaks of God's knowledge as absolute, while the knowledge of the ungrateful is based on delusions and guesswork: *He is Beginner of the heavens and the earth. How would He have a child when He is without a companion and He created everything and He is Knowing of everything?* (6:101)

The same truth of creation is re-emphasized in order to assert another aspect. It tells that the One who is worshipped and obeyed and to whom submission is made is the creator of all things. Therefore, there is no deity save Him, the only Lord in the universe: *That is God, your Lord. There is no god but He—the One Who is Creator of everything—so worship Him. For He is Trustee over everything.* (6:102)

THE CHOICE TO REMAIN UNSEEING

The beauty is brought to its perfect, enthralling climax at the end of those scenes which describe the universe and which reach out to the One beyond. In this way we behold the Originator of the heavens and earth who has placed all these wonderful things in the universe. The section speaks of Him in images and expressions the beauty of which cannot be intimated except by the Quranic text itself: *No sight overtakes Him, but He overtakes sight. And He is The Subtle, The Aware.* (6:103)

In this passage we find an example of the linkage the Quran makes between pure worship and recognizing that God belongs only to God, the Creator and guardian of all: *That is God, your Lord. There is no god but He—the One Who is Creator of everything—so worship Him. For He is Trustee over everything.* (6:102)

The section follows with a description of God which is so powerful that it impresses man's whole being with connotations which I believe to be indescribable by any human language. Let us then allow these impressions to formulate as we behold the scene which allows God's reassuring attributes to be more prominent than His fear-inspiring attributes: *No sight overtakes Him, but He overtakes sight. And He is The Subtle, The Aware.*(6:103)

The section then comments on what it has already listed of signs and evidence available everywhere in the universe, and within the human soul itself. What follows serves also as a comment on the statement that concerns God's nature: *No sight overtakes Him, but He overtakes sight. And He is The Subtle, The Aware.* (6:103)

We have already said that no human language can explain or commentate on such a description. It imparts its own clear sense to our minds. However, it is followed by a significant comment: *Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* (6:104)

What God has given us is indeed the means of insight which provides guidance and points to the right way. The choice is then left to every individual. He who chooses to see will find himself in the light, equipped with guidance. Inevitably, the alternative is total blindness. No one deliberately persists in error after having seen these signs and received these insights except one who shuts out his senses, suppresses his feelings, stifles his conscience and remains blind. The Prophet is instructed to declare that he dissociates himself from them: *Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* (6:104)

Perhaps it is important to draw the readers' attention to the fact that in the Arabic text these signs use, in addition to their powerful rhythm, a few unmistakable and beautiful stylistic elements, such as alliteration and the juxtaposition of opposites. Thus, their effect, as we read them in Arabic, is immeasurably enhanced.

The section then addresses the Prophet, pointing out how revelations and signs of God's existence have been spelled out and explained in a way that could not fit with the Prophet's social environment or the fact that he could not read and write. For any open-minded person, this, in itself, is sufficient evidence to prove that these revelations were from God. But the idolaters did not wish to have such convincing evidence.

Therefore, they used to say that Muhammad had studied these questions of faith and those aspects of the universe with a Christian or a Jewish scholar. They did not realize that no Christian or Jew could have attained the standard of knowledge which remotely approached what the Prophet said to them. Indeed, no one on earth today can hope to reach anywhere near this level, superior as it is to all human knowledge. Therefore, the Prophet is instructed to follow what has been revealed to him and to turn away from the ungrateful: (6:105-6:107)

As for those who have true knowledge, the spelling out of revelations in the Quranic way allows them to realize the truth: *We will make the Quran manifest for a folk who know.* (6:105) As a result, the separation occurs between people endowed with knowledge and

insight who know the truth, and people who are blind and ignorant.

WELL-DEFINED ATTITUDES

This is followed by a divine order to the Prophet to follow what God has revealed to him and to turn away from pagan people who associate partners with Him. He is not to pay any attention to them or their petty arguments and not to worry about their stubborn rejection of his message. His task is to implement his message by molding his life and the attitudes of his followers on the basis of the divine message. He is to care nothing for the ungrateful: *Follow you what was revealed to you from your Lord. There is no god but He. Turn you aside from the ones who are polytheists.*(6:106)

Had God so willed, He would have imposed His guidance on them. He could, if He so willed, have created them knowing no way other than that of His guidance, in the same way as angels are bound always to obey Him. He, however, has created us with the ability to follow either right guidance or error. He has left us to choose our way and has held us accountable for our choice. All this is, of course, within the framework of God's absolute free will which governs everything that occurs in the universe, without imposing a choice on any human being. God has created us in this fashion for a purpose He knows. He has a role to play assigned to us by God, using his abilities and talents: *And if God willed, they would not have ascribed partners with Him, We made you not a guardian over them, nor are you a trustee for them.* (6:107)

The Prophet is not responsible for their actions, and he has not been assigned as a watchdog over their hearts: (6:107) his instruction to the Prophet defines the area around which he should concentrate his efforts. The Prophet's successors and those who advocate his faith in every generation and every community are also made aware of their area of activity and its limits.

BASIC FACTS ON FAITH AND GOD'S POWER

Moreover, the believers are instructed to adopt, as they turn away from the ungrateful, an attitude of propriety, decency and refinement which suits those who believe in God. They are instructed not to revile the idols or deities of the ungrateful so that the latter do not start to revile God, without knowing His true position and His majesty. Thus any abuse by the believers of their worthless deities would be taken as an excuse to abuse God, the Almighty: (6:108)

It is human nature that when a person does something, whether good or bad, he thinks that he has done well and he defends his actions. If he follows guidance, he finds it good; and if he is in error,

he still believes that his error is good. The ungrateful ascribed partners to God and appealed to them instead of appealing to Him; yet they accepted that God is the One who creates and provides sustenance.

The passage concludes by mentioning those ungrateful who used to swear most solemnly that if only a miracle, like those given to earlier prophets and messengers, were shown them they would certainly believe. On hearing such assurances, some Muslims suggested to the Prophet that he should pray to God to show them such a miracle. Here they are given a clear answer, which shows the nature of those people and their obstinate rejection of the divine faith: (6:109-6:110)

BASIC FACTS ON FAITH AND GOD'S POWER

Moreover, these signs outline certain basic facts that we must consider. The first of these facts is that to accept the faith or to deny it, to follow the right guidance or to remain in error, does not depend on the provision of proofs and evidence of the truth. The truth is its own proof and it can easily prevail over the human mind to accept it and submit to it with reassurance. There are impediments that may prevent a person from accepting the truth. Indeed, God refers to these as He addresses the believers: *And they swear by God the most earnest sworn oaths that if a sign would draw near them, they would, certainly, believe in it. Say: The signs are only with God. And what will cause you to realize that even if the signs were to draw near, they would not believe? We will turn around and around their minds and their sight as they believe not in it the first time. And We will forsake them in their defiance, wandering unwilling to see.* (6:109-6:110)

What prevented them the first time round from accepting divine guidance could happen again even after a miracle is shown them, and they could, thus, continue to go astray and reject guidance.

The pointers to faith are latent within us and are inherent within the truth itself. They do not relate to any external factor. It is imperative, therefore, that our heart be purged of all external factors impeding its acceptance of the faith.

The second fact is that God's will is the ultimate factor which determines who follows guidance and who goes astray. God has willed that human beings be tested, allowing us the freedom of choice to determine which course we follow. Anyone who utilizes this freedom in order to seek guidance with the intention of following it once it is received, though he may not know at that moment where he stands, will find that God, by His will, is helping him and showing him the right way. Conversely, a person who uses this freedom of choice to turn away from guidance and the pointers to faith, will find

himself further away from the truth, because God's will has determined that he should drift further astray and continue to grope in the dark. God's will prevails over human beings in all situations. It is He who determines everything in the end.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What is the clear evidence that has drawn near us from our Lord according to the Quranic signs here? Analyze verses 6:104-6:105 as to information, interpretation, concepts, assumptions and implications.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

Lesson 55(13). Critical Thinking Strategy Experiences, Reasoned Judgments

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam) Signs 6:111-6:121

Makkah: *And even if We sent down*
the angels to them
and the dead spoke to them
and we assembled everything against them,
face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills,
except many of them are ignorant. (6:111)
And, thus, We made an enemy for every Prophet,
satans from among humankind and the jinn.
Some of them reveal to some others an ornamented saying,
a delusion.
*And if **your** Lord willed, they would not have accomplished it.*
So forsake them and what they devise, (6:112)
while minds will bend towards it
of those who believe not in the world to come
and they will be well-pleased with it.
And they will gain what the ones who gain, gain. (6:113)
Madinah (6:114)
Makkah: *Completed was the Word of **your** Lord in sincerity*
and justice.
There is no one who changes His Words.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (6:115)
*And if **you** obey most of who are on the earth,*
*they will cause **you** to go astray from the way of God.*
They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess. (6:116)

*Truly, **your** Lord is He Who is greater in knowledge*
of who goes astray from His way.
And He is greater in knowledge
of the ones who are truly guided. (6:117)
So eat of that over which the Name of God
was remembered if you had been
ones who believe in His signs. (6:118)
And why should you not eat of that over which
the Name of God was remembered on it?
Surely, He explained distinctly to you
what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it.
And, truly, many cause others to go astray
by their desires without knowledge.
*Truly, **your** Lord, He is greater in knowledge*
of the ones who exceed the limits. (6:119)
And forsake manifest sin and its inward part.
Truly, those who earn sin, they will be given recompense
for what they had been gaining. (6:120)
Eat not of that over which the Name of God
is not remembered on it.
Truly, it is contrary to moral law.
And, truly, the satans will reveal to their protectors
so that they dispute with you and if you obeyed them,
truly, you would be of the ones who are idolaters. (6:121)

COMMENTARY°

The rest of the section tackles the question of God's authority over people's lives and the law they implement. Therefore, the section repeatedly emphasizes that all authority belongs to God who continues to govern the destiny of those who disobey Him and turn away from His constitution. These people cannot do any harm to believers, unless God so wills. Indeed, they are too weak to have any authority over themselves, let alone over believers. What takes place in life is simply the fulfilment of God's will as it relates to both those who obey Him and those who refuse to do so: *And even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

With this passage we begin discussion of the great issue treated in the remainder of this section: (6:112-121)

The groundwork for this discussion has been prepared throughout the section, including the discussion of major faith concepts. Fur-

ther preparation is given in the first two signs of this passage which speak of the continuing battle launched against every Prophet by the evil ones among human beings and the jinn, and how this battle is resolved. The preparation may also be seen in earlier references to the rules that govern divine guidance and how people react to it. Now the section dwells on the issue of what is lawful or forbidden of slaughtered animals, and whether God's name is invoked at the time of their slaughter or not.

The first two signs serve as a prelude to the important issues that relate to authority, law and sovereignty which take up the remaining part of this section. (6:112-113)

The passage then emphasizes once more that the authority to legislate in all matters that relate to human life belongs to God alone. This is preliminary to stating that it is God who determines which slaughtered animals are lawful to eat and which are forbidden. Those who associate partners with God often exercise this authority in blatant aggression against God and His sovereignty. We note that a long prelude is included here before the issue is clearly tackled: (6:114-117)

These four signs serve as a long preamble, introducing the main subject and closely relating it to the central issue of acceptance or denial of the faith: (6:118-119)

Before the discussion of the question of permissibility and prohibition is completed, the section gives a number of instructions with strong overtones of authority and warning: (6:119-6:120)

The question of permissibility and prohibition is then resumed and linked directly to the question of submission to God alone, as opposed to associating partners with Him: *Eat not of that over which the Name of God is not remembered on it. Truly, it is contrary to moral law. And, truly, the satans will reveal to their protectors so that they dispute with you and if you obeyed them, truly, you would be of the ones who are polytheists.* (6:121)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Write a paragraph in answer to these questions: What are signs 6:118-

6:120 referring to? What is their purpose? What questions does it cause you to think about? What information does it give? What are the assumptions? How to you interpret it? What are the implications if someone does not follow what it says?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to:

Evaluate Reasoning by:•
Use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words
Develop criteria for evaluation
Recognize and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts

LESSON 55(14). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN?

CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:122-6:129

Makkah: *Is he who had been lifeless*
and We gave him life and We made a light for him
by which he walks among humanity
like he who is in the shadows
and is not one who goes forth from them?
Thus, it was made to appear pleasing to ones who are ungrateful
what they had been doing. (6:122)

And, thus, We made in every town greater ones
who sin that they plan in it.
Yet they plan not but against themselves
although they are not aware. (6:123)
And when a sign drew near them they said:
We will not believe until we are given the like
of what was given to Messengers of God.
God is greater in knowledge where to assign His message.
On those who sinned will light contempt from God
and a severe punishment
for what they had been planning. (6:124)
And whomever God wants, He guides him.
He expands his breast for The Submission to One God.
And whomever He wants to cause to go astray,
He makes his breast tight, troubling,
as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent.
Thus, God assigns disgrace
on those who believe not. (6:125)
And this is the path of ***your*** *Lord, one that is straight.*
Surely, We explained distinctly the signs
for a folk who recollect. (6:126)
For them is the abode of peace with their Lord.
And He is their protector for what they had been doing. (6:127)
And mention on a Day He will assemble them altogether.
O assembly of the jinn! Surely, you acquired much
from humankind.
And their protectors among humankind would say:
Our Lord! Some of us enjoyed some others
and we reached our term
that was appointed by ***You*** *for us.*
He would say: The fire is your place of lodging,
ones who will dwell in it forever, but what God willed.
Truly, ***your*** *Lord is Wise, Knowing.* (6:128)
And, thus, that is how We make some of them friends
with some others who are ones who are unjust to one another
for what they had been earning. (6:129)

COMMENTARY°

Next we have a full treatment of the nature of both faith and disbelief. The following signs speak of God's will that manifests itself in every community, even where the most hardened of criminals scheme and give themselves airs. Their arrogance prevents them

from accepting the faith. This concludes with a splendid image portraying the faith that opens people's hearts and minds, contrasting it with the oppressive situation of ingratitude, which weighs heavily on people's minds. The whole passage relates to the question of prohibition and permissibility concerning slaughtered animals, in the same way as a basic rule is related to a detailed application. (6:122-6:125)

The final comment in this passage provides the last link between the issues of faith and legislation. Together they form God's straight path. To violate either of them is to abandon the path set by God. To stick to them both is to follow the path which leads to the abode of peace and ensures God's patronage to those who do well: *And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect. For them is the abode of peace with their Lord. And He is their protector for what they had been doing.* (6:126-6:127)

God has made plain His revelations, but it is those who take heed and do not overlook these revelations that benefit by such a detailed statement. A believer's heart is always alert, wide open, happy, alive, responsive. Those who reflect and take heed will enjoy the abode of peace with their Lord. Their reward will not fail to come. God will grant them His support as He takes good care of them to reward them for what they have been doing. They have passed the test well and their reward is generous indeed.

Once more we find ourselves looking at one of the fundamental issues of this faith, showing God's straight path to reflect the recognition of His sovereignty and the following of His code. Beyond both lies faith. Together they define the nature of the Quranic message as stated by the Lord of the universe.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?

4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 6:125-6:126 based on the criterion of "taking to heart" mentioned at the beginning of the lesson.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to develop and clarify criteria for evaluating writing.
Continually evaluate written material and discuss its criteria.
Specific points should be explained in terms of the nine standards that you support (such as clarity).

LESSON 55(15). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:130-6:140

Makkah: *O assembly of jinn and humankind!*
Approach not Messengers from among yourselves
relating to you My signs,
and warning you of the meeting of this, your Day?
They said: We bore witness against ourselves.
This present life deluded them
and they bore witness against themselves
that they had been ones who are ungrateful. (6:130)
That is because ***your*** *Lord would never be*
One Who Causes to Perish towns unjustly
while their people are ones who are heedless. (6:131)
And for everyone there are degrees for what they did.
And ***your*** *Lord is not One Who is Heedless*
of what they do. (6:132)
Thy Lord is The Sufficient, Possessor of Mercy.
If He wills, He will cause you to be put away
and will make a successor after you of whomever He wills,
just as He caused you to grow
from offspring of other folk. (6:133)
Truly, what you are promised is, certainly,
that which arrives and you will not be
ones who frustrate it. (6:134)
Say: O my folk! Act according to your ability.
Truly, I too am one who acts.
Then, you will know for whom the Ultimate End
will be the abode.
Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper. (6:135)
And they assigned to God of what He made
numerous of cultivation and flocks a share.
Then, they said in their claim:
This is for God and this is for our ascribed associates.
But what had been ascribed for their associates then,
reaches not out to God
and what had been ascribed for God
then, reaches out to their associates.
How evil is the judgment they give! (6:136)

And, thus, made to appear pleasing
to many of the ones who are idolaters
was the killing of their children
by those whom they ascribe as associates with Him
so that they deal them destruction
and so that they confuse their way of life for them.
And if God willed, they would not have accomplished it.
So forsake them and what they devise. (6:137)
And they said: These flocks and cultivation are banned.
None should taste them, but whom we will, so they claim.
And there are flocks whose backs were forbidden and flocks
that they remember not the Name of God on it,
a devising against Him.
He will give them recompense
for what they had been devising. (6:138)
And they said: What is in the bellies of these flocks
is exclusively for our males
and is that which is forbidden to our female spouses,
but if it would be born dead, then, they are ascribed
as associates in it.
He will give recompense to them for their allegations.
Truly, He is Wise, Knowing. (6:139)
They, surely, lost those who foolishly kill their children
without knowledge.
They forbade what God provided them in a devising against God.
They, surely, went astray
and had not been ones who are truly guided. (6:140)

COMMENTARY°

Let us reflect for a moment on the remarkable Quranic style which paints future events so that we can visualize them now, as if they were taking place in front of our very eyes. The Quran is revealed so that it is read to people in this life, in their own surroundings. But it portrays the scenes of the life to come as if they are taking place now, while scenes of this life belong to an era which has long since passed. In this way, we forget that the Day of Judgment is still to come. We feel that it is here, now. This is only made possible by the remarkable style of the Quran: *O assembly of jinn and humankind! Approach not Messengers from among yourselves relating to you My signs, and warning you of the meeting of this, your Day? They said: We bore witness against ourselves. This present life deluded them and they bore witness against themselves that they had*

been ones who are ungrateful.(6:130)

When the scene is complete, the address is made to God's Messenger, his followers and to humanity generally. The address includes a comment on the judgment made against evil human beings and jinn and the fact that such a great multitude are condemned to the fire. Their fate is sealed only after they have testified against themselves that they continued to disbelieve despite receiving messengers who related to them God's revelations and warned them against what awaited them of God's punishment if they continued to reject the faith. The comment here makes it clear that God's punishment does not befall anyone without warning. God does not hold people accountable and does not punish them for their disbelief until after they have been shown the fact and received warnings from God's messengers who relate His revelations to them: *That is because your Lord would never be One Who Causes to Perish towns unjustly while their people are ones who are heedless.*(6:131)

Another rule is stated concerning reward and punishment. It is applicable to believers and evil ones in equal measure: *And for everyone there are degrees for what they did.* (6:132) The believers have their grades, one above the other, while the evil ones have their own grades, one sinking below the other. They attain or sink into their grades according to their deeds which have been monitored to the finest detail: *And your Lord is not One Who is Heedless of what they do.* (6:132)

God sends His messengers to human beings as a gesture of His grace. He Himself has no need of them, their worship or even their belief in Him. When they do well, they only benefit themselves both in this life and in the life to come. His grace is also seen in the fact that He grants a chance to the disobedient generation which continues to do wrong and to deny Him altogether, while He is able to destroy it completely and bring in its place a different generation: *Your Lord is The Sufficient, Possessor of Mercy. If He wills, He will cause you to be put away and will make a successor after you of whomever He wills, just as He caused you to grow from offspring of other folk.* (6:133) Therefore, human beings must never forget that they survive only by God's grace, and that their existence depends on His will. Whatever power they enjoy, has been given to them by God. Theirs is not an intrinsic power or a self-determined existence. No one has any choice with regard to their coming into being, and no one determines what sort of power he can exercise. To remove them altogether and to bring another community in their place is very easy for God. After all, it is He who has brought them into being from the seed of a past generation so that they succeed that generation by His will.

This is followed by another strong warning note: *Truly, what you are promised is, certainly, that which arrives and you will not be ones who frustrate it.* (6:134) You are all the time within God's grasp and subject to His will. It is He who determines your fate, and you cannot resist Him or escape from your fate. The Day of Resurrection, a scene from which has just been painted, awaits you. It will inevitably come. When it does, nothing will avail you against God Almighty. The final comment includes an implicit, but highly effective warning: *Say: O my folk! Act according to your ability. Truly, I too am one who acts. Then, you will know for whom the Ultimate End will be the abode. Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper.* (6:135)

This is a warning made by one who is certain that he follows the truth and who has complete trust in the power of the truth, and of the great power that supports the truth. The warning is made by God's Messenger (peace be upon him) who says that he is disclaiming any responsibility for them, confident that what he has is the truth, absolutely certain of his way. He is also certain that what they follow is error and their prospects are very gloomy indeed: *Then, you will know for whom the Ultimate End will be the abode. Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper.* (6:135) This is an unfailing rule. Those who associate partners with God will never be successful, because success is granted only by God. Those who do not follow His guidance are in deep error and will end up as miserable losers.

The passage begins with a brief reference to a host of concepts that prevailed in tribal honor days, and the pagan practices of the Arabs concerning their agricultural produce, livestock and children. In other words, these practices related to their economic and social set-up. The following are given by way of example:

1. They divided the provisions of sustenance God gave them, their crops and cattle into two portions, assigning one to God and claiming that they did this in accordance with God's law. They assigned the other portion to the deities they invented and who they considered as partners with God, having power over their lives, wealth and children: *But what had been ascribed for their associates then, reaches not out to God and what had been ascribed for God then, reaches out to their associates. How evil is the judgment they give!* (6:136)

2. Having done so, they deal unfairly with the portion they assigned to God. They add a part of it to the portion assigned to their other deities or partners and never do the same with the other portion: *But what had been ascribed for their associates then, reaches not out to God and what had been ascribed for God then, reaches out to*

their associates. How evil is the judgment they give! (6:136)

3. They willingly kill their children, having been induced to do so by their partners. The partners in this case are their priests and lawmakers who initiate traditions which acquire a force of their own, relying on social pressure and ancient legends with their religious overtones. Such killing of children claimed the lives of their daughters in the first place for fear of poverty and shame. Occasionally, it claimed the life of a son, particularly when the slaughter of a son was made in the form of a religious offering. An example of this was the pledge made by Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's grandfather, that should God give him ten sons to protect him, he would slay one of them as an offering to the gods: *And, thus, made to appear pleasing to many of the ones who are polytheists was the killing of their children by those whom they ascribe as associates with Him so that they deal them destruction and so that they confuse their way of life for them. And if God willed, they would not have accomplished it. So forsake them and what they devise.* (6:137)

4. They consecrated certain portions of their livestock and certain types of produce, falsely claiming that they could not be eaten without special permission from God. They also made certain animals unlawful to ride, and prohibited that God's name be mentioned over them at the time of slaughter or riding. They also prohibited such animals from being ridden at pilgrimage time, because pilgrimage involved glorifying God. They further claimed that all these restrictions had been ordered by God Himself:*And they said: Thes flocks and cultivation are banned. None should taste them, but whoi we will, so they claim. And there are flocks whose backs were forbidden and flocks that they remember not the Name of God on it, a devising against Him. He will give them recompense for what they had been devising.* (6:138)

5. They also consecrated what was in the bellies of their cattle to their men, prohibiting them to their women. However, if it happened to be stillborn, they would allow both males and females to partake of it. They attributed such absurdities to God: *And they said: What is in the bellies of these flocks is exclusively for our males and is that which is forbidden to our female spouses, but if it would be born dead, then, they are ascribed as associates in it. He will give recompense to them for their allegations. Truly, He is Wise, Knowing.* (6:139)

Such were the concepts and traditions which characterized Arabian society in ignorant, pre-Quranic days. This long passage, occurring in a Makkan section, seeks to put an end to them and to purge people's hearts and souls of their effects. The Quran follows a delib-

erate, slow and detailed approach in order to achieve its purpose.

It begins first by declaring that those who in their ignorance kill their children and forbid themselves what God has provided for them are indeed losers. These concepts they attribute to God are declared to be both absurd and erroneous.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Who are those who kill their children? Analyze 6:137 based on the above criteria for Quranic Critical Thinking.

Answer the following questions.

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?
What is the meaning behind the information given in the above signs?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

Lesson 55(16). Critical Thinking Strategy Distinguishing Relevant from Irrelevant Information

Developing Sensitivity to Relevance

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam) Signs 6:141-6:144

Madinah (6:141)

Makkah: *And of the flocks are some as beasts of burden*
and some for slaughter.
Eat of what God provided you and follow not in the steps of Satan.
Truly, he is a clear enemy to you. (6:142)
Eight diverse pairs; two of sheep and two of goats.
Say: Forbade He the two males or the two females?
Or what is contained in the wombs of the two females?
Tell me with knowledge
if you had been ones who are sincere. (6:143)
And of the camels two and of cows two, say:
Forbade He the two males or the two females
or what is contained in the wombs of the two females?
Had you been witnesses when God charged you with this?

Then, who does greater wrong than he
who devised a lie against God
to cause humanity to go astray without knowledge.
Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust. (6:144)

COMMENTARY°

The section then speaks in full detail of the absurdity of their concepts concerning their flocks. These concepts are made to appear hollow, stupid and inconsistent. It concludes by asking them what basis they have for such absurd laws: *Had you been witnesses when God charged you with this?* (6:144) Was it, then, a secret that you have been let into, or a commandment given specially to you? It follows this by describing the ghastly nature of the crime of inventing falsehood against God and trying to lead people astray. This condemnation is one of the most effective aspects of the Quranic method.

The Arabs' absurdity exposed, they are now made to realize that the false concepts they held before the revelation have no foundation whatsoever. They are given an example to reflect upon in that God has brought into existence all their crops and flocks, yet they felt they had the right to determine how these were allocated, either by following their own whims or acting on the inspiration of evil ones. They did so knowing that those who were evil did not create the crops and flocks, but that these were of God's creation. Therefore, it is He who determines what use is to be made of His creation given to His servants as sustenance or property.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?

7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

In determining the difference between relevance, the Quran asks a rhetorical question: Had you been witnesses when God charged you with this way of forbidding certain animals? The Quranic message mentions two kinds of flocks—beasts of burden and those who are for slaughtering. It is God Who provides them. Satan has created nothing. The only prohibitions come from God. To state otherwise is to cause humanity to go astray.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understand what a rhetorical question is.

I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.

It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 55(17). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

HISTORY

Al-Tabari, a leading early commentator on the Quran, says: God, limitless is He in His glory, gives here clear instructions to His Prophet Muhammad. He is to say to those who had assigned a portion of God's creation of flocks to Him and another portion to the partners they associated with Him, who had made certain types of flocks forbidden so that none may eat of them save those whom they permitted, who made some flocks forbidden to ride, or made what was in the wombs of their flocks forbidden to their women, lawful to their men, who made unlawful what God provided for them as sustenance, falsely attributing such prohibitions to God; he should ask them all: Has a messenger sent by God come to you with such prohibitions? If so, then tell us about that. Or is it that you yourselves have been present, witnessing the issuing of God's commandments of prohibition? Or could it be that you heard Him as He made the prohibition and you acted on that? If so, then you are liars inventing falsehood against God. Should you make any such claim, people will know that you are liars.

The Prophet is further instructed to make it clear to them that he does not find in what has been revealed to him of God's Book anything forbidden to eat, including all that they claimed to be unlawful, except for four types: "carrion", which refers to an animal dying by itself without being properly slaughtered, or "blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine". All three types are pronounced to be "unclean" which means that they are impure. The fourth forbidden type is "a sinful offering" which refers to an animal slaughtered by an idolater and consecrated to one of the idols they associated with God. Such an offering is forbidden to make and to eat by anyone who believes in God.

Thus God, limitless is He in His glory, tells those who are ungrateful who argued with the Prophet and his Companions concerning the prohibition of carrion that God has made forbidden the very thing they were arguing about. As such, it is unlawful. On the other hand, that which the idolaters claimed to be forbidden remains lawful, since God has made it so. They were lying when they claimed that their prohibition relied on God's authority.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:145-6:150

Makkah: *Say: I find not in what was revealed to me to taste*
that which is forbidden to taste,
but that it be carrion or blood,
that which is shed or the flesh of swine for that,
truly, is a disgrace or was hallowed
—contrary to moral law—to other than God on it.
Then, whoever was driven by necessity
other than being one who is willfully disobedient
or one who turns away.
Then, truly, your Lord is Forgiving, Compassionate. (6:145)
And to those who became Jews,
We forbade every possessor of claws.
And of the cows and the herd of sheep,
We forbade them their fat,
but what their backs carried or entrails
or what mingled with bone.
Thus, we gave them recompense for their insolence
and We are, truly, ones who are sincere. (6:146)
If they denied thee, say:
Your Lord is the Possessor of Extensive Mercy.
And His might is not repelled from the folk
ones who sin. (6:147)
Those who ascribed partners with God will say:
If God willed, neither would we have ascribed partners with God,
nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.
Thus, denied those who were before them
until they experienced Our might.
Say: Is there any knowledge with you
that you bring out to us?
You follow not but opinion and, then, you only guess. (6:148)
Say: God has the conclusive disputation.
And if He willed, He would have guided you one and all. (6:149)
Say: Come on! Bring your witnesses who bear witness
that God forbade this. Then, if they bore witness,
bear you not witness with them.
And follow you not the desires of those who denied Our signs
and those who believe not in the world to come
and they equate others with their Lord. (6:150)

COMMENTARY°

In these signs God spells out clearly to them what He has actually forbidden, making His prohibition clear through revelations, not through guesswork and imagination. It goes without saying that God has the authority to legislate, and that what He forbids is totally forbidden and what He makes lawful is absolutely lawful. No human being can have any say in this, and He has no partners to make a similar decision or to add to or amend His prohibition. Within the same context, we have here an explanation of what God has forbidden the Jews in particular, although He has made it lawful to the Muslims. This prohibition was by way of punishment to the Jews for their wrongdoing and their deviation from God's law. (6:145-6:147)

It discusses how the Arab idolaters used to attribute to God's will the fact that they lived in ignorance, evidenced by their association of partners with God and the forbidding of what God had made lawful. Both actions carry the same legal status in God's view. It quotes their statements:*hose who ascribed partners with God will say: If God willed, neither would we have ascribed partners with God, nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything. Thus, denied those who were before them until they experienced Our might.* (6:148) The section makes it clear that such a statement can only be made by an unbeliever who denies the truth. Earlier generations of the ungrateful maintained the same assertions until they were struck with God's might: "In like manner did those who have lived before them deny the truth, until they came to taste Our punishment." (6:148) To associate partners with God is the same as the unauthorized declaration of anything as forbidden. Both are done by those who deny God's revelations. A rhetorical question is put to them concerning the basis of their assertions: *Say: Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to us? You follow not but opinion and, then, you only guess.* (6:148)

The discussion is brought to a conclusion by inviting them to make an unequivocal declaration and clear testimony of their stand. This is the same invitation as the one made at the beginning of the section concerning the very basis of faith. In both cases, the same expression, indeed the same terminology is used in order to indicate that the two aspects are the same: associating partners with God and legislating without His permission: *Say: Come on! Bring your witnesses who bear witness that God forbade this. Then, if they bore witness, bear you not witness with them. And follow you not the desires of those who denied Our signs and those who believe not in the world to come and they equate others with their Lord.* (6:150) This

sign makes it clear that those who promulgate these legislations are indeed the ones who follow their own desires, deny God's revelations and disbelieve in the life to come. Had they believed in what God has revealed and in the Day of Judgment, and had they followed God's guidance, they would not have legislated for themselves or for humanity anything that God has not permitted. Nor would they have described things as lawful or unlawful without God's permission.

The section goes on to outline what God has actually forbidden. Here we have a collection of the basic principles of social life, beginning with the belief in God's Oneness. Some of these principles include certain orders, but the prohibitions form the larger part. Therefore, they provide the overall title. God has forbidden that divinity be ascribed to anyone other than Him. He has commanded all people to be kind to their parents and He has forbidden the killing of children out of poverty, reassuring people that He provides for them. He has also forbidden all types of indecency and shameful sin, whether committed in the open or in secret, as well as the killing of other human beings except in a just cause. He has also forbidden any tampering with the property of an orphan, except to improve it, until he has come of age. He has ordered that people should deal in fair weights and measures and ordered that justice be maintained in all types of statements and testimony. He has further ordered that people should fulfil their covenants with God. All this has been enjoined by God on people. Therefore, they are reminded that it is their duty to fulfil it.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM) SIGNS 6:151-6:154

Madinah: (6:151)
Madinah: (6:152)
Madinah: (6:153)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (6:154)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 6:149-6:150 based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

LESSON 55(18). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam)
Signs 6:155-6:165

And this Book We caused to descend is
that which is blessed so follow it and be God-conscious
so that perhaps you will find mercy, (6:155)
so that you not say: The Book was only caused to descend
to two sections before us.
And, truly, we had been ones who are heedless of their study. (6:156)
Or so that you not say: If the Book was caused to descend to us,
we would have been better guided than they.
Surely, there drew near you clear portents from your Lord
and a guidance and a mercy.
And who, then, does greater wrong than he
who denied the signs of God and drew aside from them.
We will give recompense to those who draw aside from Our signs
with a dire punishment because they had been drawing aside. (6:157)
Look they on only that the angels approach them?
*Or **your** Lord approach them?*
*Or some signs of **your** Lord approach them?*
*On a Day that approach some signs of **your** Lord,*
belief will not profit a person if he believed not before,
nor earned good because of his belief.
Say: Wait awhile! We too are ones who are waiting awhile! (6:158)
Truly, those who separated and divided their way of life
*and had been partisans, be **you** not concerned with them at all.*
Truly, their affair is only with God.
Again, He will tell them what they had been accomplishing. (6:159)
Whoever drew near with benevolence, then, for him,
ten times the like of it.
And whoever drew near with an evil deed, then,
recompense will not be given but with its like
and they, they will not be wronged. (6:160)
Say: Truly, my Lord guided me to a straight path,
a truth-loving way of life, the creed of Abraham,
the monotheist. And he had not been
of the ones who are idolaters. (6:161)
Say: Truly, my formal prayer and my ritual sacrifice
and my living and my dying are for God, Lord of all the worlds. (6:162)
No associates are to be ascribed with Him
and of this was I commanded and I am the first
of the ones who submit to God. (6:163)
Say: Is it other than God that I should desire as a lord

while He is Lord of everything?
And each soul will earn only for itself.
No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.
Again, to your Lord will you return. Then, He will tell you about what you had been at variance in it. (6:164)
And it is He who made you as viceregents on the earth
and exalted some of you above some others in degree
that He try you with what He gave you.
Truly, your Lord is Swift in repayment
and He, truly, is Forgiving, Compassionate. (6:165)

COMMENTARY

Now that you have the Quran, you do not need to refer to anything else. It covers all aspects of life. Therefore, they do not need to legislate for any purpose without guidance: *So that you not say: The Book was only caused to descend to two sections before us. And, truly, we had been ones who are heedless of their study. Or so that you not say: If the Book was caused to descend to us, we would have been better guided than they. Surely, there drew near you clear portents from your Lord and a guidance and a mercy.* (6:156)

It has been God's will that every messenger was sent to his people, speaking their language. When He willed to send His final message, He sent the last of all prophets, Muhammad, to all humanity. As His final Messenger, it is only right that he should address all humanity equally.

This Book has been revealed and given to the early followers by a Messenger from among them, even though he is a Messenger to all humanity. The Book he brings is, in itself, a clear proof of its truth. It gives them some very clear, unambiguous and unequivocal information. It provides them with guidance out of the error in which they live, and ensures God's grace will be bestowed on them in this life as well as in the life to come.

Bearing all this in mind, who could be more in the wrong than one who denies God's revelations and turns his back on them when they show him the way to goodness and success? Who is more unjust to himself and to humanity by denying himself and others all these blessings, and by spreading corruption on earth through upholding ignorant concepts and laws? *And who, then, does greater wrong than he who denied the signs of God and drew aside from them. We will give recompense to those who draw aside from Our signs with a dire punishment because they had been drawing aside.* (6:157)

Here, this section explains: *Look they on only that the angels*

*approach them? Or **your** Lord approach them? Or some signs of **your** Lord approach them?* (6:158) This is a very clear and decisive warning. Here, God tells the ungrateful in plain terms that if only some of the signs they ask for were shown to them, they would be destroyed thereafter should they continue to be ungrateful. They are further told that when some of God's signs are shown, they spell the end that renders all subsequent actions futile.

Accepting the faith should come before this, and should be translated into practical action. Good action is always associated with true faith, as it is, in the Islamic view, the practical translation of faith. *On a Day that approach some signs of **your** Lord, belief will not profit a person if he believed not before, nor earned good because of his belief. Say: Wait awhile! We too are ones who are waiting awhile!* (6:158).

It should be noted that this section repeats what it has said within the context of faith and belief when it speaks about God's sovereignty and law. This is clearly seen and intentionally used to emphasize a particular fact. Therefore, it is better to interpret the statements that occur here in the same light as those which occur at its beginning, reading them as referring to the laws of nature God has set in operation. This is sufficient to understand the Quranic statements without having to resort to something that we cannot fathom because it is beyond the reach of our perception.

At this point the section addresses God's Messenger, Muhammad singling him out with his faith, law, way of life and operational mode. His faith is different from all creeds and religions known to humanity, including the erring ways of the Arab idolaters: *Truly, those who separated and divided their way of life and had been partisans, be **you** not concerned with them at all.* (6:159)

As for those who have split into groups over their faith, and about whom God has declared that His Messenger will have nothing to do with them, they will be judged by God, and then they will have to account for all their deeds: *Truly, their affair is only with God. Again, He will tell them what they had been accomplishing.* (6:159) As accountability and reward are mentioned here, God states what mercy He has committed Himself to show to His servants. He will reward every good deed done by a believer ten times its value. It is a condition that such a good deed is done by a believer, because with rejection of faith no deed remains good. On the other hand, a person who does a bad deed is requited with its like only. God will never be unjust to anyone or stint his or her reward: *Whoever drew near with benevolence, then, for him, ten times the like of it. And whoever drew near with an evil deed, then, recompense will not be given but with*

its like and they, they will not be wronged. (6:160)

At the end of this section with its long discourse on legislation and sovereignty we have a devotional glorification of God which carries with it a pleasant rhythm and a decisive verdict. The beat is repeated in each verse as it starts with the same word: '*Say*'. Each verse touches the heart, where the core of oneness lies: the oneness of the creed, goal, Lord and worship. It also provides a total look at the universe and its laws: (6:161-6:165)

This long and final comment plays a fascinating, perfectly harmonious tune. Yet it is a comment which concludes the discourse on animal slaughtering, offerings, agricultural produce and all the regulations alleged by the people of ignorance to be laid down by God.

Say: Truly, my Lord guided me to a straight path, a truth-loving way of life, the creed of Abraham, the monotheist. And he had not been of the ones who are polytheists. (6:161) This declaration expresses gratitude and trust, and overflows with certainty. We see the certainty in both the verbal expression in worship and its mental effect. The trust is derived from the bond with the Lord who guides and takes care of His servants. The gratitude is felt for being guided to a straight way that is free of diversion and crookedness.

Say: Truly, my formal prayer and my ritual sacrifice and my living and my dying are for God, Lord of all the worlds. No associates are to be ascribed with Him (6:162-6:163) This expresses complete dedication, with every pulse and every life movement. It is a form of glorification of God and submission to Him in the most absolute of terms: it combines obligatory and voluntary prayer, life and death. All is dedicated to God alone, the Lord of all the worlds, who controls and sustains them all and conducts and determines all their affairs. It is the sort of submission to God that leaves out nothing within oneself, one's conscience or in life, without dedicating it totally to God. *of this was I commanded and I am the first of the ones who submit to God* (6:163)

Say: Is it other than God that I should desire as a lord while He is Lord of everything? And each soul will earn only for itself. No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load. Again, to your Lord will you return. Then, He will tell you about what you had been at variance in it. (6:164) This is a word that encompasses all the heavens and earth as well as all that is in or on them, every creature known or unknown to the human being, everything to be done or to take place in public or private. It puts them all under the umbrella of God's Lordship of everything in the universe. They must all submit to God's absolute sovereignty in faith, worship and law. This verse asks rhetorically and in amazement: *Is it other than God that I should desire as*

a lord while He is Lord of everything? (6:164) Am I to seek a lord other than God to be my master who conducts my affairs and determines my course in life, when I am accountable to God for my intentions and actions, and will be rewarded for whatever obedience or disobedience to God I do? Am I to seek a lord other than God when this whole universe is in His hand, and both you and I are sustained by Him? Am I to seek a lord other than God when everyone will be requited for his or her sins? No one shall bear responsibility for anyone else's actions. *And each soul will earn only for itself. No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.* (6:164)

Am I to seek a lord other than God when to Him you must all return and face His reckoning of all that over which you are in dispute? Am I to seek a lord other than God when it is He who has placed human beings on earth to inherit it, and placed some of them above others in their mental and physical abilities and in the provisions they receive. He does all this to test them, so that they may prove whether they are grateful or ungrateful to Him. Am I to seek a lord other than God when He is swift in retribution, and He is the One who grants grace and forgiveness to all those who repent of their misdeeds? Am I to seek a lord other than God so as to replace his law, orders and rulings for those of God, when I have all these indications, inspirations and evidence pointing to the truth of God being the only Lord of the universe? As we have said, these verses are a devotional prayer and a glorification of God's oneness, reflecting the splendid image of pure faith as God's Messenger (peace be upon him) feels it in his heart. It is an image the splendor of which cannot be expressed in human terms.

Now that the section is completed, if we look back at its great dimensions, the wide range it covers and the profound depths it goes into, we are overwhelmed. The section has taken us on a fascinating and breathtaking journey, to look at the great truths of existence. It is a journey that covers the major and fundamental Islamic concepts. It portrays the truth of Godhead in all its awesome glory, majesty, splendors and beauty. It holds in front of our eyes the truths of the universe, life and what lies beyond life which we cannot perceive with our limited faculties. It shows us the truth of God's will and how it initiates and obliterates, gives life and causes death, and runs the universe and all living things. It reflects the truth of the human soul: its depths, apparent and hidden pathways, desires and leanings, the guidance it follows and the errors it commits, how it reacts to the whispers of evil humans and jinn, as well as how it is led along the right or wrong way. It portrays scenes of the Day of Judgement, the gathering of all creatures, their moments of great distress and mo-

ments of hope and happiness. It gives us scenes of human history on earth, and shots of the history of life and the universe. The panorama it shows us is vast and extensive. We cannot sum it up in words. It can only be seen through the section itself, with its surpassing excellence and inimitable style of expression. No wonder it is part of this blessed book. *And it is He who made you as viceregents on the earth and exalted some of you above some others in degree that He try you with what He gave you. Truly, your Lord is Swift in repayment and He, truly, is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (6:165)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze as many of the statements that can be interpreted as if ... then statements in the section in order to practice implications or conclusions. Add your personal experiences where possible.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

LESSON 56(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANK (AL-SAFFAT)

SIGNS 37:1-37:21

Makkah: *By the ones standing in ranks,*
ranged in rows (37:1)
then, ones who scare in a scaring (37:2)
then, ones who recount the Remembrance,(37:3)
truly, your God is One,(37:4)
the Lord of the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them and the Lord of the sunrise.(37:5)
Truly, We made to appear pleasing
the present heaven with the adornment of the stars (37:6)
and keeping it safe from every emboldened Satan.(37:7)
They pay no attention to the lofty Council for they are hurled at
from every edge, rejected. (37:8)
And for them is a punishment,

that which lasts forever, (37:9)
but for him who snatched a fragment,
then, a piercing flame pursued him. (37:10)
So ask them for advice: Are they stronger in constitution
or those others whom We created?
Truly, We created them of clinging clay. (37:11)
Nay! You marveled while they deride. (37:12)
And when they were reminded, they remember not. (37:13)
And when they saw a sign, they scoff at it. (37:14)
And they said: This is not but clear sorcery. (37:15)
Is it when we were dead and had been earth dust and bones
that we will, truly, be ones who are raised up (37:16)
and our fathers, the ancient ones? (37:17)
Say: Yes, you will be ones in a state of lowliness. (37:18)
There will be only one Scare.
So when they will be looking on it, (37:19)
they will say: Woe to us! This is the Day of Judgment! (37:20)
This is the Day of Decision which you had been denying. (37:21)

COMMENTARY°

A SKY ADORNED WITH STARS

The section begins by mentioning three groups of people, identifying what they do. The first description may mean that they range themselves in rows as they pray, or range their wings, awaiting God' commands. The second group rebukes whoever deserves rebuke, perhaps at the time when the angels gather their souls when they die, or at the time of resurrection, or when they are driven into hell, or in any position or situation. The third group recite God's Wword, which may be the Quran or other scriptures or they may recite glorifications of God. They are mentioned in the form of an oath made by God confirming His Oneness: *truly, your God is One.* (37:4) As we have already stated, the occasion here is the mention of the superstition circulated in ignorant Arabia alleging that the angels were God's daughters, and as such, they too were deities.

God then mentions to His servants something about Himself that is suited to the truth of His Oneness: *The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them and the Lord of the sunrise* (37:5) The heavens and the earth stand before us, speaking to us about the Creator who controls everything in this universe. No one else claims the ability to create and control the universe, and no one can deny that the One who created the universe is the true Lord who has absolute power. He also created and controls *whatever is between*

them, including the air, clouds, light, as well as tiny little creatures which we come to know from time to time, but much more remains unknown to us. It is impossible to look with an alert mind at the heavens and the earth and what is between them without being profoundly affected by the greatness, accuracy, variety, beauty, harmony and coherence between all these creatures. Only a dead heart can look at them without genuine interaction.

The translation of this sign: *The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them and the Lord of the sunrise* (37:5) is far from adequate, as the sign not only refers to the rising of the sun, but of every star and planet. Each has its time and point of rising. Therefore, the number of such points in all the corners of the universe is beyond imagination. At the same time, the phrase refers to the fact that as the earth turns round the sun, every point of it has its own sunrise, and its point of sunset. Whenever a point of earth is facing the sun, it has its sunrise, and the opposite point on the surface of the earth has its sunset. People did not know this at the time of the revelation of the Quran, but God told them about it. This precise system that makes such successive sunrises over the earth, and the splendid beauty that so permeates our planet beckons us to reflect on the superb beauty of God's creation and to believe in His Oneness. How could such beauty, accuracy and consistency have been achieved unless the Maker is One?

This is the reason why this particular attribute of God's is mentioned on this occasion. We will see that there will be another occasion in the section which recalls the mention of the heavens and sunrises, as it refers to planets, flames, devils and their destruction. *Truly, We made to appear pleasing the present heaven with the adornment of the stars and keeping it safe from every emboldened Satan. They pay no attention to the lofty Council for they are hurled at from every edge, rejected. And for them is a punishment, that which lasts forever, but for him who snatched a fragment, then, a piercing flame pursued him.* (37:6-37:10)

At the outset, the section touches on the part of the superstition that relates to angels. Now it touches on the part that relates to the jinn. In pre-Quranic days, some Arabs alleged that the jinn were related to God. Indeed, some of them worshipped the jinn for this reason, and because they attributed to them knowledge of the world beyond human perception.

One look at the sky: *Truly, We made to appear pleasing the present heaven with the adornment of the stars* (37:6) is sufficient to realize that the element of beauty is purposely incorporated into the making of the universe: its very make up is beautiful, well propor-

tioned and harmonious. In fact, beauty is an essential part of its nature. Its design gives equal importance to beautiful appearance and perfect functioning. Therefore, everything in it is made according to an accurate measure, performing its role to perfection and adding to its overall beauty.

The sky and its stars is the most beautiful scene around us. We never tire of it. Every star and planet sends its flickering light. To look at these stars and planets as they change position night after night gives endless pleasure.

Another function of the stars and their satellites is also mentioned in the section, demonstrating how some of them are shooting stars and piercing flames that target the jinn, preventing them from getting close to those on high: *Truly, We made to appear pleasing the present heaven with the adornment of the stars and keeping it safe from every emboldened Satan. They pay no attention to the lofty Council for they are hurled at from every edge, rejected. And for them is a punishment, that which lasts forever, but for him who snatched a fragment, then, a piercing flame pursued him.* (37:7-37:10) This means that some of the shooting stars we see guard the skies against rebellious devils to prevent them from eavesdropping on those on high. Such satans on the Day of Judgment will be punished further. However, a rebellious devil might stealthily snatch something of what goes on among the angels on high, but as this devil descends, a piercing flame pursues and burns him.

RECEIVING THE MESSAGE WITH RIDICULE

The Prophet is then instructed to question them about whether they considered their own creation to be more difficult or the creation of the heavens, earth and all creation in the universe? If they agree that human creation is less difficult, why should they then disbelieve in resurrection, meeting it with derision and considering it impossible, when it is nothing compared to creating the universe?

The other created beings in this respect include the angels, heavens, the earth and all between them, the jinn, stars, planets and piercing flames. They acknowledge that these are created by God. No answer, however, is expected to the question. This is simply a rhetorical device inviting amazement at their lack of understanding of what is around them. It derides the way they look at things. Leaving the question unanswered, the section shows them the substance from which they were created in the first place: it is soft, sticky clay made of material from this earth, which is itself one of God's creatures: *So ask them for advice: Are they stronger in constitution or those others whom We created? Truly, We created them of clinging clay. Nay!* ***You***

had marveled while they deride. And when they were reminded, they remember not. And when they saw a sign, they scoff at it. And they said: This is not but clear sorcery. Is it when we were dead and had been earth dust and bones that we will, truly, be ones who are raised up and our fathers, the ancient ones? (37:11) It is abundantly clear then that they are not the more difficult to create. Therefore, their making fun of God's signs and His promise to bring them back to life is nothing less than absurd.

Their attitude makes the Prophet wonder: *Nay! You had marveled while they deride. And when they were reminded, they remember not. And when they saw a sign, they scoff at it.* (37:12-37:14) It is only right that the Prophet should wonder at them. A believer who recognizes God with all his faculties as Muhammad did, and who sees in full clarity the numerous signs in the universe pointing to Him, is bound to wonder and marvel at how people can remain oblivious to them. In short, how can they adopt such an attitude?

As the Prophet looked at them with amazement, they continued ridiculing the truth he presented to them, speaking of God's Oneness and their own resurrection. They preferred to remain blind, with their hearts sealed. Therefore, they scoffed at God's revelations and signs, wondered at the Prophet who presented these to them and made that the material for further ridicule. Part of this was how they described the Quran: *And they said: This is not but clear sorcery. Is it when we were dead and had been earth dust and bones that we will, truly, be ones who are raised up and our fathers, the ancient ones?* (37:15-37:17) They are oblivious to everything around them that reminds them of God's power and ability, claiming that He would not return them to life after they and their forefathers had died and perished. Yet such return is nothing to marvel at, if we would only look at the universe around us and see what God has created.

Since they would not reflect quietly and calmly on what they saw, they are strongly jolted such that they see their own agitated state in the life to come: *Say: Yes, you will be ones in a state of lowliness.* (37:18) Yes, indeed, you and your forefathers will be resurrected and utterly humiliated, unable to put up any opposition. It is not merely that God emphatically confirms their resurrection, but He shows them how it is done. This is depicted in a long scene describing resurrection in different ways, presenting lively images and successive movements. The whole account employs the narrative style first, then changes to dialogue, and in between they see events and actions and hear comments on these. Thus, the whole scene comes alive.

There will be only one Scare (37:19) is all just a glimpse, taking

no more than a single cry, which is described in Arabic as *zajrah*, to indicate that it is exceedingly strong and coming from a superior source. This single cry is made *so when they will be looking on it,* suddenly, without any preparation. Surprised so violently, they cry out: *They will say: Woe to us! This is the Day of Judgment!* (37:20) In the midst of their shock, a voice will unexpectedly make it clear that whatever happens to them is through their own making: *his is the Day of Decision which you had been denying.* (37:21) Here we see how the section changes its style from the narrative to directly address those who used to deny that there would ever be such a day when all humanity would be resurrected and their fate determined.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What is the conclusion to the arguments in these verses? What are its relative strengths? Are there any weaknesses? Are there any arguments you disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi dent you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

LESSON 56(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like-cases in a like-manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

The most conclusive arguments in Islamic tradition to prove or disprove something is to use the Quran to prove another point in the Quran. Using this method, we get to the heart of the main reason why the word "beat" causes a man-made contradiction in the Quran.

We begin with two premises: Islam encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The Prophet said: Marriage is half of faith. He also said: Divorce is deplorable.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The students can discuss their views on the two different versions and if they interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran)*

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

For the Muslim, the Prophet is the living Quran; that is, he practiced ex actly whatever God revealed in the Quran. If it was a command to good sucl as fasting, daily formal prayer, pilgrimage, purifying alms, charity, he performed these commands. If it was to prevent a wrong like drinking alcohol, gambling or eating pork, he refrained from these things. As the living Quran, the life, behavior and sayings of the Prophet serve as a model for all Muslims.

As the Quran refers to the Prophet as a mercy to humanity and the model whose example should be followed, it is clear that he would have carried out any and all of the commands (imperative forms of the verb) in the Quran that related to his life (there are commands specific to other Prophets as well) yet we find an exception in *daraba* according to the interpreters over the centuries.

In regard to 4:34 and the use of *daraba* in the imperative form allowing husbands to "strike, beat, hit, chastise or spank" a *nushuz* wife, in all of the canonical works there is no reference to Prophet Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him, having ever beaten women.

We read in 2:231: *When you divorce wives, and they (f) are about to reach their (f) term, then hold them (f) back honorably or set them (f) free honorably;*

but hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. (2:231)

In other words, the Quran is telling husbands not to harm their wives whom they want to set free, not to hold them back by injuring them. The word "injuring" (*dirar*) also means hurt, harm, use force or commit aggression.

Let's take an example. A Muslim wife, after many attempts to help her husband manage his in- appropriate anger, anger that most often is taken out against her, tells her husband that she agrees to a divorce. He, in his anger, does not at that moment remember that according to 2:231 he is not to hold back by injuring a wife he wants to divorce, and instead, being both judge and jury, beats her as erroneously as supposedly allowed in 4:34. The battered wife, becoming the victim of his anger, is then afraid to speak out again as this last instance has caused her to seek refuge in a shelter for battered women.

Therefore, we see a contradiction between 4:34 and 2:231. Jurists have created a contradiction that is not in the Quran by encouraging divorce and discouraging marriage so that we can conclude, a Muslim woman who is to be divorced must be set free without injuring, hurting, or using force against her, but a Muslim woman who wants to remain married does do under the threat of being beaten!

Does this make sense? 4:34 as presently interpreted contradicts 2:231. How can we eliminate this contradiction? There is a very simple solution: Revert the interpretation back to how the Prophet understood it through his behavior. so that *daraba* here is understood to mean "go away."

Another example from the Quran as to why the word daraba in 4:34 creates a man-made contradiction. 24:6-24:9 states: *And those who accuse their wives—and there are no witnesses but themselves—let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies sworn to God that he is among ones who are sincere and a fifth that the curse of God be on him if he has been the one who lies. And it will drive off the punishment from her if she bears witness with four testimonies sworn to God that he is the one who lies, and the fifth, that the anger of God be on her if he has been among the ones who are sincere.*

The oaths of the wife prevail and punishment is averted from her. Therefore, she is not to be "beaten" by her husband. She is allowed to defend herself against any accusation he may have against her.

Now let us imagine the same situation as we did with 4:34. Before a wife has a chance to take advantage of her right given in the Quran in 24:6-24:9, her husband accuses her of flirting with another man without witnesses other than himself and beats her. She becomes a victim, perhaps ending up in a shelter. Now, a victim, she no longer has the will to defend herself and instead assumes that she is in the wrong and deserves to be beaten whether she has done anything wrong or not.

Thus a contradiction is created that is not in the Quran itself by interpreting *daraba* to mean "beat" instead of "go away" or "leave." The reality is that

a wife who is to be divorced cannot be harmed. This protects a wife who wants to be set free. This is a right she is given in the Quran—not to be injured! When *daraba* is interpreted as beat, this reality becomes a myth.

It is a reality that 24:6-24:9 allows a wife who is accused by her husband without any witnesses other than himself to defend herself against the accusation and God and humanity accepts her defense, but because of a man-made contradiction of 4:34 and not following the behavior of the Prophet, the best model for humanity.

As critical thinkers, we immediately see a contradiction, not in the source itself, but in the way some husbands unjustly make themselves both judge and jury thereby allowing themselves to misinterpret God's Word.

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANKS (AL-SAFFAT)

SIGNS 37:22-37:74

Makkah: *Assemble those who did wrong*
and their spouses,
and what they had been worshipping (37:22)
—other than God—and guide them to the path to hellfire. (37:23)
And stop them for they are ones who will be asked: (37:24)
What is the matter with you
that you help not one another? (37:25)
Nay! They are on that Day
ones who will resign themselves to submission to God. (37:26)
And some of them came forward to some others,
demanding of one another. (37:27)
They would say:
Truly, you, you had been approaching us from the right. (37:28)
They would say: Nay! You are not ones who believe (37:29)
and we had not been any authority over you.
Nay! You had been a folk, ones who are defiant. (37:30)
So the saying was realized against us of our Lord.
That, truly, we are ones who experience the punishment. (37:31)
So we led you into error.
Truly, we had been ones who are in error. (37:32)
Then, truly, they will be on that Day
ones who are partners in the punishment. (37:33)
We accomplish, thus, with the ones who sin. (37:34)
Truly, when it had been said to them:
There is no god but God, they grow arrogant. (37:35)
And they said: Are we ones who leave our gods
for a possessed poet? (37:36)

Nay! He drew near with The Truth
and he established as true the ones who are sent. (37:37)
Truly, you are ones who will experience
the painful punishment (37:38)
and you will be given recompense
but for what you had been doing. (37:39)
But the devoted servants of God, (37:40)
those, for them was a known provision (37:41)
—sweet fruits—and they will be ones who are honored (37:42)
in the Gardens of Bliss, (37:43)
on couches—ones who face one another. (37:44)
A cup from a spring of water will be passed around, (37:45)
white, a delight to ones who drink it. (37:46)
In that is neither headache, nor are they intoxicated by it. (37:47)
And with them are ones who are restraining
their (f) glance, lovely eyed (37:48)
as if they are well-guarded pearls. (37:49)
So some of them will come forward to some others,
demanding of one another. (37:50)
One of them who consigns would say:
Truly, I had a comrade (37:51)
who would say: Are you of the ones
who establish the Resurrection as true? (37:52)
When we are dead and had been earth dust and bones,
will we be ones who are judged? (37:53)
He said: Will you be ones who peruse? (37:54)
So he perused and saw him amidst hellfire. (37:55)
He said: By God, you were about to deal me destruction! (37:56)
Had it not been for the divine blessing of my Lord
I would have been of the ones who are charged. (37:57)
Are we not, then, to be dead again (37:58)
but for our first death and will we not be
ones who are punished? (37:59)
Truly, this, it is the winning the sublime triumph. (37:60)
For the like of this, let the ones who work, work. (37:61)
Is this better as hospitality or the tree of Zaqqum? (37:62)
Truly, We made it a test for the ones who are unjust. (37:63)
Truly, it is a tree that goes forth, its root in hellfire, (37:64)
its spathes have been like the heads of satans. (37:65)
So, truly, they, they are ones who eat from it,
ones who fill their bellies with it. (37:66)
Again, truly, on top of that for them
is a brew of scalding water. (37:67)

Again, truly, their return is to hellfire. (37:68)
They discovered their fathers ones who go astray, (37:69)
yet they are running in their footsteps. (37:70)
And, certainly, went astray
most of the ancient ones before them. (37:71)
And, certainly, We sent among them ones who warn. (37:72)
Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who are warned, (37:73)
but the devoted servants of God. (37:74)

COMMENTARY°

It takes only one decisive sentence of blame before the orders are issued to those whose task it is to carry them out: (37:22-37:24) So the wrongdoers and their like are to be gathered together. Although the order is clear and decisive, it also carries much sarcasm in the expression, 'guide them all to the path of hell'.This is certainly a strange type of guidance, worse than going astray. Yet it is the perfect retort to their straying from the path of divine guidance. Since they did not benefit in this present world from guidance to the straight path, guidance will be given to them in the life to come, but this time to the path of hell.

Having been given such guidance, we then see them halted for questioning. Again the address turns to them with blame, even though it is delivered through a simple and innocent question: *What is the matter with you that you help not one another?* (37:25) Why do you not support one another when you are all here and in need of any help you can get? You also have here with you the deities you used to worship. Needless to say, none of them ventures an answer. What follows this rhetorical questioning is a comment describing their condition: *Nay! They are on that Day ones who will resign themselves to submission to God.* (37:26) Both the worshippers and the worshipped are in a state of complete submission to God.

Once more, the section picks up the narrative style, portraying them as they argue with one another: (37:27-37:28) This describes the normal condition of whispering, coming from the right. Thus, they blame the whisperers, saying they are responsible for their present ordeal. Those accused will immediately deny responsibility, putting it squarely on their accusers: *They would say: Nay! You are not ones who believe.* (37:29) It was not our whisper that took you from faith into disbelief.

You were not following guidance and we led you astray by whispering. *And we had not been any authority over you.* (37:30) We could not impose our views on you, forcing you to follow us against

your will: *Nay! You had been a folk, ones who are defiant.* (37:30) You would not abide by any limit.*So the saying was realized against us of our Lord. That, truly, we are ones who experience the punishment.* (37:31) Both you and us are in the same position, deserving of God's punishment for not heeding the warnings. You joined us because of your propensity to follow error. We did nothing to you, instead you followed us in our error: *So we led you into error. Truly, we had been ones who are in error.* (37:32)

At this point, another comment is made, but this time it sounds like a sentence announced before all, making its grounds clear and revealing what they did in this world to bring about their condemnation in the next: (37:33-37:36) A further comment carries clear censure of those who say such monstrous words: (37:37-37:40)

Since God's true servants are mentioned here, making it clear that they will not suffer, their condition on the Day of Judgement is also shown. Once more this comes in narrative style, describing the happiness and bliss they will enjoy to the full and contrasting it with the suffering the other party endures: (37:41-49)

This is happiness pure and perfect, combining all that is enjoyable, physically and spiritually. Everyone finds in it whatever they want of happiness. To start with, the people enjoying this happiness are God's true servants, a description that signifies they are held in high regard. They are also 'honored' among those on high, and this is the highest honor. They have 'fruit' and they sit 'on soft couches facing one another.' They will be served so that they need not exert any effort for anything. What they drink is also described in detail: (37:45-37:47) These are the best qualities in any drink, giving the pleasure without negative consequences. Thus they do not fear that it will he used up, and it gives them no unpleasant side effects. They have companions who are described as follows: *And with them are ones who are restraining their (f) glance, lovely eyed.* (37:48) Their modesty means that they do not look up to anyone other than their mates, despite being very pretty. They are chaste and gentle, untouched by anyone.

As the story unfolds we see these true servants of God engaged in pleasant conversation, recalling things from their past lives and looking at what they now enjoy. This image contrasts with the contentious arguments the others have in their place of suffering. One of the believers then relates to his brethren something that he recalls from his first life: (37:51-37:53) His friend did not believe in the Day of Judgment, and he asked him in amazement whether he truly believed in resurrection after death. As he is speaking about his friend, this believer wishes to know what happened to him. He looks for

him and calls on his brothers to look as well: He adds: *Will you be ones who peruse? So he perused and saw him amidst hellfire.* (37:54-37:55)

When he sees him in his suffering, he turns to him and says: *He said: By God, you were about to deal me destruction! Had it not been for the divine blessing of my Lord I would have been of the ones who are charged.* (37:56-37:57) I could have ended up in the same position and been driven with the herd to the same position you now are in.

His awareness of what happened to his friend makes him feel more acutely the great blessing he and his fellow believers are experiencing. Therefore, he wants to assert it and be reassured that it will last: *Are we not, then, to be dead again but for our first death and will we not be ones who are punished? Truly, this, it is the winning the sublime triumph.* (37:58-37:60)

A short comment is made here, alerting hearts to the need to work hard in order to achieve such a goal.*For the like of this, let the ones who work, work.* (37:61) The goal is a pure and everlasting happiness that cannot be ended by death or prevented by torture. It is the type of goal that deserves hard effort. Compared to this, other goals people strive for seem worthless.

In order to highlight the great gulf between this everlasting, pure happiness and the other destiny awaiting the ungrateful, the section explains what awaits the latter after they have been held to account:

Is this the better welcome, or the *Zaqqum* tree? We have made it a test for the wrongdoers. It is a tree that grows in the very heart of the blazing fire of hell. Its fruit is like devils' heads. They will indeed eat of it, filling their bellies. Then on top of it, they will be given polluted scalding water to drink. Then again, their ultimate goal is hell. (37:62-37:68)

Rhetorically they are asked whether the pure endless bliss is a better position and place or the Zaqqum tree. What is this tree, then? The answer is simple: *Truly, it is a tree that goes forth, its root in hellfire, its spathes have been like the heads of satans.* (37:64-37:65) Needless to say, people do not know how devils' heads look. Nevertheless, it is a frightening image. It is sufficient only to think of these heads to be scared. How, then, would they countenance the prospect of these very heads becoming the food with which they fill their bellies?

God made this tree a test for the wrongdoers. When they heard its name, they made fun of it, saying: 'How could a tree grow in hell without being burnt?' One of them, Abu Jahl, said in sarcasm: "People of the Quraysh! Do you know what the *zaqqum* tree is that

Muhammad holds up to scare you with? It is the dates of Madinah cooked with butter. Should we get it, we will swallow it without hesitation."

The fact is, however, that the *zaqqum* tree was something different from the food they knew: *So, truly, they, they are ones who eat from it, ones who fill their bellies with it.* (37:66) When it stings their throats and burns their bellies—as it grows in the fire it is of the same substance—they will look for a cool drink to stop the burning. However, they will only drink contaminated, boiling water: *Again, truly, on top of that for them is a brew of scalding water.* (37:67)

After this meal, they leave the table to return to their permanent abode, which is far from welcoming: *Again, truly, their return is to hellfire.* (37:68)

They found their forefathers astray, and rushed to follow in their footsteps. Most of the people of old went astray before them; although We had sent them warners. Behold what happened in the end to those that had been warned. Not so God's true servants. *They discovered their fathers ones who go astray, yet they are running in their footsteps. And, certainly, went astray most of the ancient ones before them. And, certainly, We sent among them ones who warn. Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who are warned, but the devoted servants of God.* (37:69-37:74)

These people are hardened in following error, but at the same time they are simply following the footsteps of others, without thinking or reflection. They rush to follow their fathers' lead taking no opportunity to question or examine: *They discovered their fathers ones who go astray, yet they are running in their footsteps.* (37:69-37:70) Both they and their fathers are examples of going astray, which was also the case of the majority of earlier communities: *And, certainly, went astray most of the ancient ones before them.* (37:71) Yet they did receive warnings, but paid no heed: *And, certainly, We sent among them ones who warn.* (37:72) What did this lead to in the end? What was the outcome of the ungrateful' attitude, as compared with the outcome of heeding the warnings and accepting the faith? This is shown in the stories that follow. The signs that ensue serve as a mere announcement of what is to come: *Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who are warned, but the devoted servants of God.*(37:73-37:74)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

When arguing opposing views, students should be encouraged to find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

What do the different translations of 4:34 and 2:231 say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other when darab is interpreted as "beat," spank," or any other similar synonym?
What does each sign (4:34 and 2:231) say?
Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agree?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

LESSON 56(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases. They hesitate before they accept this or that analogy or comparison between 4:34 and 2:231 as the previous lesson showed. They recognize the purposes of the comparisons they make. They recognize that purposes govern noting significant similarities and differences.

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANKS (AL-SAFFAT)
SIGNS 37:75-37:113

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:75)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:76)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:77)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:78)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:79)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:80)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:81)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:82)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:83)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:84)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:85)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:86)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:87)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:88)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:89)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:90)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:91)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:92)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:93)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:94)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:95)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:96)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:97)

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:98)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:99)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:100)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:101)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:102)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:103)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:104)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:105)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:106)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:107)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:108)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:109)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:110)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:111)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:112)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:113)

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANKS (AL-SAFFAT)

SIGNS 37:114-37:138

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:114)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:115)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:116)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:117)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:118)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:119)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:120)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:121)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:122)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:123)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:124)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:125)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:126)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:127)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:128)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:129)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:130)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:131)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:132)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:133)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:134)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:135)

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:136)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:137)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:138)

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANKS (AL-SAFFAT)

SIGNS 37:139-37:182

Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:139)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:140)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:141)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:142)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:143)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:144)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:145)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:146)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:147)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:148)

Then, ask them for advice:
*Are daughters for **your** Lord and for them, sons?* (37:149)
Or created We female angels
while they were ones who bear witness? (37:150)
Truly, it is out of their calumny that they say: (37:151)
God procreated! And, truly, they are ones who lie. (37:152)
Favored He daughters over sons? (37:153)
What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (37:154)
Will you not, then, recollect? (37:155)
Or is there for you a clear authority? (37:156)
Then, bring your Book
if you would be ones who are sincere. (37:157)
And they made kindred between him and between the genies.
But, surely, the genies knew well
that they were ones who will be charged. (37:158)
Glory be to God from what they allege, (37:159)
but not the devoted servants of God. (37:160)
So, truly, you and those whom you worship (37:161)
will not be ones who are tempters against Him, (37:162)
but he who would be one who roasts in hellfire. (37:163)
There is not any of us but he has a known station. (37:164)
And we are ones who are standing in ranks. (37:165)
And we are the ones who glorify. (37:166)
And, truly, they had been saying: (37:167)
Had there been with us a Remembrance

from the ancient ones, (37:168)
we would have been servants of God,
ones who are devoted, (37:169)
but they were ungrateful for it. and soon they will know. (37:170)
And, certainly, Our Word preceded for Our servants,
the ones who are sent. (37:171)
They, truly, they are ones who shall be helped. (37:172)
And, truly, Our armies are the ones who are victors. (37:173)
*So turn **you** away from them for awhile* (37:174)
and perceive them and soon they will perceive. (37:175)
Are they impatient for Our punishment? (37:176)
Then, when it would come down into their courtyard,
how evil will be the morning daybreak
of the ones who are warned! (37:177)
*So turn **you** away from them for awhile,* (37:178)
and perceive and they will perceive. (37:179)
*Glory be to **your** Lord, the Lord of Great Glory,*
from what they allege about Him. (37:180)
And peace be to the ones who are sent. (37:181)
And The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds! (37:182)

COMMENTARY°

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

The section uses every means to refute the claims of the ungrateful; it shows their false superstition for what it is, draws its argument on the basis of their own logic and how it works in their own environment. They used to prefer boys to girls, considering the birth of a girl something of a tragedy. Yet they allege at the same time that the angels were female and that they were God's daughters. Therefore, the section takes up the argument, using their own standards to show how stupid their claims were: *Then, ask them for advice: Are daughters for **your** Lord and for them, sons?* (37:149) If females are of a lesser rank, how could they assign daughters to their Lord and keep sons for themselves? Or was it that He chose for Himself daughters and gave them sons? Neither possibility stands to reason. The Prophet is instructed to question them about this worthless claim. He is also to ask them about the source of the superstition and how it came about. In other words, where did they get the idea that the angels were females? Did they witness their creation in order to know their sex? *Or created We female angels while they were ones who bear witness?* (37:150)

The section gives the exact wording of their fabricated lies about

God: *Truly, it is out of their calumny that they say: God procreated! And, truly, they are ones who lie.* (37:151-37:152) They are liars even according to their own tradition which prefers sons to daughters. How could it be, then, that God would choose daughters for Himself? *Favored He daughters over sons?* (37:153) It wonders at their judgment which ignores their own logic: *How you give judgment! Will you not, then, recollect?* (37:154-37:155) Where do you get the evidence on which you base your judgment? *Or is there for you a clear authority? Then, bring your Book if you would be ones who are sincere.* (37:156-37:157)

The section moves on to refute the other superstition which alleged that some relationship existed between God and the jinn: *And they made kindred between him and between the genies. But, surely, the genies knew well that they were ones who will be charged.* (37:158) The allegation being that the angels were God's daughters born to Him by the jinn! The ungrateful claimed that this is how the relation started. The jinn, however, know for certain that they are created by God, like all other creation, and they also know that they will be brought before Him for judgment. Had they been related to Him, they would be due different treatment.

God places Himself far above this worthless fabrication: *Glory be to God from what they allege.* (37:159) He also makes clear that the believers among the jinn would not be driven to suffer their punishment. *But not the devoted servants of God.* (37:160)

The section then quotes an address made to the idolaters, their alleged deities and their deviant beliefs. Apparently, the address is made by the angels: *So, truly, you and those whom you worship will not be ones who are tempters against Him, but he who would be one who roasts in hellfire. There is not any of us but he has a known station. And we are ones who are standing in ranks. And we are the ones who glorify.* (37:161-37:166)

What this address means is that neither the ungrateful, nor the deities they worship could turn anyone away from God's path except one who is considered to belong to the people of hell and destined for it. They cannot lead astray a believer who is God's obedient servant. Hell has its own people who are of a known type. These respond to temptations and listen to those who try to lead them astray.

The angels also refute this superstition, making it clear that each one of them has his own position which he does not exceed. They are a type of God's creation who worship Him alone. They are assigned certain tasks and they fulfil them, ranging themselves in rows for prayer and extolling God's glory.

AN UNFAILING PROMISE

The section then speaks about the idolaters who circulate such superstitions, mentioning the promises they made when they envied the people of earlier revelations for receiving such messages. They used to say that had they had some sort of traditional beliefs inherited from Abraham or later prophets, they would have had a degree of faith that would have enhanced their position with God: *And, truly, they had been saying: Had been with us a Remembrance from the ancient ones, we would have been servants of God, ones who are devoted,* (37:167-37:169) Yet when they received the best revelations ever bestowed from on high, they turned away and forgot their promises: *But they were ungrateful for it. and soon they will know.* (37:170) The sign carries an implicit threat, which is suitable for those who persist in disbelief, going back on expressed wishes and promises: *Soon they will know.*

At this point the section states God's promise to His messengers of His assured help. In this way victory is assured them: *And, certainly, Our Word preceded for Our servants, the ones who are sent. They, truly, they are ones who shall be helped. And, truly, Our armies are the ones who are victors.* (37:171-37:173)

God's word has gone forth, and His promise has been given by His will. His Word will take effect without fail: *And, certainly, Our Word preceded for Our servants, the ones who are sent. They, truly, they are ones who shall be helped. And, truly, Our armies are the ones who are victors.* (37:171-37:173)

When this true promise has been declared, God orders His Messenger to turn away from the ungrateful, leaving them to God's Word to take effect. He should, however, watch them as the Word proves true, for they will see with their own eyes how this comes about:

*So turn **you** away from them for awhile and perceive them and soon they will perceive. Are they impatient for Our punishment? Then, when it would come down into their courtyard, how evil will be the morning daybreak of the ones who are warned! So turn **you** away from them for awhile, and perceive and they will perceive.*(37:174-37:179) The Prophet is told to leave them alone and not care for them. He is further told to wait for the day when he and they will see what God's promise means for him and them. If they hasten His punishment, they will suffer greatly when it falls upon them. Should this strike a community, they will have got what is certain to grieve them. Again, the Prophet is told to abandon them to their fate. This order implies further warning to them, and again the section advises that the outcome will be terrible: *So turn **you** away from them for awhile, and perceive and they will perceive.* (37:178-

179) What will happen is left unspecified, implying great terror.

The chapter concludes with extolling God's glory, stating that all might belongs to Him alone. It adds the blessing and greeting of peace to God's messengers, and declares that all praise is due to God, the Lord of all, who has no partners whatsoever: *Glory be to your Lord, the Lord of Great Glory, from what they allege about Him. And peace be to the ones who are sent. And The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds!* (37:180-37:182) It is indeed a fitting ending that sums up the main issues discussed in the chapter as a whole.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What similarities and differences do the Quranic verses point out between the practice of the early Quraysh and the Quranic message?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

Appendix 1: Correlation between the Present Order of Chapters in the Quran and their Chronological Order

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Firs published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. See *Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim* with slight variation
2. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*
3. See *Sahih Muslim*
4. See *Sahih Muslim*
5. See *Sahih Muslim*
6. See Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi
7. See *Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Tirmidhi*
8. See Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi
9. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, Malik
10. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*
11. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*
12. See Introduction to Book Year 7
13. Related by Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim
14. See *Sahih Muslim*
15. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance from Error.*

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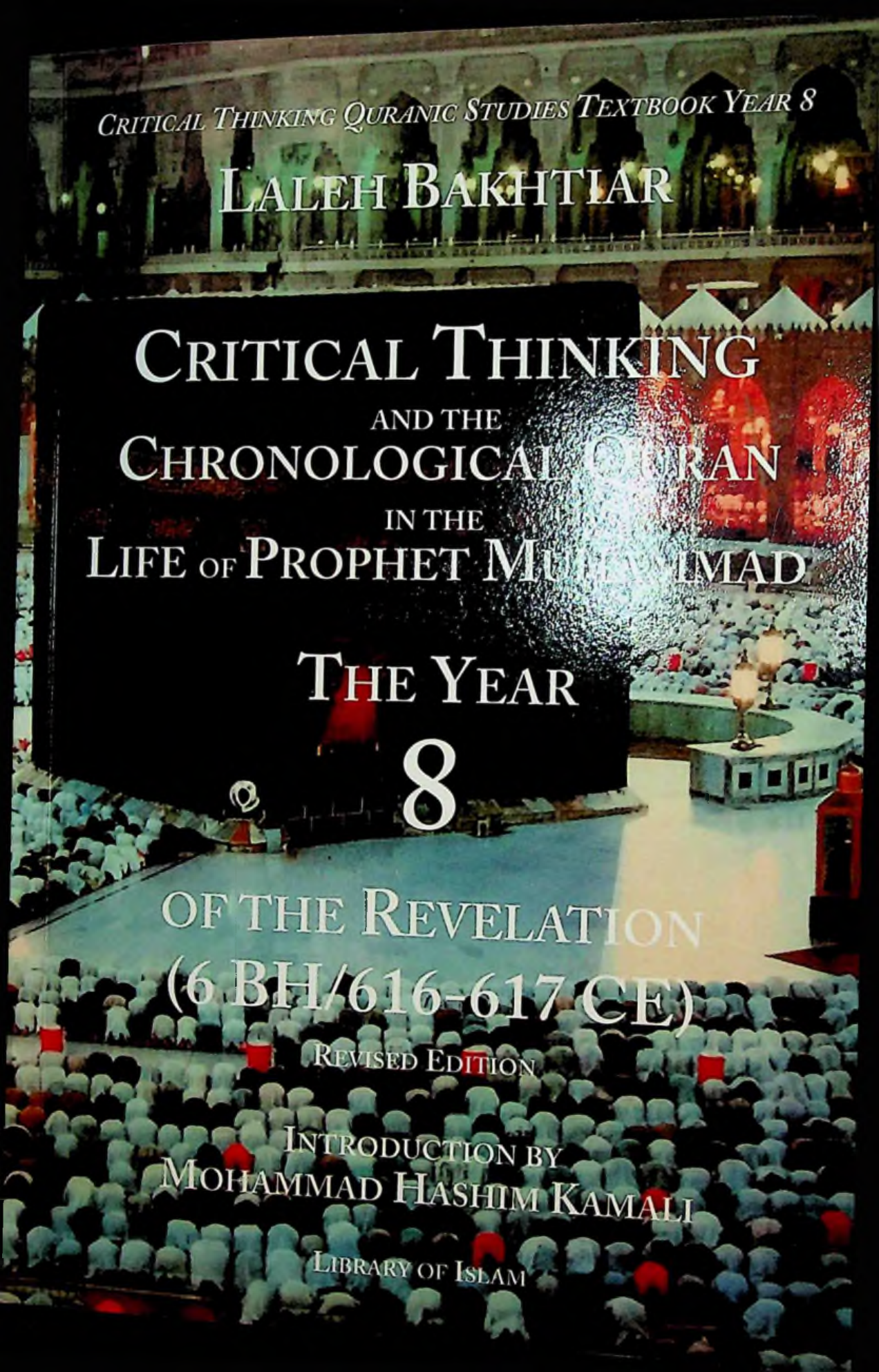
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Mohammad Hashim Kamali
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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 8

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 8 of the Revelation (6 BH/616-617 CE)

Revised Edition

Laleh Bakhtiar

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 8, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 6 BH/September 19, 616 CE-September 7, 617 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: I: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of

view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)

4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS**

AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is.

What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facil-

itates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the

act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike

the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge

tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the

intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience.[ii] But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowl-

edge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends

farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long be-

fore it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remem-*

brance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones*

who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah.*

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad.* Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad.* Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh.*

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad.* Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed

about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 8*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 8* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 8*, we begin with Lesson 57, that is, Quran Chapter 31 which is the 57th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 34, 39, 40 and, finaly Lesson 61 with Quranic Chapter 41 which is the 61st chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

PRELUDE: ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST THE HASHIM CLAN

COMMUNICATIONS CUT OFF

The Quraysh who had opposed the Prophet's message entered into a confederacy against the Hashimites—that they would not marry their women, nor give their own in marriage to them; that they would sell nothing to them, nor buy aught from them; and that dealings with them of every kind should cease.[1]

THE BAN

The ban was carefully committed to writing, and sealed with three seals. When all had bound themselves by it, the record was hung up in the Kabah, and religious sanction thus given to its provisions.

The Hashimites were unable to withstand the tide of public opinion which was set violently against them. Apprehensive perhaps that it might be only the prelude of open attack, or of blows in the dark still more fatal, they retired into the secluded quarter of the valley known as Shib of Abu Talib.

THE SHIB OR QUARTER OF ABU TALIB

The Shib was formed by one of the defiles or indentations of the mountains, where the projecting rocks of Abu Quraysh pressed upon the eastern outskirts of Makkah. It was entered on the city side by a low gateway, through which a camel passed with difficulty. On all other sides it was detached from the town by cliffs and buildings.

HASHIMITES WITH MUHAMMAD TO RETIRE INTO THE SHIB (616-617 CE)

On the first night of the first month, Muharram, of the eighth year of the revelation of Muhammad, the Hashimites, including the Prophet and his family, retired into the quarter of Abu Talib. With them followed also the descendants of al-Muttalib, the brother of Hashim. The ban of separation was put rigorously in force. The Hashimites soon found themselves cut off from their food supplies and other necessities of life. A great scarcity ensued. The failing stock of the Hashimites, replenished only by occasional and surreptitious ventures, reduced them to want and distress. The citizens could hear the wailing of the famished children within the Shib. Among the relatives of the isolated band were found some who ventured, in spite of threats of the Quraysh, to introduce from time to time provisions by stealth at night, into the quarter of Abu Talib.

THEIR DISTRESS

At the beginning of the siege, Ali was sixteen years old. He was charged with the difficult and dangerous duty of feeding the whole clan. He discharged this duty at great risk to his life. He brought water and grain whenever he could find any. For one goatskin of water, he had to pay one piece of gold. He considered himself lucky if he succeeded in bringing it to the ravine. His efforts, however, brought only partial relief to the beleaguered clan.

Abu Talib himself did not sleep at night. For him the physical safety of his nephew took precedence over everything else. When Muhammad fell asleep, Abu Talib woke him up, and asked him to sleep in the bed of one of his four sons, and ordered his son to sleep in Muhammad's bed. A little later, he would wake his nephew again, and ask him to go to the bed of another of his sons.

He spent the whole night shifting Muhammad out of one bed and putting him in another. He had no illusions about his enemies. They were tenacious, treacherous, vicious and vindictive. He, therefore, did not underestimate them. If one of them crept into the ravine with the intention of killing Muhammad, he would most probably kill one of the sons of Abu Talib. Abu Talib and his wife were ever ready to sacrifice their sons for Muhammad.

There were times when Ali, notwithstanding his daring and his resourcefulness, was unable to find any provision. The children and the adults all went hungry. But going hungry and thirsty was a norm in the ravine. When water was available, mothers boiled dead leaves in it to comfort their crying children. The cry of hungry children could be heard outside the ravine, and Abu Jahl and the Umayyads responded to it with derisive laughter. They gloated over their 'triumph' in making the children of the Hashim Clan cry for water and food.

The most precious gift for the besieged clans during these three years, was water. Water was the gift of life. The two clans received it from Khadija. She gave Ali the pieces of gold with which he bought water. Her concern for those around her manifested itself in various ways. She prayed to God and invoked His mercy upon the besieged. Prayer was her 'strategy' for handling adversity. It was, she found, a simple but effective strategy.

Occasionally, the few friends that the members of the Hashim Clan had in Makkah, tried to smuggle food into the ravine, but if the pagans caught it, they seized it.

One of the friends of Hashim Clan in Makkah was Hisham ibn Amr al-Amiri. He brought food and water for them as often as he

could. The time he had chosen to deliver the provisions into the ravine was a few hours before daybreak. Eventually the Quraysh caught him, and they threatened to kill him if he persisted in bringing his loaded camels to the ravine for Hashim clan.

Another secret friend of Hashim clan was Hakim ibn Hizam, the nephew of Khadija. He and his servant carried food and water to Khadija which she immediately gave to the children.

Abu al-Bukhtari was one of the friends of Hakim. He too brought essential supplies to Hashim clan. One night he and Hakim were driving a camel to the ravine when they were surprised by Abu Jahl. He told them that he was going to confiscate the provisions and the camel. At first, Abu al-Bukhtari tried to conciliate him with words but he didn't want to hear anything. He barred the access to the ravine and refused to let them pass. Abu al-Bukhtari tried to force his way past Abu Jahl, and this led to a violent fist fight between them. Brawls like this erupted quite frequently near the ravine but the few friends that the clan of Hashim clan had in the city, did not lose heart, and did everything they could to bring succor to it.

Hisham bin Amr al-Amiri, Hakim bin Hizam, and Abu al-Bukhtari, were not Muslims but they did not want to see any child or even a servant of the Hashim clan perish from hunger, and they risked their own lives time and again in bringing food and water to the Shib of Abu Talib. They were also very happy to pay the bill for such relief operations for three years, and all they sought in return was the safety of the besieged clans.

It should be pointed out here that the hatred and anger of the Umayyad clan of the Quraysh idolaters was directed not against the Muslims but against the Hashim Clan. Their aim was to destroy Islam. But they could not destroy Islam without killing Muhammad. They made numerous attempts to kill him, but they failed because he was beyond their reach. He was safe in the fortress which Abu Talib and the Hashim clan had built for him.

The Umayyads rightly pinpointed the Hashim Clan as responsible for all their failures and frustrations in their war on Islam, and never condoned it for checkmating them in their long and bitter struggle against it.

As for the Muslims who did not belong to the clan of Hashim clan, there were many, and they were all in Makkah. They did not go to Shib of Abu Talib with the Hashim Clan. Some among them are said to have been rich, powerful and influential, and all of them claimed that they loved their Prophet; but curiously, not one of them ever came to see him much less bring any aid to him, during the three

years of siege. They enjoyed the comfort and security of their homes in the city for three years while their Prophet, Muhammad Mustafa, lived on the edge of a sword, surrounded by enemies thirsting for his blood, and in a state of unmitigated suspense never knowing what terrors the next day or the next night might bring to him and to his clan.

OTHER ACCOUNTS OF THE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

A few years later Fatima, the wife of Abu Talib, like the rest of the Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib tribes, were isolated in Makkah and confined to an area in the valley of her husband. The Quraysh idolaters had held a meeting and drawn up a document to boycott the Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib Clans after they saw things moving against them, namely, the Messenger's companions had settled in Abyssinia in peace and safety; Hamza and Umar had become a Muslim; they were both now on the side of the Messenger; and Islam had begun to spread among the tribes.

The Quraysh agreed in the document not to marry the women of the Hashim or Abd al-Muttalib Clans nor give their women to them to marry nor buy from them nor sell to them. They hung the document up in the middle of the Kabah to remind them of their obligations. As a result, the two clans joined with Fatima bint Asad and her husband, Abu Talib, in his valley. The families were imprisoned with the exception of Abu Lahab who joined with the enemy.

Men, women, and children were placed indiscriminately in the hot, dry valley. The notice written by Abu Jahl in the name of the Quraysh aristocrats and hung on the Kabah wall said: No one is to have any contact with the Hashim or Abd al-Muttalib clans. All relationships with them are cut-off. Do not buy anything from them. Do not sell anything to them. Do not marry any of them.

THROUGH THE VIEW OF FATIMA BINT ASAD

Fatima bint Asad, mother of Ali ibn Abi Talib and wife of Abu Talib who cared for the Messenger for seventeen years, along with the rest of her family faced this economic and social boycott. They were forced to live in a rocky prison so that loneliness, poverty, hunger, and the difficulties of life would make them surrender to either the Quraysh idols or death! They had no choice but to bear the torture—both those who had become Muslim like herself and those who had not as yet accepted the faith.

Even those who had not as yet become Muslim from these families put up a united front towards the enemies in order to preserve

their family honor. They had faith in Muhammad as a good person: He sought no personal gain. He had a sense of faith and commitment. He did not present himself as being superior to them even though they had not accepted his faith. He acted justly towards all without demanding justice for himself.

Fatima also knew in her heart that people like the members of her family who had still not accepted Islam but were willing to bear the hunger and thirst along with her and those members of her family who had accepted Islam, were worth far more than the idol-worshipping intellectuals who sat around the Kabah filled with fear. The intellectuals spoke about philosophy and charity, but when they were presented with a progressive ideology, they refused to accept because it meant being equal with POW/slaves and the deprived. These intellectuals she had seen and listened to spoke about class equality while choosing to act in a way that would protect the wealth of their fathers in order to continue to live in luxury. They chose to act to protect their social position and to avoid opposing the unjust status quo. These intellectuals Fatima had observed preferred to remain on the side of Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab. They watched the torture of Bilals, Ammars, and Khabbabs and the martyrdom of Sumayya and Yasirs without raising a hand to object.

Living in isolation in the hot, dry valley, Fatima also sensed a new faith had alighted upon her spirit and that of the other believers. The wonders of being human had become clear to her with the appearance of this new movement in her society which was full of danger. She intuited the basis of the movement—experiment, choice, and obligatory disciplines. She could now speak of herself and her responsibilities towards her fellow human beings clearly and without deceit. The liberation she sensed made her aware of both her strengths and her weaknesses. All these things were hidden within the spirit of the movement and yet, wonder upon wonder, it was these very hidden things which were revealed.

Now, in this frightening compound, there were people who were not Muslims and yet they bore the difficulties with patience, silence, and three years of hunger and loneliness. They lived in the shadows of danger. They also took part in God's great revolution of humanity. In this most sensitive moment of the beginning of the history of Islam, they shared the pain, having understood the position of Muhammad and his companions.

The families of the Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib clans were cut off for three years from their city, their people, their freedom, and even their means of livelihood. They were made to live in this con-

finement. Was it possible to leave the valley in the middle of the night and, hidden from the eyes of the spies of the Quraysh, get some food for the hungry who were waiting in jail? Could it be that a conscience-stricken family member or friend might, out of kindness, bring them some bread? Hunger sometimes reached the point that they took on the image of 'death,' but as they had prepared themselves for martyrdom, they were patient. Sad ibn Abi Waqqas, who was confined with the others, wrote: Hunger has brought on such dizziness that if at night I kick at a soft and wet material, without even realizing it, I put it in my mouth and suck it. Two years later I still do not know what it was.

One could see under these conditions what passed for the family of the Messenger even if history had said nothing. All of these families bore the difficulties of hunger, loneliness, and poverty for the sake of the Messenger. They patiently bore the cry of a child from the pain of hunger. They remained calm when a sick person moaned in pain from the lack of medicine and food. When an aged person reached the limits of endurance, they said nothing to the Messenger, so as not to cause him greater anguish.

At the same time, in spite of all of the difficulties, they remained loyal and generous in faith and love. All of this showed the expressions of the spirit, of faith, and of human life which greatly affected the sensitive heart of the Messenger. Know for sure that whenever food arrived in the darkness of the night and it was given into the hands of the Messenger to be spread among the people, the share of his wife and daughter was least of all, in order that they not fear for their lives.

The days passed with difficulty in this compound. At night the black tent of darkness fell upon the residents of this mountainous area separated from the life of the city. Weeks, months, and years passed with hardship. They passed slowly over their tired bodies and spirits, but all continued to step in sympathy with each other and with the Messenger.

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And through all of this, the Quranic revelations continued to be sent down on the Prophet/Messenger for his Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib followers. Those early Muslims from other tribes against whom sanctions had not been imposed were not to hear these revelations as they were being revealed. In spite of suffering from hunger and thirst, the spirits of those Muslims isolated in the valley of Abu Talib remained high throughout this ordeal.

LESSON 57(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, VOCABULARY

WHAT IS A CONCEPT?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

QURANIC CHAPTER 31: LUQMAN (LUQMAN) SIGNS 31:1-31:11

Makkah: *Alif Lam Mim.* (31:1)
There are the signs of the wise Book, (31:2)
a guidance and a mercy to the ones who are doers of good, (31:3)
those who perform the formal prayer
and give the purifying alms
and they are certain of the world to come. (31:4)
Those are on a guidance from their Lord.
And those, they are the ones who prosper. (31:5)
And of humanity is he who exchanges diversionary conversation
to cause others to go astray from the way of God
without any knowledge.
And he takes it to himself in mockery.
Those, for them will be a despised punishment. (31:6)
When Our signs are recounted to him,
he turned as one who grows arrogant,
as if he had not been hearing them,
as if there had been heaviness in his ears.
So give him the good tidings of a painful punishment. (31:7)
Truly, those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them are Gardens of Bliss, (31:8)
ones who will dwell in them forever.
The promise of God is true.

And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (31:9)
He created the heavens without any pillars
so that you see the heavens.
And He cast firm mountains on the earth
so that the earth should not vibrate with you.
And He disseminated in and on it of all moving creatures.
And We caused water to descend from heaven.
We caused all generous, diverse pairs to develop in it. (31:10)
This is the creation of God.
Then, cause me to see what other than He created?
Nay! The ones who are unjust
are clearly wandering astray. (31:11)

COMMENTARY°

A BOOK OF WISDOM

The section begins with three separate letters which are then described as: *there are the signs of the wise Book.* (31:2) This serves to emphasize that the signs of this book are composed of letters of the same sort. The book is described here as being wise because it is repeatedly mentioned in this chapter. Hence, it is fitting, in the normal method of the Quran, that this particular aspect of the book is emphasized in this context. Moreover, speaking of the book as being wise gives it connotations of life and will. It is as though the book itself is a living creature which is wise in what it says and the way it directs people to behave. It chooses its objective and serves it. This is indeed true of the book as it has life, spirit, movement and a distinctive personality. Furthermore, it provides friendly companionship, one which is felt by those who live with it and under its shade. They relate to it and have a mutual response with it just like close friends.

This book, which is wise, provides *a guidance and a mercy to the ones who are doers of good.* This is its essential and permanent status: providing guidance so that goodly people can follow the right way. Indeed, travelers who follow its way are never in error. This book also provides people with mercy as they feel reassured and contented by the guidance they are given. They feel God's mercy as they attain success, establish firm bonds and strong mutual commitments among those who follow such guidance, and also between them and the laws of the universe in which they live.

The ones who excel in doing good are those who *those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and they are certain of the world to come.* (31:4) Such people attend regularly to

prayers, and offer them in full, on time and in the right manner. This fulfils the purpose of those prayers and enhances their effect on feelings and behavior. Thus prayer creates a very strong bond with God, one which spreads an air of pleasantness on life as a whole. Giving generously in charity enables the giver to rise above the natural instinct to hold on to things. It helps to establish a social system based on mutual cooperation where both the affluent and the deprived find confidence and reassurance, as well as genuine mutual care. Certainty of the hereafter ensures that believers stay alert, seeking what God will give, and resisting the lure of all worldly comforts and luxuries. Furthermore, it keeps the believer heedful of what God desires, in public and private, in matters small or large. Thus he aims to achieve excellence in doing good, or *ihsan*, which the Prophet defined as: To worship God as though you see Him; if you do not see Him, remember that He sees you.[2]

Those who attend to prayer, give in charity and are certain of the hereafter: *Those are on a guidance from their Lord. And those, they are the ones who prosper.* (31:5) Whoever accepts divine guidance will be successful. Such a person moves along with enlightenment which leads him to his goal. He is thus free from error in this life and from the consequences of error in the life to come. He has reassurance, comfort, and friendly interaction with all that exists.

THE OTHER PARTY

And of humanity is he who exchanges diversionary conversation to cause others to go astray from the way of God without any knowledge. (31:6) Such people would pay money, time and life to buy such idle talk. How high the price, and cheap the commodity in which such people spend their lives. They buy such talk *to cause others to go astray from the way of God without any knowledge.* (31:6) They are truly ignorant. Their action is neither based on sound knowledge, nor aims for a wise objective. They have bad intentions and aims. They want to use such idle talk to lead themselves and others astray from God's path. They are ill-mannered, ridicule God's path, and mock the way God has laid down for people's lives. Hence, the Quran issues a strong warning to such people. It shows them as contemptible, even before it completes their picture: *Those, for them will be a despised punishment.* (31:6) The description of their suffering as shameful is deliberate for this replies to their mocking of the divine way of life.

Painting the image of this other party is then resumed: *When Our signs are recounted to him, he turned as one who grows arro-*

gant, as if he had not been hearing them, (31:7) The image here is full of movement, showing this person as arrogant, turning away in pride. He is, therefore, decorated with shame and this makes us look at him with contempt: *as if there had been heaviness in his ears.* (31:7) It is this heaviness that stops him from listening to God's signs. No person listens to these divine signs and then turns away so arrogantly. This description is completed with further ridicule: *So give him the good tidings of a painful punishment.* (31:7) The sign uses here the term *bashshir*, which connotes the giving of happy news. Its usage adds further ridicule.

Those believers who have translated their faith into good action: *Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them are Gardens of Bliss.* (31:9) Their admission to heaven and their abode there simply fulfils God's true promise. The grace God bestows on His servants means that He commits Himself to reward them generously for what they do for themselves, not for Him, as He is in no need of anyone. *And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (31:9) He is certainly able to fulfil His promise, and He is wise in all that He does, including creation, promise and fulfilment.

SIGNS OF WISDOM

The ultimate proof of God's might, wisdom and all other issues mentioned in the chapter is the great universe, whose creation no human being ever claims for himself or for anyone other than God.

This reference to the limitless space: *He created the heavens without any pillars so that you see the heavens* is made quickly and briefly, before we are returned straight to earth which is no more than a tiny particle when compared to the great universal expanse.

Yet we see the earth as huge indeed: No person can traverse it all, even though he spends his life in continuous travel. Thus, the section returns us to earth so we contemplate it with open minds, and without the effects of familiarity that cloud our vision: *And He cast firm mountains on the earth so that the earth should not vibrate with you.* (31:10)

God: *We caused all generous, diverse pairs to develop in it.* (31:10) This is one of the great wonders of existence. *And We caused water to descend from heaven. We caused all generous, diverse pairs to develop in it.* (31:10) Sending rain down from the sky is yet another universal wonder which we take for granted, oblivious to what is involved. The water that runs in rivers, fills up lakes, or bursts out in springs comes from the sky according to a carefully planned system that, in turn, is linked to the regulation of the heavens and the

earth, their relative distances, natures and formations.

That plants and their pairs are described as 'goodly' imparts a significant feeling, making it suited as God's creation. Therefore, it is raised in front of our eyes: *This is the creation of God.* (31:11) And a challenge follows: *Then, cause me to see what other than He created?* (31:11) Then follows the comment: *Nay! The ones who are unjust are clearly wandering astray.* (31:11) What could be worse than wrongdoing and the error of associating partners with God when looking at God's great and universal creation?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

CONCEPT MAPPING:

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

PRE-QUESTIONS:

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

DEFINITION:

What is....?
Where does ... fit?
What group does ... belong to?

CHARACTERISTICS:

How would I describe...?

What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

EXAMPLES

What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

EXPERIENCE

What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

QURANIC CHAPTER 31: LUQMAN (LUQMAN)
SIGNS 31:12-31:19

Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:12)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:13)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:14)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:15)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:16)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:17)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:18)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:19)

Lesson 57(2). Critical Thinking Strategy Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when

a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one be-

come a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[3]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 31: LUQMAN (LUQMAN)
SIGNS 31:20-31:30

Makkah: *Consider you not*
that God caused to become subservient to you
whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth
and lavished on you His divine blessing,
that which is manifest and that which is inward
and yet most of humanity is he who disputes about God
without knowledge and with no guidance
and without an illuminating Book. (31:20)
And when it was said to them:
Follow what God caused to descend.
They said: Nay! We will follow what we found our fathers on.

Even if it Satan had been calling them
to the punishment of the blaze? (31:21)
And whoever submits his face to God
while he is one who is a doer of good,
then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold.
And to God is the Ultimate End of affairs. (31:22)
And whoever was ungrateful,
let not his ingratitude dishearten you
To Us is their return and We will tell them what they did.
Truly, God is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (31:23)
We give them enjoyment for a little while.
Again, We will compel them to a harsh punishment. (31:24)
And if you had asked them who created the heavens and the earth,
they will certainly say: God! Say: The Praise belongs to God!
But most of them know not. (31:25)
To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.
Truly, God, He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise. (31:26)
Madinah (31:27)
Madinah (31:28)
Madinah (31:29)
That is because God, He is The Truth
and what they call to other than Him is falsehood.
And that God, He is The Lofty, The Great! (31:30)

COMMENTARY°

Some people are ungrateful, do not reflect on the world around them and do not appreciate the blessings they enjoy: *Yet most of humanity is he who disputes about God without knowledge and with no guidance and without an illuminating Book.* (31:20)

And when it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow what we found our fathers on. (31:21) This is their only basis and evidence! It is nothing other than blindly following traditions which lack knowledge and intelligent thinking. The Quran wants to free us from such blind imitation, so as to set our minds free. It wants us to be able to think, reflect and benefit by the light, but we adamantly hold on to the chains of their deviant past.

The Quranic message gives us freedom of conscience, active feelings, aspiration for enlightenment and a new way of life that is free of blind tradition. Yet such people turn their backs on it, rejecting its light and guidance. They argue about God without knowledge or guidance. Hence, the chapter looks upon them with ridicule, making

a subtle reference to the end such attitudes lead to: *Even if it Satan had been calling them to the punishment of the blaze?* (31:21) Indeed their attitude is nothing less than an invitation by Satan leading them to God's punishment. Will they persist with this despite the end which they will be certain to have? This last remark should at least alert them to the difficulty of their position.

The section then refers to the proper attitude that should result from reflecting on the universal evidence and God's countless blessings: *And whoever submits his face to God while he is one who is a doer of good, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. And to God is the Ultimate End of affairs.* (31:22) Together with good deeds, what is required is total submission to God. One should feel reassured of God's will, obey His commands, fulfil the duties He requires, have confidence in His mercy, trust His care, and so enjoy total contentment. All this is grouped under the heading of submission to God.

And whoever submits his face to God while he is one who is a doer of good (31:22) supports a bond that is never severed or weakened. It never lets down anyone who holds to it, whether in situations of ease or difficulty. No one who holds to it will ever be lost, even though his road is rough, dark and beset by hardships. This firm support is the close, confident link between the submitting believer and his Lord. Thus, whatever comes through God's will is accepted without qualm. It gives the believer the sort of reassurance that keeps him calm and confident as he faces all events. Furthermore, in this way, he is able to rise above comforts, luxuries, difficulties, surprises and all other impediments.

Our journey is long, hard and full of danger. The danger posed by luxury and affluence is no less than that arising from misery and deprivation. Hence the need for firm and ever-present support. The firmest support is that which comes about from submitting oneself to God and doing good deeds. *And to God is the Ultimate End of affairs.* (31:22) With Him all journeys end, and to Him we all return. Hence, it is better for us to submit to Him from the start, so that he moves along our journey with confidence, reassurance and guidance.

This is, by contrast, the end of the ungrateful who is deceived by life's comforts. In this present life, he is shown to the Prophet and the believers as being of no consequence: *And whoever was ungrateful, let not his ingratitude dishearten you.* (31:23) He is too small for you to grieve over. As for his end in the life to come, it is again of no insignificance. He cannot escape God's punishment, when God knows all his actions and intentions: *To Us is their return and We*

will tell them what they did. Truly, God is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (31:23) The enjoyments that deceive such people are small, short in duration, trifling in value, but the results at the end are terrifying. These they cannot escape: *Again, We will compel them to a harsh punishment.* (31:24) The Arabic term, *ghaliz*, used here to describe the suffering, has more physical connotations than 'severe' suggests. Thus the sign imparts a more tangible feeling of the suffering into which they are driven, unable to avoid it. How vastly different the two ends are.

USING THE CREATION ARGUMENT

In its contemplation of the universe, the section puts the ungrateful face to face with the logic of their own nature. In this way, they cannot deny the truth it emphasizes. Yet still there are those who deviate and remain heedless.

Those who associated partners with God, and argued very strongly against the Prophet and his message, could not falsify the argument of their own nature when they were confronted with the universal proof of the creation of the heavens and the earth. Therefore, they did not hesitate in their reply to the question: *And if you had asked them who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say: God!* (31:25) Praise is due to God for keeping the truth of the universe and its creation clear in human nature. The argument is discontinued so as to give a new comment: *Say: The Praise belongs to God! But most of them know not.* (31:25) It is because they do not understand that they continue to argue, ignoring the logic of human nature and the fact that the whole universe points to its supreme Creator.

The ssection adds a statement of God's ownership of all that is in the heavens and the earth, whether it is made available to us or not. He is in no need of anything in the heavens or the earth. He is praised even though people may not praise Him: *To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Truly, God, He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise.* (31:26)

Thus it is, because God alone is the Ultimate Truth, and all that people invoke beside Him is sheer falsehood, and because God alone is Most High, Great. (31:29-31:30)

That is because God, He is The Truth. (31:30) Everything else changes and alters, increases and decreases, is subject to strengthening and weakening, flourishing and withering. Everything else comes into existence and goes out of it, but God alone is Eternal, unchanging, subject to no transformation or alteration.

Yet there remains in my mind something I have not expressed about the statement: *That is because God, He is The Truth.* It is something that cannot be communicated in words; something which is not in my power to express; something I feel strongly in my heart, yet human language cannot put into words. The same is true of the last statement in this sign: *And that God, He is The Lofty, The Great!* (31:30) Indeed, no one else is high or great. Have I said anything about what works inside me about this Quranic statement? I feel that any human expression of these sublime truths detracts from them. Indeed, the Quranic expression is uniquely inspiring.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height.

Lesson 57(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

Quranic Chapter 31: Luqman (Luqman) Signs 31:31-31:34

Makkah: *Have you not considered*
that the boats run through the sea
by the divine blessing of God that He causes you to see His signs?
Truly in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one. (31:31)
And when a wave overcame them like an overshadowing,
they called to God as ones who are sincere
and devoted in the way of life to Him.
Then, when He delivered them to dry land among them
are ones who halt between two opinions.
And none negates Our signs
but every ungrateful turncoat. (31:32)
O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord,
and dread a Day when recompense will not be given by a child
to one to whom the child is born,
nor will one to whom a child is born
be one who gives recompense
for the one who is born at all.
Truly, the promise of God is True
so let not this present life delude you
nor let the deluder delude you about God. (31:33)
Truly, the knowledge of the Hour is with God.
And He sends plenteous rain water down.
And He knows what is in the wombs.

And no soul is informed of what it will earn tomorrow.
And no soul is informed in what region it will die.
Truly, God is Knowing, Aware. (31:34)

COMMENTARY°

Have you not considered that the boats run through the sea by the divine blessing of God that He causes you to see His signs? Truly in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one. (31:31) Many people are neither patient nor grateful. When harm afflicts them, they raise their voices with prayer. When God lifts harm from them, only a few are truly grateful. *And when a wave overcame them like an overshadowing, they called to God as ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. Then, when He delivered them to dry land among them are ones who halt between two opinions. And none negates Our signs but every ungrateful turncoat.* (31:32)

But *when He delivered them to dry land among them are ones who halt between two opinions.* (31:32) Security and comfort do not drive them back to carelessness. They remain mindful of God's bounty and give thanks for it, but they do not do enough to fulfil their duties towards God in thanksgiving. In other words, they are restrained in their thanks.

There are others who deny God's signs once danger is over and security is again felt. *And none negates Our signs but every ungrateful turncoat.* (31:32) Both treachery and unbelief are here described in superlative terms that are nevertheless true of anyone who disbelieves after having seen all the universal indications and listened to the clear arguments about human nature.

THE LURE OF COMFORTABLE LIVING

O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord, and dread a Day when recompense will not be given by a child to one to whom the child is born, nor will one to whom a child is born be one who gives recompense for the one who is born at all. (31:33) The horror described here is psychological, measured by its effect on hearts and souls. Nothing severs blood relations and ties between parent and child, and nothing makes everyone preoccupied solely with their own positions unless it be a fear totally unknown to people. The call to fear God, therefore, comes here at the right time, when people are ready to respond. The issue of the hereafter is presented against the background of such great horror so that hearts will listen.

Truly, the promise of God is True. (31:33) It will never fail. There can be no avoidance of this very difficult situation. No one can escape the accurate reckoning and the fair reward, when none can avail

another of anything.

So let not this present life delude you. (31:33) It is full of lure, luxury and comfort, but it is limited in duration, and it is only a test to determine the eventual reward. *So let not this present life delude you nor let the deluder delude you about God.* (31:33) Let no comfort, work, or interest delude you. Above all, let no devil tempt you, for there are many devils, such as money, science, life, power, authority, desire, fancy and passion. Each has its own lure and temptation which can be very deluding. Fear of God and remembrance of the Day of Judgment, however, should be enough to protect believers from all such temptations.

KNOWLEDGE ABSOLUTE

At the end of this presentation, which completes the section, a final note is given, one which is both powerful and awesome. It describes God's perfect and comprehensive knowledge contrasting this with our own limited, human knowledge. It states the question discussed throughout the chapter and presents all this in one of the most wonderful images drawn in the Quran:

Truly, the knowledge of the Hour is with God. And He sends plenteous rain water down. (31:34) God Almighty has chosen to keep the knowledge of the Last Hour to Himself; none knows it other than Him. Thus people will always remain cautious, expecting its arrival at any time, trying to be ready for it. They know that there is no time to lose in preparing for its arrival.

And He knows what is in the wombs. (31:34) This is exclusive knowledge similar to that of the Last Hour. It is God alone who knows, with absolute certainty, what wombs contain at every moment and in every stage, how they swell or shrink, what type of foetus, even when it has no shape, form or size. He further knows the features the foetus will have, its characteristics and future abilities. All this is part of God's exclusive knowledge.

And no soul is informed of what it will earn tomorrow. (31:34) No one knows what will happen to them tomorrow: good or bad, benefit or harm, ease or hardship, health or sickness, obedience to God or disobedience. 'Earning' is far more general than material gain. It applies to everything that happens to a person tomorrow, which is kept hidden under thick covers. People may try to discover this, but they will always fail, remaining unable to discern anything beyond those covers.

Similarly, *And no soul is informed in what region it will die.* (31:34) Such knowledge is kept behind thick blinds which cannot be

penetrated by hearing or seeing. *Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* (31:34)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully. Try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Have you tried the strategy below? How would your rate yourself?

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

LESSON 58(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[4]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues

which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[5]

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)
SIGNS 34:1-34:9

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God.*
To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
And His is The Praise in the world to come.
And He is The Wise, The Aware. (34:1)
He knows whatever penetrates into the earth
and what goes forth out of it
and what comes down from the heaven
and what goes up to it.
And He is The Compassionate, The Forgiving. (34:2)
And those who were ungrateful said:
The Hour will not approach us.
Say: Yea! By my Lord, it will, certainly, approach you.
He is One Who Knows of the unseen.
Not an atom's weight escapes from Him in the heavens
or in and on the earth, be it smaller than that
or greater, but that it had been in a clear Book (34:3)
that He may give recompense to those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality.
Those, for them there is forgiveness
and a generous provision. (34:4)
But those who endeavored against Our signs
as ones who strive to thwart,
those, for them there is a punishment of painful wrath. (34:5)
Madinah (34:6)
Makkah: *Those who were ungrateful said:*
Shall we point you to a man who will tell you
when you were torn to pieces, ones who are totally torn to pieces?
Then, you will be, truly, in a new creation. (34:7)
Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him?
Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come
there is a punishment and a going far astray. (34:8)
Consider they not what is in advance of them

and what is behind them
of the heaven and the earth?
If We will, We could cause the earth to swallow them,
or cause to drop on them pieces of heaven.
Truly, in this is a sign for every servant,
one who turns in repentance. (34:9)

COMMENTARY°

WHERE PRAISE IS DUE

This section, which speaks at length about the idolaters who associated partners with God, denied His Messenger, doubted the hereafter and dismissed the idea of resurrection, begins with praising God. All praise is due to Him for being God, even though no human being utters a word of praise addressed to Him. He is praised by the universe and all creation, even though some human beings take a different attitude. Coupled with this is God's attribute of being the Sovereign of the universe. No one has any portion of heaven or earth: He alone owns all there is. This is the central issue of faith: God's Oneness.

The Praise belongs to God. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And His is The Praise in the world to come. And He is The Wise, The Aware. (34:1) Whatever He does is based on wisdom. Indeed, He conducts the affairs of this life and the Next, and the affairs of the entire universe in perfect wisdom. Moreover, He is aware of everything that takes place, and His knowledge is full, accurate and absolute.

The chapter gives us a notion of God's knowledge, portrayed against the background of heaven and earth: *He knows whatever penetrates into the earth and what goes forth out of it and what comes down from the heaven and what goes up to it. And He is The Compassionate, The Forgiving.* (34:2) This is a vast image drawn in a few simple words, painting an amazing multitude of things, motions, sizes, shapes, forms and meanings that go beyond any imagination. Should all the people on earth spend their entire lives monitoring and recording what takes place in just one moment of the things mentioned in the sign, they would not be able to do so. How many things go into the earth in such a moment? How many leave it? And how many come down from the sky or go up into it?

The chapter then mentions the ungrateful' denial of the inevitability of the Last Hour, even though they are totally unaware what tomorrow will bring. That it will come is certain; it is necessary so that both those who do good and those who do evil should receive their fair reward:

The ungrateful deny the life to come because they do not understand God's wisdom. In His infinite wisdom, He does not let people do what they please, whether good or evil, and then leave them at that, without giving reward to the doers of good and requiting those who do otherwise. He has informed us, through His messengers, that He leaves the reward in full or in part to the Day of Judgment.

Therefore, all those who understand His wisdom with regard to His creation realize that the life to come is essential for the fulfilment of God's promise. The ungrateful, however, are oblivious of divine wisdom. They impolitely say: *And those who were ungrateful said: The Hour will not approach us.* (34:3) Hence the emphatic retort: They have no knowledge of what is beyond their world, but they nevertheless are quick to assert something of which they have no knowledge: *Say: Yea! By my Lord, it will, certainly, approach you. He is One Who Knows of the unseen.* (34:3) What He states is the truth. Furthermore, this truth is simple, complete and based on sound and true knowledge.

Once more God's knowledge is portrayed against a similarly universal background testifying once more to the Originator of the Quran. Such thoughts simply do not occur to human minds: *Not an atom's weight escapes from Him in the heavens or in and on the earth, be it smaller than that or greater, but that it had been in a clear Book.* (34:3) Such images do not occur in ordinary prose or poetry. When people describe knowledge as complete, comprehensive and accurate, they do not paint such a captivating universal image.

This is a description by God of His own knowledge, using human language in a way humans do not use it. Thus the Muslims' own concept of God is set on a nobler level. The nearest meaning of the phrase, *but that it had been in a clear Book*, is that God's knowledge takes note of everything, including the tiniest of atoms and what is even smaller.

The inevitable arrival of the Last Hour and God's knowledge that does not exclude anything small or large have a definite purpose: *that He may give recompense to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality. Those, for them there is forgiveness and a generous provision. But those who endeavored against Our signs as ones who strive to thwart, those, for them there is a punishment of painful wrath.* (34:4-34:5) Everything is based on God's wisdom who has created everything according to a set measure so as to administer the right reward or punishment for the believers or those who exert all efforts to turn people away from the truth. Those who give credence to their faith by good actions earn God's forgiveness

of any errors they make or sins they commit. They also have 'generous provisions' Therefore, it is fitting that the happiness they are assured to have in the life to come is described here as 'provisions', which in fact it is.

The others, who strive hard to turn people away from God and His message will receive some of the worst type of punishment which fits their wicked efforts. Thus is God's purpose fulfilled.

Within the overall context of God's knowledge and His purpose the next statement makes clear that those endowed with knowledge realize that what the Prophet Muhammad receives from God is the truth, providing sound guidance: *And consider those who were given the knowledge that what was caused to descend to you from your Lord. It is The Truth and it guides to a path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (34:6)

The way leading to the Almighty is the system He has placed in the universe and chosen for humanity so that their lives may be in harmony with the universe they live in. It is the law that applies to absolutely everything that takes place in the universe: *And consider those who were given the knowledge that what was caused to descend to you from your Lord. It is The Truth and it guides to a path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (34:6)

The chapter again mentions their reception to news of a Day of Judgment, expressing their total amazement at such a subject. They, in fact, suggest that to claim that resurrection takes place on a day when all humanity will be individually judged by God can only be attributed to a madman or someone who invents lies and attributes them to God. (34:7-34:8)

Their amazement at the thought of resurrection is such that they invite people to join them in wondering at the condition of the person claiming it, using an especially derisive style: *Those who were ungrateful said: Shall we point you to a man who will tell you when you were torn to pieces, ones who are totally torn to pieces? Then, you will be, truly, in a new creation.* (34:7) Do you want to see such a strange man uttering wild claims of a new creation after you have been long dead and your bodies have decomposed? Such derision then turns to defamation: According to them, such claims can only be made by a liar, by someone who fabricates ideas and claims that they are God's, or by a madman affected by the jinn to such an extent that he says what is incomprehensible.

What justifies their attitude? Is it simply because he says that they will be resurrected? Why is this so amazing when they have already gone through the process of being created? They do not even

reflect on this amazing event, which they know to have taken place, i.e. their creation in the first instance. Had they reflected on this, they would not have marvelled at a second creation. They have already gone astray. Hence, the chapter comments: *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

These people, who disbelieve in the life to come, are jerked from their slumber and presented with a fearful scene which could happen to them, if God so wills. What they see in the heavens and earth, and what may befall them at any time, should God wish it, present clear signs for anyone who reflects and turns to God with submission: *Consider they not what is in advance of them and what is behind them of the heaven and the earth? If We will, We could cause the earth to swallow them, or cause to drop on them pieces of heaven. Truly, in this is a sign for every servant, one who turns in repentance.* (34:9)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the guidelines below:
- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)
SIGNS 34:10-34:21

Makkah: Book 28: David (34:10)
Makkah: Book 28: David (34:11)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:12)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:13)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:14)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:15)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:16)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:17)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:18)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:19)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:20)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:21)

LESSON 58(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)

SIGNS 34:22-34:30

Makkah: *Say: Call on those whom you claimed other than God.*
They possess not the weight of an atom
in the heavens nor on the earth,
nor have they in either any association,
nor among them is there any sustainer of Him. (34:22)
No intercession profits with Him,
but for him to whom He gave permission.
Until when their hearts were freed from terror, they said:
What is it that your Lord said. They said: The Truth.
And He is the Lofty, the Great. (34:23)
Say: Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth?
Say: God. And, truly, we or you are either on guidance
or clearly going astray. (34:24)
Say: You will not be asked of what we sinned,
nor will we be asked about what you do. (34:25)
Say: Our Lord will gather us. Again, He will explain The Truth
among us and He is The Opener, The Knowing. (34:26)
Say: Cause me to see those whom you caused to join with Him
as ascribed associates. No indeed!
Nay! He is God, The Almighty, The Wise. (34:27)
And We sent you not, but collectively for humanity
as a bearer of good tidings and a warner,
but most of humanity knows not. (34:28)
And they say: When is this promise if you had been
ones who are sincere? (34:29)
Say: Yours is the solemn declaration of a Day which you delay
not for an hour nor press forward. (34:30)

COMMENTARY°

This short passage tackles the issue of God's Oneness in contrast

to attributing partners to Him. Yet it takes us on a round of the universe, with both its apparent realm and that which is hidden from us, its present and past, heavens and earth, this life and the life to come. The passage also refers to our sustenance, actions and reward. It looks at how people are grouped together and then separated into two distinct parties. All this is delivered in a quick rhythm with strong accompanying beats. The word, say, is repeatedly used for added emphasis. After each such usage, a new proof is given which is both irrefutable and overpowering.

THE TRUTH WILL OUT

The sign: *Say: Call on those whom you claimed other than God.* (34:22) begins with a challenge that applies to the entire universe, without exception: *They possess not the weight of an atom in the heavens nor on the earth.* (34:22) They cannot even claim to own anything in the heavens or the earth. An owner of something has full authority over it: he can do or dispense with it as he likes. What, then, do those alleged deities own in this vast universe?

They do not own an atom's weight either as their own private property or as something in which they have a share: *Nor have they in either any association.* (34:22) Moreover, God does not seek their help in anything. He is in no need of help: *Nor among them is there any sustainer of Him.* (34:22)

The sign appears to refer to a particular type of alleged partner with God. These are the angels whom the Arabs claimed to be God's daughters, alleging that they could intercede with God on people's behalf. Therefore, in the next sign the chapter denies that they have any means of intercession while drawing a scene that fills hearts with fear: *No intercession profits with Him, but for him to whom He gave permission.* (34:23) Intercession, then, is dependent on God's permission. Needless to say, God will not permit intercession on behalf of people who do not believe in Him and deserve His grace. Those who associate partners with Him do not deserve that He grant permission to angels or anyone else to intercede on their behalf.

The chapter then describes the fearful scene when intercession is needed: *Until when their hearts were freed from terror, they said: What is it that your Lord said. They said: The Truth.* (34:23) The day is exceedingly hard: people stand awaiting developments, and those who can intercede and the ones who hope for intercession in their favor wait for a signal from the Almighty permitting such intercession. The wait continues, faces look down, sounds die out and hearts go quiet as all await a signal from the Lord, full of majesty and glory

The word of permission is then given and all prospective intercessors and the ones they are interceding for are overwhelmed with awe. They are unable to comprehend. Then, *when their hearts were freed from terror* and they recover their senses and faculties, they begin to ask one another: What has your Lord ordained? They wonder whether they have understood what God said. The answer is given in one word: The truth.' It may he that the angels of the highest order are the ones who give this perfect answer. Your Lord has stated the truth, complete and perfect; the truth that comes from Him who is truth absolute. For whatever God says is absolutely true. *And He is the Lofty, the Great.* (34:23) It is a most fitting description.

That was the first note of this splendid and awe-inspiring scene. The second note refers to the provisions granted to them. Although they are oblivious to the source that gives them their provisions, the fact that they have them proves His Oneness and that no one else has any control over what He decides to give or deny. *Say: God. And, truly, we or you are either on guidance or clearly going astray.* (34:24)

The next note puts everyone before their actions and responsibilities, but again using the most polite and fair approach: *Say: You will not be asked of what we sinned.* (34:25) This might have been in answer to the repeated accusations of the idolaters branding the Prophet and his Companions as guilty and in the wrong. They had in this respect berated them for renouncing their forefathers' religion. This happens all the time, when the followers of falsehood accuse the followers of truth of being in error. Hence, the Prophet is instructed to tell them in exemplary politeness that everyone is responsible for his or her own deeds: *Nor will we be asked about what you do.* (34:25) Everyone must reflect and determine whether their attic tide will lead them to success or bring about their ruin. This is the first step towards recognizing the truth before attaining conviction.

The fourth note is given in the sign that says: *Say: Our Lord will gather us. Again, He will explain The Truth among us and He is The Opener, The Knowing.* (34:26) At first, God gathers both the followers of truth and those who follow falsehood together, so that both truth and falsehood meet face to face. Then, the advocates of truth will call on others to join them. At this stage, issues become confused, and a battle ensues between truth and falsehood. Doubts may blur evidence, and falsehood may appear to gain the upper hand, but all this will be for a limited duration. Then, God will judge between the two parties in fairness and state the truth clearly, without any ambiguity or confusion.

The final note in this passage sounds similar to the first one, throwing out a challenge to those who associated partners with him: *Say: Cause me to see those whom you caused to join with Him as ascribed associates.* (34:27) The very request is sarcastic: demanding that they reveal the subject of their claims: who are they; what is their status, position and role; how did they merit such a position? All these questions betray an element of derision. This is followed by strong censure: *No indeed! Nay! He is God, The Almighty, The Wise.* (34:27) The One who has such attributes has no partners of any sort.

These signs (34:28-30) clarify what was stated in the previous passage about each individual's accountability to God, and that the role of the advocates of truth does not go beyond delivering God's message and presenting it clearly before the rest of humanity. The current passage starts with explaining the mission assigned to the Prophet. It is clear that they are unaware of its nature. Therefore, they try to hasten what he promises or threatens them with. It makes clear that this comes at the time God has determined for it, which is unknown to anyone other than Him: *And We sent you not, but collectively for humanity as a bearer of good tidings and a warner.* (34:28) Such is the remit of the message addressed to all humanity: to bring good news and to give warning. When this is done, the messenger's role has ended. As for the fulfilment of promise and warning, this is all left to God to determine: *But most of humanity knows not.* (34:28)

The very question: *And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (34:29) implies that they do not understand the Messenger's role or the limits of the message. The Quran wants the question of God's Oneness to be absolutely clear: Muhammad is His Messenger with a clearly defined remit. He fulfils his task but does not go beyond this. All authority belongs to God: it is He who has given him the message to deliver, clearly defining his role. It is not part of his role to decide, or even to know, when the promise and the warning are to be fulfilled. This all belongs to God. The Prophet knows his limits. Therefore, he does not even question anything God has not chosen to inform him of, or has not assigned to him. Here, God instructs him to give them this particular reply: *Say: Yours is the solemn declaration of a Day which you delay not for an hour nor press forward.* (34:30)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.
Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.
Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a way t o get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.
Do not negate or embarrass the students.
Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.
Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Why? If that is so, what follows? Are you assuming that...?
How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...? For example? Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?
Can I summarize your point as ...? What is your reason for saying that?
What do you mean when using this word? Is it possible that...?
Are there other ways of looking at it?
How else could we view this matter?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked. Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

LESSON 58(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If*

they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)
SIGNS 34:31-34:36

Makkah: *And those who were ungrateful said:*
We will never believe in this, the Quran,
nor in what was in advance of it,
but if you consider when the ones who are unjust
who are stationed before their Lord,
returning the saying, some of them to some others.
Say to those who were taken advantage of
due to their weakness to those who grew arrogant:
If it were not for you,
we would have been ones who believe. (34:31)
Those who grew arrogant would say
to those who were taken advantage due to their weakness:
Barred we you from guidance after it drew near you?
Nay! You had been ones who sin. (34:32)
And would say those who were taken advantage
due to their weakness
to those who grew arrogant:
Nay! It was your planning by nighttime and daytime
when you commanded us to be ungrateful to God
and to assign rivals to Him.
And they will keep their self-reproach secret
when they will see the punishment
and We assigned yokes around the necks
of those who were ungrateful.
Are they given recompense
but for what they had been doing? (34:33)
We sent not any warner to a town,
but that the ones who are given ease said:
Truly, in what you were sent,
we are ones who disbelieve it. (34:34)
And they said: We are more than you in wealth
and in children and we are not ones who are punished! (34:35)
Say: Truly, my Lord extends the provision for whomever He wills
and confines it for whom He wills,
but most of humanity knows not. (34:36)

COMMENTARY°

The next sign speaks about a determined attitude to reject all divine guidance: The ungrateful say: *We will never believe in this, the Quran, nor in what was in advance of it.* (34:31) They make it clear that they will never believe, neither in the Quran nor in any divine book that preceded the Quran, which in fact confirms its truth. They are not prepared to believe in any of this at any time in the future either. They are determined to disbelieve, deliberately refusing even to consider anything that points to faith. It is all, then, a well considered stance. Therefore, the chapter puts before their eyes what happens to them on the Day of Judgment as a result of their stubborn rejection.

They blame their leaders, accusing them of being responsible for this humiliation and what will come next of great suffering. They state this now but were totally unable to confront them in this way during their life on earth, prevented as they were by their weakness and submission. They had sold out the freedom and dignity God had granted them, as well as the reasoning He had blessed them with. Now that all false values have been discarded, and they are put face to face with a long-lasting suffering, they can express themselves without fear: (34:31)

Those who used to think much of their power base are fed up with those whom they treated with humiliation. Both face the same punishment, but the weaker elements want them to bear responsibility for leading them astray, which is what has brought them to this suffering. Therefore, their reply is haughty, disowning any responsibility. They also tell them rudely what they think of them: (34:32)

It is not only that they deny responsibility for others, but they acknowledge that the message they received was one of guidance. In their first life, they paid little heed to the weak or their views. In fact, they treated them as if they did not exist, accepting neither argument nor opposition from them. Now that they are facing the punishment of the hereafter, they reproachfully ask them: *Barred we you from guidance after it drew near you?* (34:32) With this denial comes an accusation: *Nay! You had been ones who sin.* (34:32) You refused the guidance that was given you because you yourselves were guilty.

Had this exchange taken place in this life, the weak would have sat quietly, unable to utter a word. But on the Day of Judgment, when false airs are seen for what they are, and when the facts that were hidden are brought into the open, the weak do not accept this accusation. Instead, they speak out telling the others that it was they who consistently schemed to turn them away from God's guidance, it was

they who established false beliefs, created confusion around the truth, and who used power and influence to keep people astray: (34:33)

Both groups will then realize that such a depressing dialogue benefits neither. It will not spare either the punishment they deserve. Each party is guilty of their own sins: the ones who claimed power have to account for their own sins, as well as for leading others astray; and similarly the weak are responsible for their own sins and for following tyrants. They cannot he exempt on account of the fact that they were weak. God favored them with reason and freedom, but they chose not to use their reason and sold their freedom, accepting humiliation and servility. Thus, they all deserve to be punished. When they see the suffering they have to endure, they are in deep sorrow, regretting all that they have done: *And they will keep their self-reproach secret when they will see the punishment.* (34:33) This is a description of a state of total regret that leaves the person unable to utter a word. Hearts are buried and lips are sealed.

They are then taken to where their punishment, hard and painful, is meted out: *and We assigned yokes around the necks of those who were ungrateful.* (34:33) As they are being so driven, the chapter addresses the onlookers, saying: *Are they given recompense but for what they had been doing?* (34:33)

AN EVER REPEATED STORY

The wealthy Qurayshi people behaved in exactly the same way as others of affluence when they received a divine message: *We sent not any warner to a town, but that the ones who are given ease said: Truly, in what you were sent, we are ones who disbelieve it.* (34:34) Thus, it is the same story repeated again and again throughout the generations. Luxurious life hardens hearts, blunts sensitivity, and corrupts nature so that it no longer sees the pointers divine guidance provides. It thus lures people into arrogance, darkness and falsehood.

People who live in luxury are often deceived by false values and transient affluence. They are deluded by the power and wealth they enjoy, thinking that it will spare them God's punishment or that it is evidence of God's being pleased with them, or that in their position they are above accountability for their deeds: *And they said: We are more than you in wealth and in children and we are not ones who are punished!* (34:35)

The Quran puts in front of them the standard of values God wants. It explains to them that whether God grants provisions in plenty or makes them scanty is no indication of God's being pleased or displeased with a person. It has nothing to do with the correct stan-

dard of values; it neither prevents punishment nor induces it. It is totally separate from the question of accountability, reckoning, requital and God's pleasure. It is subject to a totally different divine rule: *Say: Truly, my Lord extends the provision for whomever He wills and confines it for whom He wills, but most of humanity knows not.* (34:36)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 58(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourseelf: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)
SIGNS 34:37-34:45

Makkah: *And it is not your wealth nor your children*
that will bring you near to Us,
but whoever believed and did as one in accord with morality.
As for those, for them, the recompense is doubled
for what they did and they will live in the highest chambers
as one who is safe. (34:37)
And those who endeavor against Our signs,
as ones who strive to thwart them,
those are ones who are charged with the punishment. (34:38)

Say: Truly, my Lord extends the provision
for whomever He wills of His servants
and confines for him what He wills.
And whatever you spent of anything, He will replace it.
And He is Best of the ones who provide. (34:39)
And on a Day He will assemble them altogether.
Again, He will say to the angels:
Was it these who had been worshiping you? (34:40)
They would say: Glory be to ***You****!*
You *are our Protector and not they. Nay!*
They had been worshiping the jinn.
Most of them were ones who believe in them. (34:41)
Then, today none of you will possess the power
over some others to profit nor hurt
and We will say to those who did wrong:
Experience the punishment of the fire
which you had been denying. (34:42)
When are recounted to them Our signs, clear portents,
they said: This is not but a man who wants to bar you
from what your fathers had been worshipping.
And they said: This is not but a forged calumny.
And those who were ungrateful
for The Truth said when it drew near them:
Truly, this is but clear sorcery. (34:43)
And We gave them not any Books that they study them
nor sent We to them any warner before thee. (34:44)
Those that were before them denied
and they reached not one-tenth of what We gave them.
Yet they denied My Messengers.
So how had My disapproval of them been! (34:45)

COMMENTARY°

The rule concerning people's provisions and whether they are given in abundance or small measure is restated, making it clear that it is subject to God's wisdom. It tells us that whatever of our provision is spent for God's sake is the portion that remains and grows. We need to keep this fact clear in our minds: (34:39)

These are the angels they used to worship, or hope would intercede for them with God: they are brought face to face with them, but the angels glorify God, stating that He is exalted above all that these people allege. They disassociate themselves from such false worship, as though it had not taken place. They are indeed in Satan's service,

either worshipping him and appealing to him for help, or obeying him by associating partners with God. In fact, when they worshipped angels, they were actually worshipping Satan. Indeed worship of the jinn was practised by some Arabs. Some of them actually addressed their worship to the jinn, while others sought their help. Hence, the chapter says: (34:41)

As this scene concludes, the mode of expression changes from narrative to address. The blame is squarely put on them, and they are severely reproached: *Then, today none of you will possess the power over some others to profit nor hurt and We will say to those who did wrong:* (34:42) Neither can the angels benefit people, nor can those the ungrateful benefit one another. The fire the wrongdoers used to deny is now in front of them. It is an undoubted reality: *Experience the punishment of the fire which you had been denying.* (34:42) Like all previous passages, this one concludes with further emphasis on the question of resurrection, accountability, reckoning and reward.

They met the clear truth the Prophet recited to them with a confused legacy of past traditions that had neither a clear basis nor solid foundation. They realized that the simple, clear and consistent truth that was the Quran represented a serious threat to their confused medley of inherited beliefs and traditions. Hence they claimed: (34:43) They realized, however, that this was not enough. That it contradicted their forefathers' beliefs was not enough to convince everyone. Hence, they also questioned the honesty of the Messenger who delivered God's message: *And they said: This is not but a forged calumny. And those who were ungrateful for The Truth said when it drew near them: Truly, this is but clear sorcery.* (34:43) Needless to say, what is 'false' must be fabricated, but they wanted to give it stronger emphasis by saying *This is not but a forged calumny.* (34:43) In other words, they sought to undermine it, raising doubts about its divine source.

Then they moved on to describe the Quran itself: *And those who were ungrateful for The Truth said when it drew near them: Truly, this is but clear sorcery.* (34:43) They realized that the Quran is powerful and shakes people's hearts.

Therefore, it was not enough to say that it was fabricated. They had to explain its power and so alleged that it was '*clear sorcery.*' The Quran exposes them as it states that they were not given books in the past so as to evaluate new ones and judge revelations. How can they, then, say that what they now received was neither revelation nor a divine book? How can they say that it was not from God, when they did not have any messengers in the past? Their claims are devoid

of substance: (34:44)

The section then touches their hearts by reminding them of the destruction of earlier communities. Those Arabs had not been given one tenth of what those earlier people had of knowledge, wealth and power. When they denied God's messengers, punishment overwhelmed them: (34:45) This condemnation destroyed them all. The Quraysh knew of some of these old communities who suffered God's punishment. Therefore, this brief reminder is sufficient. It comes in the form of a sarcastic question: 'how terrible was My condemnation.' It is a question put to those who knew the extent of that condemnation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that

as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

Lesson 58(5). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

Quranic Chapter 34: Sheba (al-Saba)
Signs 34:46-34:54

Makkah: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing:*
That you stand up for God by twos and one by one.
Again, reflect.
There is not in your companion any madness.
He is only a warner to you
of a severe punishment in advance of you. (34:46)
Say: Whatever compensation I asked of you,
that is for you.
My compensation is only from God.
And He is a Witness over everything. (34:47)
Say: Truly, my Lord hurls The Truth.
He is The Knower of the unseen. (34:48)
Say: The Truth drew near and falsehood
neither causes to begin nor causes to return. (34:49)
Say: If I went astray, truly, I will only go astray

with loss for myself.
And if I was truly guided,
it is because of what my Lord reveals to me.
Truly, He is Hearing, Ever Near. (34:50)
And if you would see when they would be terrified,
when there is no escape
and they would be taken from a near place, (34:51)
they would say: We believed in it! But how could they reach it
from a place so far away? (34:52)
And, surely, they were ungrateful for it before.
And they hurl at the unseen from a far place. (34:53)
And a barrier was set up between them
and between that for which they lust,
just as was accomplished with partisans before.
Truly, they had been uncertain, in grave doubt. (34:54)

COMMENTARY°

A SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

At this point the Prophet is instructed to call on them in all sincerity to search for the truth, to distinguish between what is false and what is true, and to assess the situation they are in, free of distortion and fabrication: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness.* (34:46)

This is an invitation to stand before God, in all sincerity, removing from one's mind all personal prejudices, interests, motivations, desires, environmental and social influences. It is an invitation to look at the facts, plain and simple. This invitation seeks to put before their eyes the plain argument of human nature, away from everything that blurs or obscures what is clear and simple. At the same time, it is a simple means to search for truth, discarding all outside influences and being mindful only of God.

He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you. (34:46) This statement shows the suffering to be close at hand, and the warning precedes it by only by one step, hoping to save anyone who listens. It is like an alarm warning of a fire that threatens lives. It urges immediate action to escape inevitable suffering.

At first the chapter called on them to think carefully about the man delivering the message and the fact that he is of sound mind, without the faintest trace of madness. Now they are asked to think about the reasons that motivate him to warn them against the painful suffering that may befall them: what is his interest in all this? How

can he benefit by it? The Quran orders the Prophet to put this to them in a way that fits with their logic and touches their consciences: *Say: Whatever compensation I asked of you, that is for you. My compensation is only from God.* (34:47) It is He who has charged me with this message and He gives me my reward for it. It is to Him alone that I look for reward. If a person expects to be rewarded by God, all that others can offer is trifling. *And He is a Witness over everything.* (34:47) He sees and knows everything. Nothing is hidden from Him. He is my witness in whatever I intend, say or do.

The third note is stronger and faster: *Say: Truly, my Lord hurls The Truth. He is The Knower of the unseen.* (34:48) What I have given you is the truth, which is powerful in its own right. However, it is God who hurls it forth: who can stand up to His truth? It is like a missile whose trajectory penetrates what otherwise would not be possible to penetrate. The one who hurls it is God, who 'has full knowledge of all that is beyond the reach of people's perception.' When He hurls it, He is fully aware of what takes place. No goal is hidden from Him and no shield or fortification can stop what He hurls.

The fourth note is just as fast and strong: *Say: The Truth drew near and falsehood neither causes to begin nor causes to return.* (34:49) This truth has now come, in one of its forms, in the message embodied in the Quran and its straight path. The Prophet is ordered here to declare the coming of the truth, strong, overpowering, rising high and imposing its authority: *Say: The Truth drew near and falsehood neither causes to begin nor causes to return.* (34:49) Falsehood is done for: it has no life of its own and nowhere to function. It is destined for a miserable end. As we listen, we feel as if the end has already been sealed.

This is indeed the case. Ever since the Quran was revealed, the truth has been established on solid foundations. Compared with its clarity and power, falsehood is nothing more than a futile argument which is known to be so. Falsehood may appear to triumph in certain situations, but this is not a victory over the truth, but rather over the people who claim loyalty to it; it's a triumph of people, not principles. Such a victory is temporary, not permanent. The truth remains the same: clear and simple.

The final note says: *Say: If I went astray, truly, I will only go astray with loss for myself.* (34:50) You will lose nothing if I go astray, because I will be the one accountable for it. If I am following guidance, it is because God has guided me aright when He gave me His revelation. I can produce nothing of that. I only remain subject:

And if I was truly guided, it is because of what my Lord reveals to me. (34:50) This is how those who responded to the Prophet's call and believed in his message felt God's presence. They felt His interaction with them. They felt Him near to them, listening to what they said, taking direct care of their affairs. Their complaints and appeals went directly to Him, and He did not overlook them or give them to someone else to deal with. This made them aware that they lived under God's supervision, close to Him and receiving His care and kindness. This they felt in reality, not as an abstract notion or a representation of an idea. It was real fact: *Truly, He is Hearing, Ever Near.* (34:50)

If you could but see when they are seized by terror, with nowhere to escape; for they will have been seized from a place nearby. (34:51-34:54) How can they regain it in their new position when the place to believe is now so far away? It was available to them in their life in this world, but they let the chance go unheeded.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

LESSON 59(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR) SIGNS 39:1-39:9

Makkah: *The sending down successively of this Book*
is from God, The Almighty, The Wise. (39:1)
Truly, We caused to descend to you the Book
with The Truth so worship God
as one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:2)
The way of life is exclusively for God.
And those who took to themselves protectors other than Him say:
We worship them not, but that they bring us nearness to God.
Truly, God gives judgment between them
about what they are at variance in it. Truly, God guides not him,
one who lies and is an ingrate. (39:3)
If God wanted to take to Himself a son,
He would have favored from what He creates of what He wills.
Glory be to Him. He is God, The One,
The Omniscient. (39:4)
He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth.
He wraps the nighttime around the daytime
and wraps the daytime around the nighttime.
And He caused to be subservient the sun and the moon,
each run for a term, that which is determined.

Is He not The Almighty, The Forgiver? (39:5)
He creates you from one soul.
Again, He made its mate from it
and He caused to descend for you eight pairs of flocks.
He creates you in the wombs of your mothers,
creation after creation,
in threefold shadows.
Such is God your Lord. His is the dominion.
There is no god but He. Why, then, turn you away? (39:6)
If you are ungrateful, truly, God is Independent of you.
And He is not well-pleased with ingratitude from His servants.
And if you give thanks, He will be well-pleased with you.
No burdened soul will bear the heavy load of another.
Again, to your Lord is the return,
so He will tell you what you had been doing.
Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (39:7)
And when some distress afflicted the human being,
he calls to his Lord as one who turns in repentance to Him.
Again, when He granted him divine blessing from Himself,
he forgets that for which he had been calling to Him before
and he laid on rivals to God to cause others
to go astray from His way.
Say: Take joy in your ingratitude for awhile.
Truly, you are of the Companions of the Fire. (39:8)
Is he one who is morally obligated during the night watch,
one who prostrates himself or one who is standing up in prayer
being fearful of the world to come
and hoping for the mercy of his Lord?
Say: Are those who know on the same level
as those who know not?
Only those imbued with intuition recollect. (39:9)

COMMENTARY°

The section begins with a clear, emphatic statement: *The sending down successively of this Book is from God, The Almighty, The Wise.* (39:1) As He is Almighty, He is able to bestow it from on high, and as He is wise, He knows the purpose of bestowing it, ensuring that it is all done in accordance with wise and elaborate planning.

The section, however, does not dwell on this fact. It is only a prelude to its main theme, which this book has been revealed to establish, namely, God's Oneness, addressing all worship to Him alone, ensuring sincerity in faith, eliminating all traces of any alleged part-

nership with God and establishing direct contact with Him without any intermediary or need for intercession.

The essence of the truth with which the book has been revealed is the absolute Oneness of God, which forms the foundation of all existence. *Truly, We caused to descend to you the Book with The Truth so worship God as one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him.* (39:2)

The address here is to the Prophet, the recipient of the book as it is bestowed from on high. It embodies the constitution which he advocates, calling on all humanity to adopt it: to worship God alone, sincere in our devotion, and to conduct human life, in all spheres, on this basis. These are not mere statements. It is a complete system, starting with a firm belief that is translated into an all-embracing way of life for both the individual and the community.

In Arabic this statement has added emphasis provided by certain characteristics of the sentence structure, which is peculiar to Arabic and difficult to capture in translation. *The way of life is exclusively for God.* (39:3) It gives the statement the sense of a declaration producing a loud but clear echo. Thus sound, structure and meaning combine to strongly emphasize this basic truth upon which all life, throughout the universe, is based.

Then a refutation of the complex superstition the idolaters presented in opposition to belief in God's Oneness follows: *And those who took to themselves protectors other than Him say: We worship them not, but that they bring us nearness to God. Truly, God gives judgment between them about what they are at variance in it. Truly, God guides not him, one who lies and is an ingrate.* (39:3)

The section then shows their belief to be erroneous: *If God wanted to take to Himself a son* ... (39:4) This is a supposition made for the sake of argument and to correct concepts. Had God wished for a son, He could have chosen any of His creatures. His will is free, unrestricted. However, He, in His limitless glory, has made Himself free of any such need. Hence, no one can attribute to Him a son. Such is His will and determination: *He would have favored from what He creates of what He wills. Glory be to Him. He is God, The One, The Omniscient.* (39:4)

Why would He need a son when He is the Creator and Originator of all who controls everything. Indeed everything in the universe belongs it to Him and He can do with it all whatever He wants: *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. He wraps the nighttime around the daytime and wraps the daytime around the nighttime. And He caused to be subservient the sun and the moon,*

each run for a term, that which is determined. Is He not The Almighty, The Forgiver? (39:5) This reference to the great universe and the phenomena of night and day, and the subjecting of the sun and moon to God's law, puts the truth of the One God clearer before human nature. The One who creates all this from nothing does not need a son or a partner.

Likewise, He bestowed His book from on high to state the truth. *Is He not The Almighty, The Forgiver?* (39:5) It is the same truth in the universe and in this book, the Quran. Both originate from the same source, and both are evidence of the Oneness of their Maker, the Almighty, the Wise.

Let the human being look at his own self. *Again, He made its mate from it and He caused to descend for you eight pairs of flocks.* (39:6) He has not created himself, nor does he know who created the human entity except for what God has told him. Yet we all originate from one soul, with one nature and the same characteristics that distinguish us from the rest of creation. Moreover, every human individual shares in these characteristics, because the human soul is one in the countless millions of humans across all generations and all communities. Moreover, its mate or spouse is also made from the same essence. Thus, despite all differences of detail between men and women, they share all these characteristics. This again confirms the unity of the original design for humanity, male and female, and the unity of the Will that created this single soul with its two manifestations.

The sign continues its discussion of man's creation, referring to various growth stages of the embryo: These stages of creation begin with the gamete, then a clinging cell mass, then an embryo, then the bones, and then to a creation that indicates its human status: *He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, in threefold shadows.* (39:6) There is the darkness of the placenta in which the embryo grows, the darkness of the uterus, and the darkness inside the mother's body. It is God's hand that takes the single cell through these stages of creation, one after another, looking after it and giving it the ability to grow and develop until it is formed in a complete human being as God has determined.

Anyone who looks carefully at this journey, which covers a huge gulf traversed in a short period of time, and who reflects on these stages of development, and on how this simple cell is guided along its remarkable journey in these depths of darkness, beyond man's knowledge, will inevitably recognize the Creator and His handiwork. How, then, are we turned away from the true faith: *Such is God your*

Lord. His is the dominion. There is no god but He. Why, then, turn you away? (39:6)

Having outlined this clear vision of the signs testifying to God's absolute Oneness and all encompassing power, the section shows people's positions at the parting of the ways between belief and disbelief.

If you believe, you will not increase His kingdom in any way. If you disbelieve, this too will not affect His kingdom in any adverse way. He, however, does not like people to be ungrateful: *And He is not well-pleased with ingratitude from His servants.* (39:7) The ultimate end of the journey is to God. There can be neither escape from Him nor refuge with anyone else: *Again, to your Lord is the return, so He will tell you what you had been doing.* (39:7) You can hide nothing from Him: *Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* (39:7)

The first passage touched people's hearts by telling them about their existence, how they are all created from a single soul and how its mate was also created from it. *And when some distress afflicted the human being, he calls to his Lord as one who turns in repentance to Him.* \(39:8) It told them about the creation of animals in pairs, and how we are created in three depths of darkness inside the mother's belly. It touched on how God's hand gave them their human characteristics and their ability to grow and develop.

When the human being suffers affliction, he cries out to his Lord, turning to Him for help; but once He bestows upon him a favor by His grace, he forgets what he cried and prayed for earlier, and claims that others are equal to God, thus leading others astray from His path: *Again, when He granted him divine blessing from Himself, he forgets that for which he had been calling to Him before and he laid on rivals to God to cause others to go astray from His way.* (39:8)

The result is to go astray, moving away from God's way which has one form, namely, acknowledging His Oneness and addressing worship and love to Him alone. Believing in God does nor admit any partnership in our heart, be that a partnership of wealth, children, home country, land, friend or relative. Should such a partnership be found in the human heart, it means acknowledging some beings as equal to God. Thus it allows a brief enjoyment in this life and ends in the fire of hell: *Say: Take joy in your ingratitude for awhile. Truly, you are of the Companions of the Fire.* (39:8) Every enjoyment in this life is small no matter how long it endures. Furthermore, anyone's span of life is brief no matter to what old age he attains. Indeed, the life of the entire human race on this earth is merely a brief en-

joyment when compared to God's days.

Juxtaposed with this depressing picture of the human being is another showing him standing in awe, remembering God in all situations, pleasant or distressing. He goes through his life on earth without ever losing consciousness of the Day of Judgment. He always looks up to his Lord, hoping for His grace. It is from such a bond with God that true knowledge emerges, providing full awareness of the truth: *Is he one who is morally obligated during the night watch, one who prostrates himself or one who is standing up in prayer being fearful of the world to come and hoping for the mercy of his Lord?* (39:9)

All the elements provided here, sincere devotion, the dread of what may happen in the life to come, the hope for God's grace, the purity of heart that opens the locks that prevent understanding, giving our hearts the blessing of clear perception all draw a bright picture which is the opposite of the one drawn in the previous sign. Hence, it is necessary to draw the comparison: *Say: Are those who know on the same level as those who know not? Only those imbued with intuition recollect.* (39:9) True knowledge is that which understands the truth and opens one's mind to the need to be in touch with the fundamental truths in the universe. True knowledge is not a host of pieces of information that clutter the mind without leading to any understanding of the fundamentals of existence.

The way to true knowledge and enlightened information then is devout worship, a sensitive heart, being mindful of the life to come, entertaining strong hopes of benefiting from God's mercy and of being conscious of God. Those who limit themselves to individual experiences and superficial vision are no more than collectors of information. They will never attain the rank of people with knowledge.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities

ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

LESSON 59(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR) SIGNS 39:10-39:21

Makkah: *Say: O My servants who believed!*
Be God-conscious of your Lord.
For those who did good in the present,
there is benevolence, and the earth of God
is that which is extensive.
Only ones who remain steadfast will have their compensation without reckoning. (39:10)
Say: Truly, I was commanded to worship God,
one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:11)
And I was commanded that I be the first
of the ones who submit to God. (39:12)
Say: Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord
the punishment of a tremendous Day. (39:13)
Say: God alone I worship as one sincere
and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:14)
So worship what you would other than Him.
Say: Truly, the ones who are losers are those who lost themselves
and their people on the Day of Resurrection.
Truly, that is a clear loss. (39:15)
They will have overshadowings above from the fire
and beneath them, overshadowings.
With that, God frightens His servants.
O my servants! Be God-conscious of Me! (39:16)
And those who avoided false deities so that they worship them
not and were penitent to God, for them are good tidings.
So give good tidings to My servants, (39:17)
those who listen to the saying of the Quran and
follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided.
And those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:18)
Against whom was realized the word of punishment?
Will you be saving him from the fire? (39:19)

But those who were God-conscious of their Lord,
for them are the highest chambers
with the highest chambers built above them,
beneath which rivers run.
This is the solemn declaration of God.
God never breaks His promise. (39:20)
Have you not considered that God caused to descend water
from heaven and threaded fountains in the earth,
again, brings out crops by it of hues, ones that are at variance?
Again, they wither so you see them
as ones that are growing yellow.
Again, He makes them chaff.
Truly, in this is a reminder for those imbued with intuition. (39:21)

COMMENTARY°

The section then addresses the believers, requiring them to remain God-conscious and to ensure that they always do good. They should use their life on earth, short as it is, as a means to earn everlasting reward in the life to come: [Thus speaks God] *Say: O My servants who believed!* (39:10)

It is important to note here how the Arabic text is phrased. The words between brackets, 'thus speaks God', are not in the text. They are added to remove confusion. The text should originally read: *Say to My servants*, but the Prophet is made to address them, because an address alerts the addressees and makes them more aware of what is to come. When the Prophet addresses them, he does not call them as his servants, because they are God's servants, not his. This means that he is addressing them in God's name, making the address from God directly to them. The Prophet is merely the means by which the address is given.

God, the Creator of humanity, knows that leaving one's land is hard. It involves abandoning one's relatives and the people with whom one has close ties, leaving the place where one can easily find work and earn a living, to go to a new place where one is a stranger. This is not an easy thing for anyone. Therefore, the section refers here to patience in adversity and how it is generously rewarded by God: *For those who did good in the present, there is benevolence, and the earth of God is that which is extensive. Only ones who remain steadfast will have their compensation without reckoning.* (39:10) Thus, God's servants feel His care and are touched as they see that when they have to undertake something hard God turns to them with care and grace. He opens for them what compensates for land, coun-

try, family and relatives, giving them a reward without count.

This declaration by the Prophet: (39:11-39:13) outlining what he is commanded to do with regard to worship, devotion and submission is very important in keeping the belief in God's Oneness pure, as the Quranic message wants it to be. In this respect, the Prophet is one of God's servants. He does not exceed that position. In their servitude to God, all people over all creation.

The declaration is made once more, with the Prophet's announcement that he will stick to his way, leaving the idolaters to their way and the painful end to which that leads: (39:14-39:15)

Once more the Prophet announces: I am unwavering in following my way, addressing all worship to God and submitting myself to Him alone. As for you, you can follow any way you want, worship whomever you wish, but this will lead you to the worst imaginable loss: a loss of oneself as one goes to hell, and the loss of family and kin, be they believers or unbelievers. If those relatives are believers, the idolaters will have lost them as each group goes their separate ways, and if they are ungrateful, the loss is the same as they all will have lost themselves in hell: *So worship what you would other than Him. Say: Truly, the ones who are losers are those who lost themselves and their people on the Day of Resurrection. Truly, that is a clear loss.* (39:15)

We then have a picture showing the extent of the loss: *They will have overshadowings above from the fire and beneath them, overshadowings.* (39:16) It is a scene that strikes real fear in people's hearts, showing the fire in layers that engulfs people from above and below. They are seen within these layers as they close in on them from all sides. Yet these layers are fire. God shows this picture to His servants while they are on earth and still have the chance to change their ways: *With that, God frightens His servants. O my servants!* (39:16) He calls on them warning them so that they may choose the way to safety: *Be God-conscious of Me!* (39:16)

On the other side stand those who are safe, having feared this fate and done what is necessary to avoid it: *O My servants! Be God-conscious of Me! And those who avoid false deities so that they should not worship them and are penitent to God, for them are glad tidings. So give good tidings to My servants,* (39:17)

False deities are referred to here by the word *taghut*, which implies an exaggerated sense of exceeding the bounds. Those who shun the worship of *taghut* are the ones who reject the worship of anyone other than God in any form whatsoever. They are the ones who turn to God, stand in front of Him and worship Him alone. These have

good news issued to them directly from on high. The Prophet is giving them this good news by God's order: The fact that this news comes from on high and is delivered by the noble Messenger is in itself a great blessing.

One quality of such people is that they listen to whatever is being said, but their hearts and minds pick up only the best of it and discard the rest. Thus, the only words that they actually receive are the best words that improve and purify people's hearts and souls. A good soul is always ready to receive good words and respond to them, while the one which is foul receives only what is foul: *those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it, those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:18) He knows that they are genuinely good in their hearts and souls and He, therefore, guided them to listen and respond to the best of what is said. Guidance comes only from God.

Before showing us the blessings these people enjoy in the life to come, the section states that those who worshipped false deities have already reached hell. Who can save them from its fire, then? *Against whom was realized the word of punishment? Will you be saving him from the fire?* (39:19) This address is made to the Prophet. If he cannot save them from the fire, who else can?

As against this, those who are God-fearing will have lofty mansions raised upon mansions high, beneath which running waters flow. This is God's promise. Never does God fail to fulfil His promise. *But those who were God-conscious of their Lord, for them are the highest chambers with the highest chambers built above them, beneath which rivers run. This is the solemn declaration of God. God never breaks His promise.* (39:20)

That which follows such rainfall is described thus: *Have you not considered that God caused to descend water from heaven and threaded fountains in the earth, again, brings out crops by it of hues, ones that are at variance?* (39:21) This applies to the rivers running on the surface of the earth as well as the rivers that run underneath its surface when water seeps underground. It then forms springs or wells. It is God's hand that prevents it from going too far into the earth making it impossible to bring up again.

This growing, fresh plant that is full of life attains its full growth and completes its life cycle, *Again, they wither so you see them as ones that are growing yellow.* (39: 21) It has completed its life as ordained in the system of the universe. It is now ripe for harvest. *Again, He makes them chaff.* (39: 21) Its role in life is now completed as it was determined by the Giver of life. *Truly, in this is a reminder for*

those imbued with intuition. (39: 21) These are the ones who reflect, making use of the insight God has granted them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

LESSON 59(3). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR) SIGNS 39:22-39:31

Makkah: *So is whose breast God has expanded*
for submission to God,
in a light from His Lord?
So woe to their hearts,
ones that harden against the Remembrance of God.
Those are clearly going astray. (39:22)
God sent down the fairer discourse, a Book,
one that is consistent in its often repeated parts of the Quran
by which shiver the skins of those who dread their Lord.
Again, their skins and their hearts become gentle
with the Remembrance of God.
That is the guidance of God.
With it He guides whom He wills.
And whomever God causes to go astray,
there is not for him anyone who guides. (39:23)
Is he, then, one who fends off a dire punishment with his face
on the Day of Resurrection?
And it will be said to the ones who are unjust:
Experience what you had been earning! (39:24)
Those before them denied
and so the punishment approached them
from where they are not aware. (39:25)
So God caused them to experience degradation
in this present life.
But the punishment of the world to come is greater
if they had been knowing! (39:26)
And, certainly, We propounded for humanity in this,
the Quran, every kind of parable
so that perhaps they will recollect, (39:27)
an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness
so that perhaps they would be God-conscious. (39:28)
God propounded a parable of a man owned
by quarreling ascribed associates
and a man belonging to another man.
Are they both equal in likeness?
The Praise belongs to God. But most of them know not. (39:29)
*Truly, **you** are mortal and, truly, they are mortal.* (39:30)
Again, truly, on the Day of Resurrection before your Lord
you will strive against one another. (39:31)

COMMENTARY°

How about one whose heart God has opened to the Quranic message, and thus receives light from his Lord? Just like He sends water from the skies to cause vegetation of various colors and forms to grow, God bestows from on high a reminder which is received by hearts that are alive, and that open up and react to such life. By contrast, hardened hearts receive it like a rock that cannot embrace life. God opens to the Quranic message those hearts that He knows to be good. These hearts receive the light of the Quranic message and they shine and radiate. The gulf between these hearts and the ones that are hardened is wide indeed: *So is whose breast God has expanded for submission to God, in a light from His Lord? So woe to their hearts, ones that harden against the Remembrance of God. Those are clearly going astray.* (39:22)

Hearts do not shiver in this way unless God's guidance prompts them to respond. God knows the true feelings of these hearts and rewards them with either His guidance or by letting them go astray: *God sent down the fairer discourse, a Book, one that is consistent in its often repeated parts of the Quran by which shiver the skins of those who dread their Lord. Again, their skins and their hearts become gentle with the Remembrance of God. That is the guidance of God. With it He guides whom He wills. And whomever God causes to go astray, there is not for him anyone who guides.*(39:23) He allows such people to go astray because He knows that they have gone so far into error that they will never respond to guidance.

The chapter then shows what awaits those who chose to go astray on the Day of Judgment. It paints a very depressing picture at the time when results are given: *Is he, then, one who fends off a dire punishment with his face on the Day of Resurrection?*(39:24)

Normally a person uses his hands and body to protect his face from fire or harmful objects. In this case, however, he cannot use his hands or legs to save himself from the fire; instead, he uses his face for protection, which describes a case of great confusion and hardship. In the midst of all this difficulty and suffering they are faced with strong censure and given the results of their lives' actions. What a terrible result they have to face: *And it will be said to the ones who are unjust: Experience what you had been earning!* (39:24)

The chapter then speaks about the ungrateful who stood in opposition to the Prophet, showing them what happened to the ungrateful of earlier communities, so that they may save themselves from a similar fate:

Among those who lived before were those who were ungrateful,

and so suffering befell them from where they could not perceive. God gave them a taste of humiliation in this world. Yet much greater will be the suffering of the life to come, if they but knew it! *Those before them denied and so the punishment approached them from where they are not aware. So God caused them to experience degradation in this present life. But the punishment of the world to come is greater if they had been knowing!* (39: 25-39:26)

Such is the outcome faced by the ungrateful in both lives, in this world and the next. In this life, God made them taste humiliation, and in the life to come they will face a greater suffering. God's law will continue to operate, the fates of past generations remain witnesses to the truth, God's warnings concerning the Day of Judgment remain in force, their chance to save themselves continues, and this Quran remains available to those who will heed the warnings. *And, certainly, We propounded for humanity in this, the Quran, every kind of parable so that perhaps they will recollect, an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious. God propounded a parable of a man owned by quarreling ascribed associates and a man belonging to another man. Are they both equal in likeness? The Praise belongs to God. But most of them know not.* (39:27-39:29)

God draws an analogy citing the examples of two of His servants: one believes in His Oneness and one ascribes divinity to others beside God. He compares them to two slaves: one is owned by several people who are at odds with each other about who owns him; he is caught between them, while each of them requires him to do certain things. He is at a loss, not knowing which way to turn and cannot manage to satisfy them all because of their contradictory orders. The other is owned by one master, and he knows what his master wants and is clear about his desires and requirements.

They are definitely unequal. The one who has one master enjoys consistency and knows what is expected of him. His energy is spent in a consistent way and the road ahead of him is clear. The other, who has several masters, is always suffering anxiety and worry. He does not feel settled. He is unable to satisfy even one of his masters, let alone them all.

This comparison accurately describes the nature of believing in God's Oneness as opposed to the nature of idolatry. The one who believes in God's Oneness goes along his earth's journey equipped with clear guidance, because his eyes are looking up to one guiding star in the sky. Thus his way is straight. He knows one source for life, strength and sustenance; harm and benefit; grace and deprivation.

He sets on his straight way to this source, strengthening his ties with it. He is assured of his single goal and does not lose sight of it. Thus, his energy is streamlined, assured of his work's objective. His feet are set firm on the ground while his gaze looks to God in heaven.

This telling analogy is followed by a comment praising God who has chosen for His servants what gives them comfort, safety, security and contentment. Yet they deviate from the truth, and most of them do not even know it.

This is but one of the numerous examples the Quran gives people so that they may reflect. It is a clear Quran in the Arabic tongue. It addresses human nature with simple logic. In it there is no ambiguity, equivocation or deviation.

Commenting on the preceding passage, the chapter stares that the dispute between the Prophet and his opponents is left to God for judgment, which will occur after they have all died. He will requite the liars as they deserve and give generous reward to the people of the truth.

Truly, you are mortal and, truly, they are mortal. Again, truly, on the Day of Resurrection before your Lord you will strive against one another. (39:30-39:31)

Death is the end of every living thing. Only God remains. In death all people share the same end, including Muhammad, God's last Messenger. Mention of this fact here comes within the framework of the great truth the chapter emphasizes, namely, God's absolute Oneness. This is followed by stating what comes after death, because death is not the final end: it is a link in the chain of life that has been so ordained that no part of it passes in vain. On the Day of Judgment people will stand in front of God disputing with one another over what they used to claim, and how they reacted to the guidance God sent them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own

words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

Lesson 59(4). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait God-consciousness (*taqwa*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

Quranic Chapter 39: The Troops (al-Zumar) Signs 39:32-39:41

Makkah: *Then, who does greater wrong*
than one who lied against God
and denied sincerity when it drew near him?

Is there not in hell a place of lodging
for the ones who are ungrateful? (39:32)
And he who brought about sincerity
and he who established it as true, those,
they are the ones who are God-conscious. (39:33)
For them is all that they will with their Lord.
That is the recompense of the ones who are doers of good. (39:34)
Certainly, God absolves them of bad deeds of
what they do and gives them recompense in compensation
for the fairer of what they had been doing. (39:35)
Is not God One Who Suffices for His servants?
They frighten you with those other than Him.
And whom God causes to go astray,
there is not for him anyone who guides. (39:36)
And whomever God guides,
there is not for him anyone who leads astray.
Is not God Almighty, The Possessor of Requital? (39:37)
And, truly, if you had asked them:
Who created the heavens and the earth?
They would, certainly, say: God.
Say: Considered you what you call to other than God?
If God wanted some harm for me,
would they be ones who remove His harm from me?
Or if He wanted mercy for me would they (f) be
ones who hold back His mercy?
Say: God is enough for me.
In Him put their trust the ones who put their trust. (39:38)
Say: O my folk! Truly, act according to your ability.
I am one who acts. You will know (39:39)
to whom punishment approaches covering him
with shame and on whom alights an abiding punishment. (39:40)
Truly, We caused the Book to descend to you
for humanity with The Truth.
So whoever was truly guided, it is only for himself.
And whoever went astray, goes astray but for himself.
You are not over them a trustee. (39:41)

COMMENTARY°

These five signs (39:36-39:40) epitomize the logic of faith: Simple, clear, forceful and profound. Thus it was in the Prophet's heart, and thus it should be in every heart that advocates a cause. These signs represent the line that such a believer should follow. They pro-

vide his light as he goes along his clear and straight way.

It is reported that these signs were revealed as a result of the ungrateful trying to scare the Prophet, claiming that their deities, which he described in disrespectful terms, would be sure to harm him. They warned him that unless he desisted, their gods would cause him much trouble. However, the significance of these signs is far broader than this. They describe the true nature of the battle between an advocate of the truth and all the forces that line up against him. They show the confidence and reassurance a believer feels as he gives these forces their true measure.

Yes, indeed. *They frighten you with those other than Him.* (39:36) So, what can scare him when God is with him? What can generate any feeling of fear in him after he has taken the position of a servant of God and fulfilled the responsibilities that such a position confers? Who can doubt God's sufficiency for His servants when He is the Almighty who holds sway over all His creation?

How could he be frightened when those inferiors do not frighten one who is protected by God? *And whom God causes to go astray, there is not for him anyone who guides.* (39:36) Is there anyone on earth who is not inferior to God? It is a very simple issue. It requires no argument or hard thinking. It is God opposed by some who are inferior to Him. This leaves no room for doubt concerning the outcome.

God's will is the one that is done. He determines everything for His servants, including what takes place within them, their inner thoughts and feelings: *And whomever God guides, there is not for him anyone who leads astray.* (39:37) He knows who deserves to go astray and who deserves to be guided. He lets them have what they deserve. When He has made His judgment, no one can alter it.

Yes, indeed, He is. *Is not God Almighty, The Possessor of Requital?* (39:37) He requites everyone as they deserve, inflicting retribution on those who deserve it. When anyone fulfils the duties incumbent on God's servants, He extends His protection to them. How can such a person, then, fear anyone?

The same truth is then re-emphasized in a different way, using their own logic and what they, by their very nature, acknowledge of God's attributes: *And, truly, if you had asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth? They would, certainly, say: God. Say: Considered you what you call to other than God? If God wanted some harm for me, would they be ones who remove His harm from me? Or if He wanted mercy for me would they (f) be ones who hold back His mercy?* (39:38)

When this notion is firmly planted in a believer's heart, the matter is settled. There is no more argument. The only fear or hope such a believer may have is centered on what comes from God. It is He who is sufficient for His servants, and in Him all trust is placed: *Say: God is enough for me. In Him put their trust the ones who put their trust.* (39:38)

This gives believers all they need of trust and reassurance, leaving no room for worry or fear of anything. They go along their way in full confidence as to the end they will meet: *Say: O my folk! Truly, act according to your ability. I am one who acts. You will know to whom punishment approaches covering him with shame and on whom alights an abiding punishment.* (39:39-39:40) Do what you can, the way you wish. I am going my way entertaining no desire to change or deviate even slightly from it, free from worry or anxiety. You will come to know who will suffer humiliation in this life and everlasting punishment in the life to come.

The truth is the nature of this book: *Truly, We caused the Book to descend to you for humanity with The Truth. So whoever was truly guided, it is only for himself. And whoever went astray, goes astray but for himself.* (39:41) It is clear in the law it sets out and in its system: it is on the basis of this truth that the universe is sustained; the truth that links the code of human life outlined in this book to the system of the universe. This truth has now been bestowed on humanity giving them guidance on how to live by its provisions. You, Prophet, are only the means to deliver it to them. It is up to them to choose what they wish for and how to deal with it. Each one of them can choose either guidance or error, and each will define his or her own fate. No responsibility attaches to you for what they choose: *You are not over them a trustee.* (39: 41)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask: What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?

How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as they can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question they are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things they are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which they have some control from questions over which they have no control. Set aside the questions over which they have no control, concentrating their efforts on those questions they can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information they need and actively seek that information.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information they collect, drawing what reasonable inferences they can.

5. Figure out their options for action. What can they do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under their control from questions beyond their control. Recognize explicitly their limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate their options, taking into account their advantages and disadvantages in the situation they are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When they act, monitor the implications of their action as they begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise their strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift their strategy or their analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to them.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 59(5). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR) SIGNS 39:42-39:52

Makkah: *God calls the souls to Himself*
at the time of their death
and those that die not during their slumbering.
He holds back those for whom He decreed death
and sends the others back for a term, that which is determined.
Truly, in that are signs for a folk who reflect. (39:42)
Or took they to themselves other than God intercessors?
Say: Even though they had not been possessing anything
and they are not reasonable? (39:43)
Say: To God belongs all intercession.
His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
Again, to Him you will be returned. (39:44)
And when God alone was remembered,
the hearts shuddered of those
who believe not in the world to come.
But when those who,
other than Him, were remembered,
that is when they rejoice at the good tidings! (39:45)
Say: O God! One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth!
One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible!
Thou wilt give judgment among Thy servants
about what they had been at variance in it. (39:46)

And if those who did wrong had whatever is in and on the earth
altogether and the like with it, they would,
truly, have offered it as ransom for the evil punishment
on the Day of Resurrection.
And it will show itself to them
from God what they not be anticipating. (39:47)
And it will show itself to them, the evil deeds
that they earned and they will be surrounded
by what they had been ridiculing. (39:48)
Then, when harm afflicted the human being,
he called to Us. Again, We granted him divine blessing from Us.
He would say: I was only given this because of my knowledge.
Nay! It is only a test, but most of them know not. (39:49)
Truly, those who were before them
said it so what they had been earning availed them not. (39:50)
The evil deeds they earned lit on them.
And as for those who did wrong among these,
evil deeds of what they earned will light on them.
They will not be ones who frustrate Him. (39:51)
Madinah (39:52)

COMMENTARY°

Such is the reality of the situation between God's messengers and all earthly forces opposing them. The question then is what is their message, and how should they react towards those who deny them? It is God who has power over them. They are in His hands when they are asleep or awake, or indeed in all situations and conditions. He determines what to do with them: *God calls the souls to Himself at the time of their death and those that die not during their slumbering.* (39:42) God gathers the souls of those who die, and He also takes away people's souls when they are asleep, even though they are not dead. During sleep, these souls are temporarily removed. If the term of some is over, God will retain their souls and they cannot wake up. Those whose term of life continues will have their souls returned and they will wake up. Thus, people's souls are in God's hands whether they are asleep or awake: *He holds back those for whom He decreed death and sends the others back for a term, that which is determined. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who reflect.* (39:42)

Such being the case, with the Prophet having no responsibility for others, it is up to each of them individually: if they follow divine guidance, they benefit themselves; and if they choose error, they bear the responsibility for their choice. They will have to face the reck-

oning, for they will not be left unaccountable. What hope, then, do they have for salvation? *Say: Even though they had not been possessing anything and they are not reasonable? Say: To God belongs all intercession. His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth. Again, to Him you will be returned.* (39:43-39:44) The question here is sarcastic, referring to their claims that they worship the statues of angels in order that these bring them closer to God. The question is followed by an emphatic statement that all intercession belongs to God: it is He who permits whomever He wishes to intercede. Do they think that attributing partners to God is the way to achieve intercession?

The section then describes how strongly they dislike any statement about God's Oneness, while they delight in the attribution of partners with Him, when everything around them in the universe rejects such polytheism:

Whenever God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who will not believe in the life to come shrink with aversion; but when others are mentioned side by side with Him, they rejoice. *And when God alone was remembered, the hearts shuddered of those who believe not in the world to come. But when those who, other than Him, were remembered, that is when they rejoice at the good tidings!* (39:45)

The sign describes a real situation during the Prophet's time, when the ungrateful delighted at the mention of their false deities, but showed clear dislike when God's Oneness was asserted. Yet the sign also describes a state of affairs that takes place in all environments. Some people do express dislike when they are asked to believe in God alone. When other systems and laws are mentioned, they demonstrate happiness and delight. Only then are they ready to discuss and argue. It is these very people that God is describing in this sign: they are the ones, in all communities and generations, who trample over sound human nature, choose deviation, go and lead others astray. The reply to all such deviation is taught by God to His Messenger whereby the latter says: *Say: O God! One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth! One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible!* (39:46)

It is a simple prayer that comes from sound human nature looking at the heavens and the earth, that cannot find anyone other than God who could have created them, that acknowledges His creation, and addresses Him by the quality that fits the Originator of the universe, i.e. His knowledge of the imperceptible and all that anyone witnesses. It is He who is fully aware of what is present and what is absent, what is hidden and what is manifest. *You will give judgment*

among Your servants about what they had been at variance in it. (39:46) He is the only judge and arbiter when they all return to Him, as return they must.

The next signs makes an implicit threat within a statement that strikes fear into the hearts of those described as 'wrongdoers', which refers to everyone who associates partners, of any type, with God. If those people had in their possession 'all that is on earth,' including everything to which they attach high value and fear to lose should they accept the Quranic message, indeed, if they had 'twice as much', they would willingly offer it all just to be spared the awful suffering they will see with their own eyes on the Day of Resurrection. Added to this is another implicit threat that is equally fearful: *And if those who did wrong had whatever is in and on the earth altogether and the like with it, they would, truly, have offered it as ransom for the evil punishment on the Day of Resurrection. And it will show itself to them from God what they not be anticipating.* (39:47) The chapter does not specify what will become obvious to them, but it is clearly understood that it is terrible, to be feared. It comes from God, and He shows them what they could never have expected.

Again this aggravates their position, because they will see for themselves how evil their deeds were, and they will find themselves engulfed with the warnings that they used to deride and ridicule. *And it will show itself to them, the evil deeds that they earned and they will be surrounded by what they had been ridiculing.* (39:48)

Then follows a description of an ironic situation: they are outspoken in denying God's Oneness, yet when they suffer affliction they turn to none but Him, praying earnestly for His help. When He bestows His grace on them and removes their affliction they revert to their boastful claims and deny His favors: *Then, when harm afflicted the human being, he called to Us. Again, We granted him divine blessing from Us.* (39:49)

This sign describes the human being if he does not accept the truth and turn back to his true Lord, following the path leading to Him and remaining on that path in all situations of strength or weakness. Affliction purges human nature of the desires and ambitions that blur its vision. It removes from it all alien influences that place a barrier between it and the truth. Therefore, when afflicted, it can easily recognize God and turn to Him alone. Yet when the testing times are over, and human nature again finds itself in easy and comfortable circumstances, we forget what we said only a short while earlier. Our nature is again turned away from the truth under the influence of our desires, and we look at God's favors and provisions

only to say: *He would say: I was only given this because of my knowledge.* (39:49) This was said by Korah, in former times, and it is said by everyone who admires what he is able to obtain of wealth or position through some sort of ability or knowledge, forgetting who grants him these, namely the One who has made causes produce their effects and who grants everyone their provisions.

Nay! It is only a test, but most of them know not. (39:49) It is all just a test. The human being either proves himself, shows that he is grateful to God and sets himself on the right way or he denies God's favors, takes the wrong way and goes astray .

By an act of God's grace, the Quran reveals this secret to us. It alerts us to the source of danger, warns us against failure in the test, and thus leaves us no excuse or argument. It reminds us of the fates of those who lived long before us, which were the result of something like the words spoken by many an unbeliever in the past: *I was only given this because of my knowledge.* (39:49)

Those who lived before their time said the same, but of no avail to them was all that they had ever done: for the very evil of their deeds recoiled upon them. Similarly, the wrongdoers among these present people will have the evil of their deeds recoil upon them. They will never be able to frustrate [Gods purpose]. *Truly, those who were before them said it so what they had been earning availed them not.* (39:50)

They are the same deviant words spoken by earlier peoples and which led them to ruin. Nothing of their knowledge, wealth or positions were of benefit to them. The same rule will apply to the present ungrateful, because God's law will never change: *The evil deeds they earned lit on them. And as for those who did wrong among these, evil deeds of what they earned will light on them. They will not be ones who frustrate Him.* (39:51)

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous

conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what they are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on their meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what they mean from experiences they have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what they mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

Developing Criteria for Evaluation

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

LESSON 59(6). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR)
SIGNS 39:53-39:63

Madinah (39:53)
Madinah (39:54)
Makkah: *And follow the fairer*
of what was caused to descend to you
from your Lord before the punishment approaches you suddenly
while you are not aware (39:55)
so that a soul not say: O me that I am regretful for
what I neglected in my responsibility to God

and that I had, truly, been among the ones who deride. (39:56)
Or he may say: If God guided me,
I would, certainly, have been among
the ones who are God-conscious. (39:57)
Or he say at the time he sees the punishment:
If only I might return again, then,
be among the ones who are doers of good. (39:58)
Yea! My signs drew near thee
and you denied them and grew arrogant.
You would have been among the ones who are ungrateful. (39:59)
And on the Day of Resurrection you will see
those who lied against God, their faces,
ones that are clouded over.
Is there not in hell a place of lodging for ones
who increase in pride? (39:60)
And God delivers those who were God-conscious,
keeping them safe.
No evil will afflict them, nor will they feel remorse. (39:61)
God is One Who is Creator of everything.
And He is Trustee over everything. (39:62)
To Him belongs the pass keys of the heavens and the earth.
And those who were ungrateful for the signs of God,
those, they are the ones who are the losers. (39:63)

COMMENTARY°

And follow the fairer of what was caused to descend to you from your Lord before the punishment approaches you suddenly while you are not aware. (39:55) To turn to God in true submission and to surrender oneself once more to Him is all that is needed.

Come on now before it is too late. *So that a soul not say: O me that I am regretful for what I neglected in my responsibility to God and that I had, truly, been among the ones who deride.* (39:56) Alternatively, someone may say that God condemned him to be in error: had He decreed that he would follow divine guidance, he would have been a God-fearing person: *Or he may say: If God guided me, I would, certainly, have been among the ones who are God-conscious.* (39:57) This is a baseless excuse: the chance is offered to everyone, the means are available to all, and the gates are wide open. Yet people deliberately miss out: *Or he say at the time he sees the punishment: If only I might return again, then, be among the ones who are doers of good.* (39:58) This is something that will never be given. Once this life is over, no return is allowed. All people are now at the stage

when they can do what they want. If they miss this chance, all is lost. They will be held to account, and they will be rebuked: *Yea! My signs drew near you and you had denied them and had grown arrogant. You had been among the ones who are ungrateful.* (39:59)

At this point, when the section has brought our feelings and hearts to the Day of Judgment, it shows us the two contrasting images of the ungrateful and the God-conscious on that momentous day:

On the Day of Resurrection you will see those who invented lies about God with their faces darkened. Is not there in hell a proper abode for the arrogant? But God will deliver those who are God-fearing to their place of safety: no harm shall afflict them, nor shall they grieve. *And on the Day of Resurrection you will see those who lied against God, their faces, ones that are clouded over. Is there not in hell a place of lodging for ones who increase in pride?* (39:60)

Now, on the Day of Judgment, they are left in utter humiliation that shows in their faces. The other group are the winners who will not be touched by grief or affliction. These are the God-fearing who, during their lives on earth, paid heed to God's warnings and hoped for His mercy. They are the ones who will be safe: *And God delivers those who were God-conscious, keeping them safe. No evil will afflict them, nor will they feel remorse.* (39:61)

God is the Creator of everything, and of all things He is the Guardian. His are the keys of the heavens and the earth. This is the truth that everything in the universe confirms. No one can ever claim to create anything. No rational being can claim that this universe came into existence without a creator, when everything in it testifies to elaborate planning and a clear purpose behind creation. Nothing in it, from the very small to the very large, is left to chance: *God is One Who is Creator of everything. And He is Trustee over everything.* (39:62) Into His control the heavens and the earth are placed. He conducts their affairs the way He chooses. They operate in accordance with the system He put in place for them. No will other than His interferes with anything. This is acknowledged by human nature, confirmed by practical fact and endorsed by reason and conscience.

They have lost the understanding that makes their lives on earth consistent and harmonious with the life of the universe. *o Him belongs the pass keys of the heavens and the earth. And those who were ungrateful for the signs of God, those, they are the ones who are the losers.*(39:63) They have lost the comfort of divine guidance, the beauty of faith, the reassurance of belief and the sweetness of certainty. On the Day of Judgment they will lose their own souls and their families. Hence, the term 'losers' applies to them in all its

shades and connotations.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

LESSON 59(7). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR)
SIGNS 39:64-39:70

Makkah: *Say: Commanded you me*
to worship other than God,
O ones who are ignorant? (39:64)
And, certainly, it was revealed to you
and to those who were before you

*that if **you** ascribe partners with God,*
*certainly, **your** actions will be fruitless and **you** will, certainly,*
be among the ones who are losers. (39:65)
*Nay! Worship **you** God and*
*be **you** among the ones who are thankful!* (39:66)
And they measured not God with His true measure.
And the earth altogether will be His handful
on the Day of Resurrection
when the heavens will be
ones that are rolled up in His right hand.
Glory be to Him! And exalted is He
above partners they ascribe! (39:67)
And the trumpet will be blown.
Then, whoever is in the heavens will swoon
and whoever is in and on the earth,
but he whom God willed.
Again, it will be blown another time.
Then, they will be upright looking on. (39:68)
And the earth will shine with the Light of its Lord
and the Book will be laid down
and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought about.
And it will be decided among them with The Truth.
And they, they will not be wronged. (39:69)
The account of each soul will be paid in full for what it did.
He is greater in knowledge of what they accomplish. (39:70)

COMMENTARY°

In the light of this truth, testified to by the heavens, the earth and every creature in the universe, the Prophet is instructed in how to reply to the idolaters' offer of both parties joining together in the worship of their idols and God Almighty at the same time. It is as if the whole question is a bargain to be struck by compromise: *Say: Commanded you me to worship other than God, O ones who are ignorant?* (39:64) This is the natural reaction to such a stupid offer that betrays nothing but ignorance.

This is followed with a clear warning against associating partners with God, beginning with the prophets and God's messengers who would never entertain even the slightest thought of such association. This, however, serves to alert all others to the truth that in the question of who is to be worshipped, God stands alone without partners, while in the question of offering worship, all humanity, including the prophets and God's messengers, are in the same position

as God's servants: *And, certainly, it was revealed to you and to those who were before you that if you have ascribed partners with God, certainly, your actions will be fruitless and you wilt, certainly, be among the ones who are losers.* (39:65)

This warning against associating partners with God concludes with an order to worship God alone. We are to show gratitude to Him for providing us with guidance to the path to certainty. We should also thank Him for all His countless favors which He bestows on us and which we all enjoy at every moment of our lives: *Nay! Worship you God and be you among the ones who are thankful!* (39:66)

Indeed, they have no clear or true understanding of Him when they associate with Him some of His creatures. *And they measured not God with His true measure.* (39:67) Nor do they worship Him as He should be worshipped. They do not appreciate His Oneness, greatness, majesty and power. Therefore, the chapter reveals to us an aspect of God's great power in the normal Quranic way of drawing images that place before our eyes a fundamental truth: *And the earth altogether will be His handful on the Day of Resurrection when the heavens will be ones that are rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him! And exalted is He above partners they ascribe!* (39:67)

The first blow on the trumpet is made, and all creatures who until that moment remained alive on earth and in the heavens fall senseless, except those God spares. We do not know how much time elapses before the second blow is sounded on the trumpet: *And the trumpet will be blown. Then, whoever is in the heavens will swoon and whoever is in and on the earth, but he whom God willed. Again, it will be blown another time. Then, they will be upright looking on.* (39:68) The third blow of gathering them all is not mentioned here. Nor is there mention of the bustling and the crowding, because the scene here is a quiet one, where all move very gradually.

This: *And the earth will shine with the Light of its Lord and the Book will be laid down and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought about. And it will be decided among them with The Truth. And they, they will not be wronged* (39:69) is the earth where all action will take place. Needless to say, there is no light other than the light of its Lord Almighty. It is the book in which all deeds by all creatures are entered. They will testify stating the truth they know. No argument or dispute is mentioned here so as to maintain the atmosphere of majesty and humility before God that permeates the entire scene. *The account of each soul will be paid in full for what it did. He is greater in knowledge of what they accomplish.* (39:69-39:70) There is no need for a word to be said or a voice to be raised.

The whole picture of reckoning, questions asked and answers given, is folded without mention because it does not fit with the ambience of majesty expressed.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

LESSON 59(8). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM

WHAT IS EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic Altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR)
SIGNS 39:71-39:75

Makkah: *Those who were ungrateful will be*
ones driven to hell in troops
until when they drew near it,
then, the doors of it will be flung open.
Ones who are its keepers will say to them:
Approach not Messengers from among you who recount to you
the signs of your Lord to warn you
of the meeting of this your Day?
They would say: Yea.
But the word of punishment was realized
against the ones who are ungrateful. (39:71)
It will be said: Enter the doors of hell

as ones who will dwell in it forever.
Miserable it will be as a place of lodging
for the ones who increase in pride. (39:72)
Those who were God-conscious will be ones driven to their Lord
in the Garden in troops until when they drew near it
and its doors were let loose,
ones who are its keepers will say to them:
Peace be on you! You fared well!
So enter it, ones who dwell in it forever. (39:73)
They would say: The Praise belongs to God
Who was sincere in His promise
to us and gave us the earth as inheritance
that we take our dwelling in the Garden wherever we will.
How excellent a compensation for the ones who work! (39:74)
And you will see the angels as ones who encircle
around the Throne glorifying their Lord with praise.
And it would be decided in Truth among them.
And it would be said: The Praise belongs to God,
the Lord of the worlds. (39:75)

COMMENTARY°

The angels keeping guard will receive them there with a statement that they deserve their lot, reminding them of the reasons why they have ended up there: its keepers will ask them: *Those who were ungrateful will be ones driven to hell in troops until when they drew near it, then, the doors of it will be flung open. Ones who are its keepers will say to them: Approach not Messengers from among you who recount to you the signs of your Lord to warn you of the meeting of this your Day? They would say: Yea. But the word of punishment was realized against the ones who are ungrateful.* (39:71) The position is one of submission, without any argument or dispute. They accept their lot and submit to their fate: *It will be said: Enter the doors of hell as ones who will dwell in it forever. Miserable it will be as a place of lodging for the ones who increase in pride.* (39:72)

Such is the fate of the arrogant party, destined for hell. How about the other party, the God-fearing who are destined for heaven? *Those who were God-conscious will be ones driven to their Lord in the Garden in troops until when they drew near it and its doors were let loose, ones who are its keepers will say to them: Peace be on you! You fared well! So enter it, ones who dwell in it forever.* (39:73)

At this point, the voices of the people of heaven are raised high in glorifying and praising God: *They would say: The Praise belongs*

to God Who was sincere in His promise to us. (39:74) This is the land worth inheriting. They live in it wherever they wish, taking from it whatever they want. *And gave us the earth as inheritance that we take our dwelling in the Garden wherever we will. How excellent a compensation for the ones who work!* (39:74)

The scene is given a finale that fills our hearts with awe and majesty. It too is in complete harmony with the ambience of the whole chapter devoted to the theme of God's Oneness. The entire universe is in complete submission to God Almighty, and praises of God are uttered by every living soul and all existence: *And you will see the angels as ones who encircle around the Throne glorifying their Lord with praise. And it would be decided in Truth among them. And it would be said: The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds.* (39:75)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 60(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the

contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

QURANIC CHAPTER 40: THE ONE WHO FORGIVES (AL-GHAFIR)

SIGNS 40:1-40:9

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (40:1)
The sending down successively of this Book is from God,
The Almighty, The Knowing, (40:2)
The One Who Forgives impieties,
The One Who Accepts remorse,
The Severe in Repayment, The Possessor of Bounty.
There is no god but He. To Him is the Homecoming. (40:3)
No one disputes the signs of God, but those who were ungrateful.
So be you not disappointed
with their going to and fro in the land. (40:4)
The folk of Noah denied before them
and the confederates after them.
And every community is about to take its Messenger
and they dispute with falsehood to refute The Truth.
So I took them. And how had been My repayment! (40:5)
And, thus, was the Word of your Lord realized
against those who were ungrateful
that they will be the Companions of the Fire. (40:6)
Those who carry the Throne
and whoever is around it glorify the praises of their Lord
and believe in Him and ask for forgiveness
for those who believed:
Our Lord! You encompassed everything in mercy
and in knowledge.
So forgive those who repented
and followed Thy way
and guard them from the punishment of hellfire. (40:7)
Our Lord! And cause them to enter the Gardens of Eden
which You promised them
and whomever was in accord with morality among their fathers
and their spouses and their offspring.
Truly, Thou, Thou alone art The Almighty, The Wise. (40:8)
And guard them from the evil deeds.
And whomever Thou hast guarded
from the evil deeds on that Day.
Surely, You had had mercy on him.
And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph! (40:9)

COMMENTARY°

This is one of the seven chapters that all begin with the two separate letters, *Ha Mim*. This is followed by a statement of a fact that is frequently used in Makkan chapters given these seek to establish faith: the fact of revelation: *The sending down successively of this Book is from God, The Almighty, The Knowing.* (40:2) A number of God s attributes are then stated. These are directly relevant to the subject matter of the chapter and the issues it discusses: *The One Who Forgives impieties, The One Who Accepts remorse, The Severe in Repayment, The Possessor of Bounty. There is no god but He. To Him is the Homecoming.* (40:3) In fact all the issues the chapter raises relate to these attributes of God, powerfully stated at the outset to give an impression that they are well and firmly established.

Throughout the entire expanse of the universe, only the ungrateful stand apart, deviating from the true path. In relation to the whole universe, they are weaker and less significant than an ant in relation to planet earth. When they stand on their own disputing God's revelations and denying His signs, the rest of the universe declares its acceptance of Him and recognizes His Oneness, deriving its strength from Him. With their odd attitude, the ungrateful' fate is sealed, no matter how powerful, affluent and mighty they may appear to be: *No one disputes the signs of God, but those who were ungrateful. So be you not disappointed with their going to and fro in the land.* (40:4) They may be able to move about, gather wealth, enjoy their power and revel in easy living. However, they are ultimately doomed. The battle, if there could ever be a battle between them and the Creator of the universe, will lead to its inevitable end.

There were in former times communities that followed the same path. Their fate should make clear to the ungrateful what happens in the end to anyone who tries to stand against the power of the Almighty: *The folk of Noah denied before them and the confederates after them.* (40:5) In other words, the battle remains the same throughout all generations. This sign provides an overall picture: a message from God received with rejection and tyranny, which leads to the inevitable end. Every Messenger is met by those in power in his community who do not try to justify their stance with sound argument. On the contrary, they resort to tyranny and try to do away with God's Messenger. They also resort to trickery in order to deceive the masses and claim victory for themselves. Therefore, God's power intervenes and smashes them in the most amazing way: *And every community is about to take its Messenger and they dispute with falsehood to refute The Truth. So I took them. And how had been My re-*

payment! (40:5) The punishments meted out were indeed severe, leaving in their wake ruins that testify to the same. Furthermore, all this is recorded in human history.

The battle, however, is not over yet. There is a further episode in the life to come: *And, thus, was the Word of your Lord realized against those who were ungrateful that they will be the Companions of the Fire* (40:6) When God's word applies to someone, it always comes true. There can be no argument about this.

Those who bear the Throne and those around it extol their Lord's limitless glory and praise, and have faith in Him, and pray far the forgiveness of all believers.

We do not know what this throne is: we have no image of it. Nor do we know how those assigned to carry it do so or how the others are present around it. It is futile to try to determine something which is beyond the reach of human understanding or perception. No purpose can be served by arguing about something over which God has not provided information. All that can be said concerning this fact is that there are some creatures who are close to God, and these extol their Lords limitless glory and praise, and have faith in Him. Although the fact that they are believers can be taken for granted, this is specifically mentioned in the Quran to emphasize the bond between them and human believers. Having extolled Gods limitless glory, these servants of God pray for the believers among humanity, requesting the best that one believer can ask for another.

They begin their supplication in a very polite way, in the process teaching us how to couch our own prayers. As they address God, they make clear their request that God bestows His grace on people, that they are relying on the fact that His grace embraces all, and that His knowledge encompasses everything. Thus, they do not make any assumptions; they simply refer to God s grace and knowledge.*Those who carry the Throne and whoever is around it glorify the praises of their Lord and believe in Him and ask for forgiveness for those who believed: Our Lord! You had encompassed everything in mercy and in knowledge. So forgive those who repented and followed Your way and guard them from the punishment of hellfire.* (40:7) This reference to God's forgiveness and people s repentance corresponds to the opening of the chapter where God is described as the One who forgives sins and accepts repentance. Likewise, the reference to the 'suffering in the blazing fire corresponds to the earlier description of His retribution as being severe.

These servants of God continue with their supplications, praying now for the admission of believers among human beings into heaven,

in fulfilment of His promise to His good servants: *Our Lord! And cause them to enter the Gardens of Eden which **You** had promised them and whomever was in accord with morality among their fathers and their spouses and their offspring. Truly, **You**, **You** alone are The Almighty, The Wise.* (40:8) Admission into heaven is a great triumph and means a life of bliss. When there is added to this the company of God-conscious ancestors, spouses and offspring, another dimension of bliss is thus granted. Moreover, this is an aspect of the unity of all believers. It is in the bond of faith that fathers, spouses and offspring are united. Without it, all their ties are severed. This part of their supplication highlights God s attributes of power and wisdom. It is this combination that determines how people are judged.

The supplication continues: *And guard them from the evil deeds. And whomever **You** have guarded from the evil deeds on that Day. Surely, **You** had had mercy on him. And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph!* (40:9) Having prayed for their admission to heaven, this prayer refers to the most important point in the whole difficult process. It is evil deeds that ruin people and lead them to their doom. When God shields a believer from evil, He actually shields that believer from the consequences of such evil. This is the great mercy on the Day of Judgment, and it is only the first step to bliss and happiness. This shielding from evil is indeed the great triumph.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?

Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 60(2). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their an-

swers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[6]

QURANIC CHAPTER 40: THE ONE WHO FORGIVES (AL-GHAFIR)
SIGNS 40:10-40:20

Makkah: *It will be proclaimed*

to those who were ungrateful:
Certainly, the repugnance of God is greater
than your repugnance of yourselves
when you are called to belief, but you are ungrateful. (40:10)
They said: Our Lord!
***You** caused us to die two times*
*and **You** gave us life two times.*
We acknowledged our impieties.
Then, is there any way of going forth? (40:11)
It will be said: That is because
when God alone was called to, you disbelieved.
But when partners are ascribed with Him, you believe.
And the determination is with God alone,
The Lofty, The Great. (40:12)
It is He Who causes you to see His signs
and sends down provision for you from heaven.
And none recollect but whoever is penitent. (40:13)
So call you on God ones who are sincere
and devoted in the way of life to Him
although the ones who are ungrateful disliked it. (40:14)
Exalter of Degrees, Possessor of the Throne,
He casts the Spirit by His command
on whom He wills of His servants to warn
of the Day of the Encounter, (40:15)
a Day when they are ones who depart.
Nothing about them will be hidden from God.
Whose is the dominion this Day.
It is to God, The One, The Omniscient. (40:16)
On this Day every soul will be given recompense
for what it earned.
There will be no injustice today.
God is Swift in reckoning. (40:17)
And warn them of The Impending Day
when the hearts will be near the throats, ones who choke.
There will not be a loyal friend for ones who are unjust,
nor an intercessor be obeyed. (40:18)
He knows that which is the treachery of the eyes
and whatever the breasts conceal. (40:19)
And God decrees by The Truth.
And those whom they call to other than Him decide not anything.
Truly, God, He is The Hearing, The Seeing. (40:20)

COMMENTARY°

As the carriers of the throne and those surrounding it address their prayer to God appealing for His grace to be bestowed on believers, their brethren in faith, the ungrateful find themselves in a totally different capacity. Everyone is looking for support, but none is to be found. In fact all bonds with all beings and things in the universe are severed. They are called out so that they can listen to the rebuke coming from all directions. The arrogance they demonstrated in this life is turned now into humiliation. They want to place their hopes in someone, but none is available to encourage their hopes:

The ungrateful will be addressed: *It will be proclaimed to those who were ungrateful:Certainly, the repugnance of God is greater than your repugnance of yourselves when you are called to belief, but you are ungrateful.* (40:10)

The Arabic text uses the strongest word for hate. We see them addressed from all corners and told that God's loathing of them when they were called upon to believe and still rejected the faith is far stronger than their feelings of hate towards themselves as they realize to what end they have brought themselves. They realize how different their fate could have been, had they responded to the call to faith before it was too late. This reminder is exceptionally painful for them in their newly difficult situation.

Now that all delusion is gone, they realize that the only One to turn to is God Himself; and so they do: *They said: Our Lord! **You** had caused us to die two times and **You** had given us life two times. We acknowledged our impieties. Then, is there any way of going forth?* (40:11) Their words betray their misery and despair. Their appeal betrays the direness of their situation. They are in bitter despair. They are made to see the reason for their plight: *It will be said: That is because when God alone was called to, you disbelieved. But when partners are ascribed with Him, you believe. And the determination is with God alone, The Lofty, The Great.* (40:12) This is what has brought you to your present position of humiliation. You denied God's Oneness and attributed partners to Him. All judgment, then, rests with Him, the Exalted, the Supreme. Both attributes fit well with the position of judgment. He is Exalted above all things and Superior to all beings.

The chapter now dwells on one of God's attributes that fits with His exalted position. The believers are instructed to address their formal prayers to Him, associating no partners with Him and to be sincere in their devotion to Him alone. The chapter also refers to the fact of revelation so as to give a warning about the day when all hu-

manity will be brought together for judgment, reward and punishment. On that day, all dominion and sovereignty belong to God alone.

Of all the sustenance: *It is He Who causes you to see His signs and sends down provision for you from heaven. And none recollect but whoever is penitent.* (40:13) God sends down people know best the rain, which is the origin of life on earth and the source of food and drink. Yet there is so much more than rain that God sends down and people learn about this gradually. Part of it consists of the rays that are necessary for life on earth. Such sustenance may also include the Divine messages that have provided guidance for humanity ever since the early stages of human life on earth. They showed us the right way and provided sound codes for living.

It is the one who turns to God that remembers His grace as well as His signs and revelations which the ungrateful, with hardened hearts, prefer to ignore. In connection with turning to God, the believers are instructed to pray to God alone and to be sincere in their faith, paying little heed to what the ungrateful feel or say: *So call you on God ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him although the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* (40:14) The ungrateful will never accept that the believers should hold on sincerely to their faith in God alone and their worship of none but Him. There is no way they will accept this, no matter how much the believers try to appease them. Therefore, the believers should stay their course, praying to God alone, completely sincere and devoted. They should pay no heed to whether the ungrateful are happy with them or not, because they will never be satisfied.

The chapter adds at this point the following attributes of God: (40:15) It is God alone who is exalted in His position, high above all orders of being, the Lord of the Throne who controls everything. It is He who gives His orders, which give life to hearts and souls, to those whom He chooses from among His servants. This expression refers to the revelation of the Divine message, and it highlights here the fact that God's revelations bring life to humanity. It further states that revelation is bestowed from on high to those chosen elite among God's servants. All these facts are in harmony with God's attributes mentioned earlier in the chapter, stating that He is the Exalted, the Supreme One. (40:12)

The main task undertaken by a servant of God chosen to receive such a message is to deliver a warning: *Exalter of Degrees, Possessor of the Throne, He casts the Spirit by His command on whom He wills of His servants to warn of the Day of the Encounter,* (40:15) That is the day when people will meet together, and they will also stand face

to face with the deeds they did during their lives on earth, and they will meet other creatures such as the jinn, the angels and other types of God's creation. All of them will meet their Lord at the time of reckoning. Hence the day is described as 'the day of the meeting'. Furthermore, it is the day when they all stand without any cover to screen their reality. Hence, no one can put up a false image: *Nothing about them will be hidden from God. Whose is the dominion this Day. It is to God, The One, The Omniscient.* (40:16) In fact, nothing about them is concealed from God at any time. However, at all times other than that day, they may imagine that they are covered or screened by something or other, or that what they do or say may remain secret. On that day, however, they will be truly exposed, unable to enjoy even an imaginary cover.

Therefore, on that day the arrogant and the mighty are made to face their humble reality. The whole universe stands in awe, and all creatures demonstrate their submission. Sovereignty belongs completely to God, the One who overpowers all. In fact this is true at all times. However, on that day, this fact becomes clear to all and sundry. Every tyrant of old and every conceited person will come to know and feel it. Then every sound dies down and every movement stops. A majestic voice asks a question and replies to it, as there is no one else to ask or reply: *Whose is the dominion this Day. It is to God, The One, The Omniscient.* (40:16)

An air of awe, heightened by silence spreads. *On this Day every soul will be given recompense for what it earned. There will be no injustice today. God is Swift in reckoning.* (40:17) All creatures listen and realize; everything is settled, the reckoning is over. This is in harmony with what the chapter said at the outset about those who dispute God's revelations: *No one disputes the signs of God, but those who were ungrateful. So be you not disappointed with their going to and fro in the land.* (40:4) This is the end of unjustified arrogance, tyranny and injustice, as well as of wealth and affluence.

The section instructs the Prophet to warn his people about this day. The instruction is given against a backdrop of an image of the Day of Resurrection when God sits alone for judgment. Up till now the chapter has not addressed people directly; instead it used a reporting style: (40:18-40:20)

The section describes the Day of Judgment as ever drawing near, and we perceive it to be hastening towards us. Souls are in distress, pressing against peoples throats. They try to suppress their worries and fears, and the effort is difficult. Nevertheless, they can find no one to support or protect them. No one can put up a word of inter-

cession that finds response from anyone.

They stand in full view; nothing can conceal their reality. Even a stealthy glance and a hearts secret is brought into the open: *He knows that which is the treachery of the eyes and whatever the breasts conceal.* (40:19) An eye looking stealthily will try hard to conceal its stealthy gaze, but God is well aware of it. A secret may be hidden safely in one's soul, but it is not hidden from God who knows it all.

On that day, it is God only who passes judgment in fairness. Their alleged deities have nothing to do with such judgment: *And God decrees by The Truth. And those whom they call to other than Him decide not anything.* (40:20) His judgment is based on perfect knowledge and full awareness. He will not entertain any injustice for anyone, and He forgets nothing: *Truly, God, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (40:20)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

Lesson 60(3). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Definitive (to be precise)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)

Signs 40:21-40:27

Section 3 (40:21): Journey Through the Earth

Makkah: *Journey they not through the earth*
and look on how had been
the Ultimate End of those who had been before them?
They, they had been superior to them in strength
and in traces they left on the earth,
but God took them for their impieties
and there had not been for them
one who is a defender from God. (40:21)
That had been because their Messengers approached them before
with the clear portents but they were ungrateful so God took them.
Truly, He is Strong, Severe in Repayment.(40:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:27)

Commentary°

Have they, then, never traveled through the land and beheld what happened in the end to those who lived before them? Greater were they in power than they are, and in the impact which they left on earth. God, however, took them to task for their sins, and they had none to defend them against God. That was because their messengers came to them with all the evidence of the truth, yet they rejected it. So God took them to task. He is Powerful, Stern in retribution. (40:21)

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)
Signs 40:28-40:37

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:28)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:29)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud ((40:30)
Makkah: Book 25: The People of Noah, Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (40:31)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (40:32)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (40:33)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (40:34)
Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh and Haman (40:35)
Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh and Haman (40:36)
Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh and Haman (40:37)

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)
Signs 40:38-40:50

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:40)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:42)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:43)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:49)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:50)

Lesson 60(4). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)

Signs 40:51-40:60

Makkah: *Truly, We will, certainly,*
help Our Messengers
and those who believed in this present life
and on a Day when the ones who bear witness
will stand up, (40:51)
a Day when their excuses will not profit the ones who are unjust.
And for them will be the curse
and for them will be an evil abode. (40:52)
And, certainly, We gave Moses the guidance
and We gave as inheritance
to the Children of Israel the Book (40:53)
as a guidance and a reminder
for those imbued with intuition. (40:54)
So have you patience. Truly, the promise of God is true.
And ask for forgiveness for your impiety.
And glorify your Lord with praise
in the evening and the early morning. (40:55)
Madinah (40:56)
Madinah (40:57)
Makkah: *Not on the same level are the unwilling to see*
and the seeing nor those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
and the ones who are evil doers.
Little do they recollect. (40:58)
Truly, the Hour is that which arrives.
There is no doubt about it,
yet most of humanity believes not. (40:59)
And your Lord said: Call to Me; I will respond to you.
Truly, those who grow arrogant toward My worship,

they will enter hell as ones who are in a state of lowliness. (40:60)

COMMENTARY°

The section adds a comment on the whole episode and what preceded it of reference to the different communities which suffered Gods punishment after taking a negative attitude towards His message. (40:51-40:55)

This definitive comment suits the decisive situation. We have been given an example of the end of truth and falsehood, both in this world and in the life to come. We have seen what fate befell Pharaoh and his noblemen in this life, and we have seen them disputing in hell, utterly humiliated. Such is the end of these communities, as stated in the Quran: (40:51-40:52)

As for the life to come, perhaps no believer in life after death will argue about this. They do not find any reason to argue. As for victory in this present world, this may need some explanation.

God's promise is clear and definitive: *Truly, We will, certainly, help Our Messengers and those who believed in this present life and on a Day when the ones who bear witness will stand up.* (40:51) Yet we see that some messengers were killed, and some had to abandon their homes after being rejected and driven out. Some believers have also been exposed to grievous suffering; some were thrown into the fire pit; some fell martyrs; some live in exceedingly difficult circumstances. What happens, then, to God's promise of support being given to them in this present life? Satan tries hard to exploit this situation, working hard to shake people's faith.

As for those who dispute God's revelations, with no authority granted to them, there is nothing in their hearts but a quest for a greatness they will never attain. Seek, then, refuge with God, for He is the One who hears all and sees all. The creation of the heavens and the earth is indeed greater than the creation of man; yet most people do not understand. The blind and the seeing are not equal; nor can those who believe and do good works and those who do evil be deemed equal. How seldom you reflect. The Last Hour is sure to come: of this there is no doubt. Yet most people will not believe. Your Lord says: (40:56-40:60)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer questions, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.
I was able to explain the main points of the sign to another student.
I now know the three points of who are my protectors/friends/allies.

LESSON 60(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 40: THE ONE WHO FORGIVES (AL-GHAFIR)

SIGNS 40:61-40:68

Makkah: *God is He Who made for you the nighttime*
so that you may rest in it and the daytime
for one who perceives.
Truly, God is Possessor of Grace to humanity,
but most of humanity gives not thanks. (40:61)
That is God, your Lord, the One Who is Creator of everything.
There is no god but He. Then, how you are misled! (40:62)
Thus, are misled those who had been
negating the signs of God. (40:63)
God is He Who made the earth for you as a stopping place
and the heaven as a canopy.
And He formed you and formed you well
and He provided you of what is good.
That is God, your Lord.
Then, blessed be God, the Lord of the worlds! (40:64)
He is The Living! There is no god but He!
So call to Him, ones sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him.

The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds! (40:65)
Say: Truly, I was prohibited from worshipping
those whom you call to other than God,
because the clear portents drew near me from my Lord.
And I was commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds. (40:66)
He it is Who created you from earth dust,
again, from seminal fluid, again, from a clot.
Again, He brings you out as infant children.
Again, you come of age and are fully grown.
Again, you be an old man.
And of you is he whom death calls to itself before,
and that you reach a term, that which is determined
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (40:47)
He it is Who gives life and causes to die.
And when He decreed an affair,
He only says to it: Be! Then, it is! (40:68)

COMMENTARY°

Let us now briefly discuss the text itself: *God is He Who made for you the nighttime so that you may rest in it and the daytime for one who perceives. Truly, God is Possessor of Grace to humanity, but most of humanity gives not thanks.* (40:61) Rest at night is necessary for every living thing. A period of darkness is needed so that living cells can rest before resuming their activity during the day. Sleeping is not enough to afford the needed rest; darkness is also necessary. A living cell that is exposed to light continuously reaches a degree of fatigue that ruins its structure.

These two phenomena of night and day are brought into existence by the One who alone deserves to be named God: *That is God, your Lord, the One Who is Creator of everything. There is no god but He. Then, how you are misled!* (40:62) People do recognize God's hand in everything, and they know for certain that He is the Creator of all. Such knowledge, in fact, forces itself on our minds by the very existence of things. No one can claim to have created these, and it is impossible that they could have come into existence of their own accord. It is most amazing then that people should turn away from believing in God:*Thus, are misled those who had been negating the signs of God.* (40:63)

The chapter then mentions the universal design that gives the earth and the sky their respective functions: *He provided you of what is good.* (40:64) The earth is a place suited for mans life, considering the many balances operating in it, some of which we have briefly discussed. The sky is a structure with careful proportions, dimensions

and cycles to ensure stability and the continuity of human life. Indeed human life is taken into consideration in the design of the universe itself.

Furthermore, the chapter specifies a link between the structure of the heavens and earth on the one hand and man's constitution and the wholesome provisions made for him on the other: *That is God, your Lord.* (40:64) These blessings and provisions are followed by a comment similar to the earlier one: *Then, blessed be God, the Lord of the worlds!* (40:64) He is the One who creates, measures and designs, giving you a specified place in His kingdom. He is your Lord, so glorify Him. His bounty encompasses all worlds.

His life is from Himself, neither gained nor created, without a beginning or an end. It does not alter, change or finish. Nothing else has such qualities to its life. All glory to Him; unique is His life.

Again He alone is God. The One who has a unique life is God: *He is the Living! There is no god but He! So call to Him ones sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds!* (40:65)

The Prophet is given clear instructions to declare to his people that he has been forbidden to worship what they invoke other than God. He has also been commanded to submit himself to the Lord of all the worlds: *Say: Truly I was prohibited from worshipping those whom you call to other than God, because the clear portents have drawn near me from my Lord. And I was commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds.* (40:66)

It is He who creates you out of dust, then out of a gamete, then out of a clinging cell mass; and then He brings you forth as infants. He then lets you reach maturity, and then grow old—although some of you die earlier. [All this He ordains] so that you may reach your appointed term, and you may use your reason. It is He who ordains life and death. When He wills something to be, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

Lesson 60(6). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Worthiness (focusing on the significant, important)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)

Signs 40:69-40:78

Makkah: *Have you not considered*
those who dispute about the signs of God,
where they are turned away: (40:69)
Those who denied the Book
and that with which We sent Our Messengers?
Then, they will know. (40:70)
When yokes are on their necks
and the chains, they will be dragged (40:71)
into scalding water.
Again, they will be poured forth into the fire as fuel. (40:72)
Again, it will be said to them:
Where are what you had been ascribing as partners (40:73)
other than God?
They would say: They went astray from us.
Nay! We be not calling to anything before.
Thus, God causes to go astray ones who are ungrateful. (40:74)
That was because you had been exultant
on the earth without right and that you had been glad. (40:75)
Enter the doors of hell
as ones who will dwell in it forever.
Then, miserable it will be as a place of lodging
for the ones who increase in pride! (40:76)
So have you patience.
Truly, the promise of God is true.
And whether We cause you to see some part
of what We promise them or We call you to Us,
then, it is to Us they will be returned. (40:77)
And, certainly, We sent Messengers before thee
among whom We related to thee
and of whom We relate not to thee.
And it had not been for any Messenger
that he bring a sign, except with the permission of God.
So when the command of God drew near,
the matter would be decided rightfully.

And lost here are these, the ones who deal in falsehood. (40:78)

COMMENTARY°

These signs first wonder at those disputing God's revelations when they see the great signs He has placed in the universe. This serves as a prelude to outlining the fate that awaits them in the life to come. *Have you not considered those who dispute about the signs of God, where they are turned away: Those who denied the Book and that with which We sent Our Messengers? Then, they will know.* (40:69-40:70) They have rejected one book and one messenger, but, in fact, they reject everything all God's messengers said. Theirs is the same faith, put in its most perfect form in the final message. This means that they actually denied every single message and rejected every single messenger. Everyone who opposed the Divine faith, at any time in history including the present, did this when he or she opposed the truth advocated by the messenger addressing him personally.

This statement adds humiliation to painful punishment. *When yokes are on their necks and the chains, they will be dragged.* (40:71) They are dragged like animals and beasts to add further humiliation to their predicament. Why should they be given honorable treatment when they have discarded every single cause of honor? There they are tied up after the place is filled with a burning fire and scalding water.

Such is the end they face. It is then that they are further rebuked and painfully embarrassed: *Again, it will be said to them: Where are what you had been ascribing as partners other than God?* (40:73) Their reply is that of someone who is in total sorrow after he realizes that he has been badly deceived: *They would say: They went astray from us. Nay! We be not calling to anything before.* (40:74) We have lost them and we have no way of finding them. Nor can they find us. In fact we did not ascribe divinity to anyone. These were all myths and false presumptions. After this sorrowful answer, the chapter adds a general comment: *Thus, God causes to go astray ones who are ungrateful.* (40:74)

A further and final reproach is then added: *That was because you had been exultant on the earth without right and that you had been glad. Enter the doors of hell as ones who will dwell in it forever. Then, miserable it will be as a place of lodging for the ones who increase in pride!* (40:75-40:76) God save us! What, then, was all that dragging, the chains, the scalding waters and fire? It appears that these were a prelude before entering hell where they would abide. It

was because of their arrogance that they were so humiliated.

Again, the chapter urges the Prophet to remain patient in the face of the many levelled adversity he was encountering, represented in the arrogance shown by the ungrateful and their persistent disputing of God's revelations. He is told to have complete trust in the fulfilment of God s promise, whether God keeps him alive to see with his own eyes some aspects of what He warned the ungrateful against or He gathers him to Himself first. The whole question is determined by God. God's messenger's task is to deliver his message. Ultimately, all will return to God: *So have **you** patience. Truly, the promise of God is true. And whether We cause **you** to see some pare of what We promise them or We call you to Us, then, it is to Us they will be returned.* (40:77)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Stage 1

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

Stage 2

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!
Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

Stage 3
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

Summary of Critical Thinking:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

- Develop a statement of the topic.
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it.
- Identify resources available for research.
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study.
- Print the list as your reference.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 60(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan, wasatiyyah*). The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

QURANIC CHAPTER 40: THE ONE WHO FORGIVES (AL-GHAFIR)
SIGNS 40:79-40:85

Makkah: *God is He Who has made for you flocks*
among which you may ride on them
and among which you eat of them. (40:79)
And you have what profits from them
and that with them you reach the satisfaction
of a need that is in your breasts
and you are carried on them and on boats. (40:80)
And He causes you to see His signs.
So which of the signs of God do you reject? (40:81)
Journey they not through the earth
and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those before them?
They had been more than them
and were more vigorous in strength
and in regard to the traces they left on the earth.
Then, availed them not what they had been earning. (40:82)
Then, when their Messengers drew near them
with the clear portents,
they were glad in the knowledge

that they had and surrounded them was
what they had been ridiculing. (40:83
So when they saw Our might, they said:
We believed in God alone
and we were ungrateful in that we had been
ones who are polytheists. (40:84)
But their belief be not what profits them once they saw Our might.
This is a custom of God which was, surely,
in force among His servants.
And lost here are the ones who are ungrateful. (40:85)

COMMENTARY°

The section concludes on a very powerful note. (40:82-40:85) At this point the chapter questions them, encouraging them to travel across the land with open eyes, alert feelings and an objective approach. They should look at what took place on earth before their time, and consider whether they too might be exposed to the same: (40:82) Before specifying what end they met, the chapter describes the conditions of those past communities so that the addressees can consider how it could affect them and also enable them to draw the right lessons:(40:82) Thus, they enjoyed power and civilization. Some of these belonged to generations that preceded the Arabs, the history of some is given to the Prophet, while others were known to the Arabs who passed by their ruins: (40:82)

Neither material power nor numerical strength was of any avail to them. Indeed their advancement was the cause of their tragedy: (40:83)

Those people, however, revelled in what little knowledge they had and ridiculed whoever reminded them of what is beyond their knowledge: (40:83) Therefore, when they see Gods might, they begin to realize the truth of their arrogance and acknowledge what they used to deny. They declare their belief in God's Oneness and disown those deities which they alleged to be God's partners. All this, however, comes when it is too late: (40:84-40:85) It is a rule God has established that repentance after demonstrating God s might is not acceptable, because it is motivated by fear, not by faith. (40:85) God's way remains operative at all times. It never changes, deviates or fails: (40:85)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are. . . ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this problem?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

Lesson 61(1). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints

In terms of critical thinking, numerous as an intellectual standard means involving multiple viewpoints. In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth.

The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

Quranic Chapter 41: They Were Explained Distinctly (al-Fussilat) Signs 41:1-41:8

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (41:1)
A sending down successively
from The Merciful, The Compassionate, (41:2)
a Book in which its signs were explained distinctly,
an Arabic Recitation for a folk who know, (41:3)
a bearer of glad tidings and a warner,
but most of them turned aside so they hear not. (41:4)
And they said: Our hearts are sheathed
from that to which you call us
and in our ears is a heaviness and between us
and between you is a partition.
So work. Truly, we, too, are ones who work. (41:5)
Say: I am only a mortal like you.
It is revealed to me that your God is God, One;
so go straight to Him and ask for forgiveness from Him,
and woe to the ones who are idolaters—
those who give not the purifying alms (41:6)
and who in the world to come are ones who disbelieve. (41:7)
Truly, those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them will be compensation, that which is unfailing. (41:8)

Commentary°

It is as if the two letters with which the chapter starts, *Ha, Mim*, are a name given to the chapter or to the Quran. The two letters constitute the subject of the first sentence while the predicate forms the

next sign: *Ha Mim. A sending down successively from The Merciful, The Compassionate.* (41:1-41:2) Choosing to identify the divine attributes of grace and mercy in connection with the revelation of the Quran highlights the quality that is most characteristic of this revelation, namely divine mercy. There is no doubt that the revelation of the Quran is an act of mercy for all of humanity. It is a mercy for those who believe in it and implement it as also for other creatures, not merely humans. The Quran defines a code of living that brings good results for all. It has had a profound impact on the life of humanity, its concepts, values and course of action. Its impact is universal and consistent, ever since it was revealed. Those who study human history with true objectivity, following its course in its wider perspective, which includes all facets of human activity, are able to recognize this truth. Many of them have also recorded this in clear terms. *A Book in which its signs were explained distinctly, an Arabic Recitation for a folk who know,* (41:3)

Spelling out the signs, clearly and distinctly, according to purpose, people's nature and mentality, generations, communities, psychologies and needs is a major characteristic of the Quran. Its signs are indeed clearly expounded for people who are ready to learn and receive knowledge. In this way the Quran gives good news to believers who put their faith in practice, and delivers warnings to those who reject its message and entertain evil. It also explains why such good news and warnings have been given in a fine Arabic style to Arabic-speaking people. *A bearer of glad tidings and a warner, but most of them turned aside so they hear not.*(41:4)

This is indeed what they did, turning away so as not to hear or be exposed to the powerful logic of the Quran. As the chapter later informs us, they tried hard to persuade others not to listen to the Quran. Of those that did listen their attitude was the same as those who did not: they all resisted the influence of the Quran on their hearts. Thus they were like the deaf, deprived of their hearing faculty. *And they said: Our hearts are sheathed from that to which you have called us and in our ears is a heaviness and between us and between you is a partition. So work. Truly, we, too, are ones who work.* (41:5)

This is just one example of what the first advocate of the Quranic message had to face. Yet, still he continued to call on people to accept his message, allowing no element of despair to creep into or disrupt his work. He never hastened the fulfillment of God's promise to him or the infliction of punishment on those who denied him. He acted instead upon instruction, declaring to people that putting the warnings into action was not up to him. He was no more than a human

being receiving revelations and delivering a message. His task was to call on people to believe in God's Oneness and to adhere to His message. He was also mandated to warn the idolaters. Once he had done this, matters were left to God while he himself had no say in what was bound to happen: *Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is God, One; so go straight to Him and ask for forgiveness from Him, and woe to the ones who are polytheists—those who give not the purifying alms.* (41:6)

What perseverance! What endurance and what dedication! Only a person who has experienced at first hand something of this condition can appreciate the power and resilience required to persevere against such odds. Yet this perseverance is coupled with the realization that one has no say in what turn developments take. Yet the Prophet faced such unrelenting opposition, arrogance and carelessness, without ever requesting a miracle to silence his opponents.

In order to be able to face such situations, God's Prophets and Messengers were often directed to remain patient in adversity. Advocacy of the divine message can only take the road of long patience and perseverance. The first thing that requires such patience is the advocate s keen desire to see the divine message triumph, but then realize that such triumph is slow coming. Indeed, no sign of it may appear for a long time, yet those who undertake such advocacy must accept this willingly and without hesitation.

The maximum the Messenger could do in the face of such arrogant rejection and ridicule of his message was to say: *and who in the world to come are ones who disbelieve.* (41:7) The fact that *zakat*, or the obligatory charity, is specified here must have been in response to a certain situation, which we cannot now determine. This sign was revealed in Makkah, while purifying alms (*zakat*) was only imposed as a duty in the second year after the Messenger's migration to Madinah. The overall requirement of *zakat* was known about during the Makkan period, but only as a general requirement whereby people paid as they wished. Later, in Madinah, this was modified to make it a specific duty with defined rates on different types of property. To disbelieve in the life to come is the essence of rejection of the divine message, and it should be met with stern warnings. Some scholars argue that in this particular instance, *zakat* means purity of faith. The general tone of the chapter and the circumstances prevailing at the time admit this possibility. *Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them will be compensation, that which is unfailing.* (41:8)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

- Define vocabulary and practice its use in discussion
- Relate terms to common experiences or general usage
- Be mindful of engaging the entire class
- Build a chain of contribution, responses, reactions, alternatives, divergence, etc.
- Randomize questioning in order to keep all students engaged
- Create a non-judgmental environment
- Build confidence and logic
- Keep a conversational tone
- Direct "big picture" questions to holistic learners; detail questions to sequential learners

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered class time as a time in which I practiced thinking (within the subject) using the fundamental concepts and principles of the course.

I did not sit back passively, waiting for knowledge to fall into my head.

Lesson 61(2). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Right Judgment

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

Quranic Chapter 41: They Were Explained Distinctly (al-Fussilat) Signs 41:9-41:18

Makkah: *Say: Truly, are you ungrateful to Him*
Who created the earth in two days?
And assign you to Him rivals?
That is the Lord of the worlds! (41:9)
And He made on it firm mountains from above it
and He blessed it and ordained its subsistence
within it in four days
equally for the ones who ask. (41:10)
Again, He turned His attention
to the heaven while it was smoke
and He said to it and to the earth:
Approach both of you willing or unwilling.
They both said: We approached
as ones who are obedient. (41:11)
Then, foreordaining seven heavens in two days,
He revealed in each heaven its command.
We made the present heaven appear pleasing with lamps
and keeping them safe.
Thus, decreed the Almighty, The Knowing. (41:12)
But if they turned aside, then, say:
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (41:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (41:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (41:15)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad ((41:16)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (41:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (41:18)

Commentary°

Creation of the Earth

Continuing to advocate the divine message, the Messenger puts

before them the enormity of the offense they commit by associating partners with God and rejecting His message. He points first to the universe, in relation to which they are tiny and flimsy creatures. He shows them God's power as reflected in the nature of this universe of which they constitute only a small part. He wants to draw them out of the narrow angle through which they look at the divine message. From that angle, they see themselves as large, occupying important positions. Preoccupied with their own selves, positions and interests, and the fact that Muhammad was chosen by God in preference to them, they overlook the great truth expounded in the Quran and set before them by Muhammad. This great truth relates to the universe, to all generations of humanity, and carries absolutism that transcends time, place and people.

When you show ingratitude, you are being nothing other than careless, gross and vulgar. You are denying the One who created the earth and placed firm structures over it, blessing it and assigning its varied provisions. He has indeed operated the systems of the universe, adorned the nearest sky with secure lights. Everything in the heavens and the earth willingly submit themselves to Him, while you, a mere single inhabitant on earth, arrogantly refuses to accept the truth. The presentation of these facts in the chapter typically shakes every heart: *That is the Lord of the worlds! And He made on it firm mountains from above it and He blessed it and ordained its subsistence within it in four days equally for the ones who ask.* (41:9-41:10)

The chapter begins here by mentioning the fact of creating the earth in two days and comments on this first stage of creation before telling us the rest of the story. The comment says: It is He who is the Lord of all the worlds, and yet you claim others to be His equals when it is He who created the earth you live on. How absurd and ghastly! We need to dwell for a moment on every phrase of this Quranic text before we turn our attention to the mention of the heavens in the next sign.

Mountains: *And He made on it firm mountains from above it and He blessed it and ordained its subsistence within it in four days equally for the ones who ask* (41:10) are often described in the Quran as being firm, and in some instances the purpose of their positioning is that they prevent the earth from shaking or swaying. This means that the mountains are firm in themselves and stabilize the earth, ensuring that it remains well balanced. In times gone by, people used to think that the earth was based on firm foundations. They are told today that the earth is nothing more than a small ball that floats in a

great expanse, without support. They may be scared when they listen to such words for the first time, and some of them may begin to look warily askance, worried that the earth might shake or fall in deep space. Let such people be reassured. God's hand holds the heavens and the earth, preventing their disappearance. Should they vanish, no one else would hold them in place. Such people should banish worrying thoughts, because the laws that govern the universe are set in operation by the Almighty who holds sway over all things.

What is meant here by the application of God s design is that it was His will to do so. The word: 'then, may not signify a chronological order; rather, it may mean turning to something higher. In our sense, the sky is higher. Then, He applied His design to the sky, which was but smoked: *Again, He turned His attention to the heaven while it was smoke and He said to it and to the earth: Approach both of you willing or unwilling.* (41:11) Scientists believe that before the existence of stars there was what they call the nebula, a cloud of gas, or rather, smoke.

The sign then adds a statement expressing an awesome truth: *They both said: We approached as ones who are obedient.* (41:11) This is a remarkable reference to the fact of the universe being under God's control. It submits to its Creator and willingly does His bidding.

Again the sky: *They both said: We approached as ones who are obedient.* (41:12) nearest to the earth can have several meanings. It could be the nearest galaxy to us..... It could mean something else that comprises stars and planets that shine for us like lights. These skies are made secure from devilment, as can be understood from other references in the Quran. Quite what this entails is beyond our grasp and hence our knowledge is limited to what the Quran tells us.

Can anyone other than Him design all this? Can anyone other than the Almighty who knows all control the whole universe and conduct its affairs?

Given this is the state of the entire universe, what position should be assigned to those who reject God's Oneness and attribute partners to Him? How should their reckless arrogance be requited? (41:13-41:18)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer questions, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

Lesson 61(3). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or 'to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

Quranic Chapter 41: They Were Explained Distinctly (al-Fussilat) Signs 41:19-41:25

Makkah: *On a Day when will be assembled*
the enemies of God to the fire,
then, they will be marching in rank (41:19)
until when they drew near it.
Witness will be borne against them
by their having the ability to hear,
and by their sight and by their skins
as to what they had been doing. (41:20)
And they will say to their skins: Why bore you witness against us?
They will say: We were given speech by God
Who gave speech to all things.
And He created you the first time
and to Him you will be returned. (41:21)
And you had not been covering yourselves
so that witness be borne against you
by your having the ability to hear
or by your sight
or by your skins but that you thought that God knows
not much of what you do. (41:22)
And that your thought,
which you thought about your Lord has dealt destruction to you.
Then, you became among the ones who are losers. (41:23)
Then, even if they endure patiently,
yet the fire will be the place of lodging for them.

And if they ask for favor,
yet they will not be of the ones to whom favor is shown. (41:24)
And We allotted for them comrades
who were made to appear pleasing to them
whatever was before them and whatever was behind them.
And the saying was realized against them in communities
that passed away before them of jinn and humankind.
Truly, they, they had been ones who are losers. (41:25)

COMMENTARY°

On the day when God's enemies will be gathered together before the fire, they will be driven onwards until, when they reach it, their ears, their eyes and their very skins will bear witness against them, speaking of what they used to do [on earth]. (41:19-41:24)

As God so commands their own organs, they are overwhelmed and respond in complete obedience: *And they will say to their skins: Why bore you witness against us?* (41:21) They will put the facts clearly before them, attempting to hide nothing: *They will say: We were given speech by God Who gave speech to all things.* (41:21) It is He who made tongues the organs of speech. He can easily give speech to other organs. He gave speech to all things, making them speak and explain things as they are. *And He created you the first time and to Him you will be returned.* (41:21) From Him all originate, and to Him all shall return. There is no escape from His authority, neither at the beginning, nor at the end. Their minds used to deny this; now their skins state it to them in an undeniable way.

The remainder of the comments may be a continuation of what their own organs say to them, or equally it may be a comment on this amazing situation: *And you had not been covering yourselves so that witness be borne against you by your having the ability to hear or by your sight or by your skins but that you thought that God knows not much of what you do.* (41:22) It never occurred to you that these, your organs, could rebel against you. In fact, you could not have hidden yourselves from your organs even if you had tried. *And you had not been covering yourselves so that witness be borne against you by your having the ability to hear or by your sight or by your skins but that you thought that God knows not much of what you do.* (41:22) Your foolish and ignorant thoughts deceived you, leading you to hell: *And that your thought, which you thought about your Lord has dealt destruction to you. Then, you became among the ones who are losers.* (41:23)

We then have the final comment: *Then, even if they endure pa-*

tiently, yet the fire will be the place of lodging for them.(41:24) What an absurd situation. Patience now entails enduring the fire. It is no longer the patience that withstands adversity in order to achieve a cherished goal and earn reward from God. It is a sort of patience that incurs the penalty of hell where they abide: *And if they ask for favor, yet they will not be of the ones to whom favor is shown.* (41:24)

We have assigned to the ungrateful companions who made their past and present seem goodly to them, but the sentence has fallen due upon them together with bygone generations of jinn and humans. They will indeed be lost. *And We allotted for them comrades who were made to appear pleasing to them whatever was before them and whatever was behind them. And the saying was realized against them in communities that passed away before them of jinn and humankind.* (41:25)

They are too proud to worship God when they are subject to His power. Their own hearts lead them to ruin and ultimately to God s punishment. God allocates them wicked companions who whisper in their ears, assuring them that all the evil they see around them is good, and who present their own bad deeds to them in a fair appearance so that they do not see how foul these are. Perhaps the worst thing that can happen to a person is that he loses his balanced judgment and can no longer see how foul or deviant his actions are. In this way, he perceives everything he does as good and fair. Inevitably, though, this leads him to ruin. When the ungrateful reach this stage, they find themselves among the lost herd of past communities that suffered Gods punishment: *Truly, they, they had been ones who are losers.* (41:25)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINKING ALOUD

Thinking aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome ob-

stacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words),
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.
4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

LESSON 61(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD FAIRNESS (RIGHT-MINDED)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view. We might ask ourselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 41: THEY WERE EXPLAINED DISTINCTLY (AL-FUSSILAT) SIGNS 41:26-41:32

Makkah: *And those who are ungrateful said:*
Hear not this, the Quran,
but talk idly about it while it is being recited
so that perhaps you will prevail. (41:26)
We will cause those who were ungrateful
to experience a severe punishment.
And We will give recompense to them for the bad deeds
of what they had been doing. (41:27)
That is the recompense of the enemies of God:
The fire. For them is the infinite abode in it,
recompense because they had been negating Our signs. (41:28)
And those who were ungrateful would say:

Our Lord! Cause us to see those who caused us to go astray
among jinn and humankind.
We will lay them both beneath our feet
so that they become of the lowest. (41:29)
Truly, those who said: Our Lord is God, again,
they went straight, the angels come forth to them:
Neither fear nor feel remorse, but rejoice in the Gardens
which you had been promised. (41:30)
We were protectors in this present life and in the world to come.
And you will have in it that for which your souls lust
and in it is what you call for, (41:31)
a hospitality from the Forgiving, Compassionate. (41:32)

COMMENTARY°

One aspect of what bad companions persuaded them to do was to fight the Quran when they realized how powerful was its argument: *And those who are ungrateful said: Hear not this, the Quran, but talk idly about it while it is being recited so that perhaps you will prevail.* (41:26) The elders of the Quraysh in Makkah used to counsel each other to do just this, and they also persuaded the masses to do the same. They realized that they were no match for the Quran, its beauty, power and eloquence.They claimed that it cast a magical spell over their minds and ruined their lives, causing division between a person and his children or a man and his wife. It is true that the Quran causes such division, but only through Gods criterion that separates faith from unfaith, and guidance from going astray. The Quran wins people's hearts so that they no longer value any other bond as the do their bond of faith.

In response to their singular remark they are given a stern warning: (41:27-41:28) We soon see them suffering in hell and see how the deluded are so angry with the ones who led them astray. They realize now that it was they who led them to their fate when they persuaded them that their foul deeds were fair and goodly. *And those who were ungrateful would say: Our Lord! Cause us to see those who caused us to go astray among jinn and humankind. We will lay them both beneath our feet so that they become of the lowest.* (41:29) They are not merely angry with them; they want to exact revenge: What a contrast with their close friendly ties in this present world.

A different type of bond is that which the believers have. These are the ones who take the right path of endeavour to do only what is good. God assigns to them angels to give them reassurance, bring them the good news of their prospects in heaven and to be their

guardians, both in the life of this world and the world to come: (41:30-41:32)

To remain steadfast in pursuing what is entailed by the declaration, Our Lord is God,' means to keep it alive in one's conscience, to give proof to it in ones life and to discharge the responsibilities it imposes. This is serious, important and hard work. Therefore, it deserves the abundant grace God grants them: a friendly relation with angels who, as God tells us, reassure the believers with sweet words: (41:30-40:31) They also describe heaven to them, knowing that they will have there all that they desire and is pleasing to them. They make it even more inviting and pleasing: *A hospitality from the Forgiving, Compassionate.* (41:32) It is a gift from God and a place assigned to them through His forgiveness and endless mercy.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
- Sequences or patterns that emerge?
- Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address
- What questions remain to be answered?

Summary of critical thinking:

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without

prejudice

- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because

I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

Lesson 61(5). Critical Thinking Strategy Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

How is Point of View (Frame of Reference, Perspective) Defined?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

Quranic Chapter 41: They Were Explained Distinctly (al-Fussilat) Signs 41:33-41:44

Makkah: *And who has a fairer saying*
than he who called to God
and did as one in accord with morality, and said:
I am one of the ones who submit to God. (41:33)
Not on the same level are benevolence or the evil deed.

Drive back with what is fairer.
*Then, behold he who between **you** and between him was enmity*
as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend. (41:34)
And none will be in receipt of it but those who endured patiently.
And none will be in receipt of it but
the possessor of a sublime allotment. (41:35)
But if Satan sows enmity, sowing enmity in thee,
then, seek refuge in God.
Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (41:36)
And of His signs are the nighttime and the daytime
and the sun and the moon.
Prostrate not yourselves to the sun nor to the moon,
but prostrate yourselves to God Who created both of them
if it is He you had been worshiping. (41:37)
But if they grew arrogant,
*then, those who are with **your** Lord glorify Him*
during the nighttime and the daytime
and they never grow weary. (41:38)
*And among His signs are that **you** see the earth*
as that which is humble. But when
We caused water to descend to it, it quivered and swelled.
Truly, He Who gives life to it is
the One Who Gives Life to the dead.
Truly, He is Powerful over everything. (41:39)
Truly, those who blaspheme Our signs are not hidden from Us.
Is he who is cast down into the fire better off,
or he who approaches as one who is safe
on the Day of Resurrection?
Do as you willed. Truly, He is Seeing of what you do. (41:40)
Truly, those who were ungrateful for the Remembrance
when it drew near them are not hidden from Us.
And, truly, it is a mighty Book! (41:41)
Falsehood approaches it not from before it,
nor from behind it.
It is a sending down successively
from The Wise, The Worthy of Praise. (41:42)
*Nothing is said to **you** but what, truly,*
was said to the Messengers before thee.
*Truly, **your** Lord is, certainly, the Possessor of Forgiveness,*
and the Possessor of Painful Repayment. (41:43)
And if We made this a non-Arabic Recitation,
they would have said:

Why were His signs not explained distinctly:
A non-Arab tongue and an Arab!
Say: It is a guidance for those who believe and a healing.
And as for those who believed not,
there is a heaviness in their ears
and blindness in their hearts.
Those are given notice from a far place. (41:44)

COMMENTARY°

An advocate of the divine faith must put his addressees face to face with reality. He has to confront people s deviation, ignorance, inflated appreciation of their own deeds, as also their instinctive abhorrence of being told that they are wrong. He is opposed by people s determination to serve their own interests and maintain positions that might be threatened by the principle of equality of all people, which is basic to divine faith. To face all this as part of the task of advocating divine faith is indeed very hard. Yet it is something truly great: Who speaks better than he who calls people to God, does what is right, and says: I am one of those who have surrendered themselves to God. *And who has a fairer saying than he who called to God and did as one in accord with morality, and said: I am one of the ones who submit to God.* (41:33)

Taking all this into account, a word of advocacy, calling on people to believe in God's Oneness, is the best word that may be said on earth. It is at the forefront of good words that are raised to God in heaven, provided it is endorsed by good action and confirmed with self surrender to Him. Thus, such advocacy becomes pure and sincere, free of self interest. The advocate's aim is merely to discharge his duty by presenting the divine message. Once he has discharged his duty, he should not care whether his words are rejected or whether people are rude or boastful in their denials. He is merely presenting what is good, which puts him in the higher position. Anyone who opposes him entertains evil, and, as such, is far below an advocate of God: *Not on the same level are benevolence or the evil deed. Drive back with what is fairer.* (41:34) Advocates of the divine message cannot return evil with its like. A good deed cannot be equal in its impact or value to a bad one. Patient perseverance, forbearance and rising above the desire to return evil with its like eventually brings people back to their senses. Their earlier hardness softens and they become friendly: *Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.*(41:34)

Such forbearance, which requires us to repel an evil deed with

a good one, rising above feelings of anger, is a sublime grade which cannot be attained by everyone. It does not merely require patience in the face of adversity; it is also a blessing which God bestows on His servants who try hard to achieve it: *And none will be in receipt of it but those who endured patiently. And none will be in receipt of it but the possessor of a sublime allotment.* (41:35) We say that it is a sublime grade; in fact it is so sublime that Muhammad, God s messenger, who never showed anger for anything personal, yet nothing could stand to his anger when it was for God's sake, is told, as indeed every advocate of the Divine message is told: *But if Satan sows enmity, sowing enmity in you, then, seek refuge in God. Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (41:36) Anger may open the way to Satan's prompting who will then try to persuade us to be impatient and unforgiving when others resort to evil. In such a situation, we will do well to seek refuge with God against Satan. This is the best shelter against Satan's efforts to exploit our anger.

CLEAR UNIVERSAL SIGNS

Among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun or the moon; but prostrate yourselves before God, who has created them, if it is Him you really worship. *And of His signs are the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not yourselves to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate yourselves to God Who created both of them if it is He you had been worshiping.* (41:37)

The sign also points to a particular aspect of deviation. Some people exaggerated the importance of the sun and the moon, and thus deviated from the truth. They worshipped them in the hope of drawing nearer to God through worshipping the most beautiful of His creatures. The Quran puts them back on track, removing their confusion and saying to them that if they want to worship God they must not prostrate themselves before the sun and the moon. Instead, they must prostrate themselves before God who created them. It is the Creator alone whom they, and all creatures, should worship.

If they persist in their arrogance, it will make no difference. Others offer worship to God in all humility: *But if they grew arrogant, then, those who are with your Lord glorify Him during the nighttime and the daytime and they never grow weary.* (41:38) The first creatures we think of as being referred to by the expression, 'those who are with your Lord,' are the angels.

The earth, their mother from which they originate and to which they return, stands humble before God as it receives life from His

hand. On the surface of the earth they are no more like ants; and from the earth they derive all their food and drink. This earth, however, presents a different attitude from theirs: "Another of His signs is this: you see the earth lying desolate, but when We send down rain water upon it, it stirs and swells [with life]. He who brings it to life will surely give life to the dead. He has power over all things: *And among His signs are that **you** have seen the earth as that which is humble. But when We caused water to descend to it, it quivered and swelled. Truly, He Who gives life to it is the One Who Gives Life to the dead. Truly, He is Powerful over everything.* (41:39)

The first description, *hamidah*, occurs in the following sign: *O humanity! If you had been in doubt about the Upraising, truly, We created you from earth dust and, again, from seminal fluid and, again, from a clot and, again, from tissue that was formed and that was not formed so that we make it manifest to you. We establish in the wombs whom We will for a term, that which is determined. And, again, We bring you out as infant children and, again, you may reach the coming of age. And among you there is he whom death will call to itself. And among you there is he who is returned to the most wretched lifetime so that he knows not anything after some knowledge. And **you** have seen the earth as that which is lifeless. Yet when We caused water to descend on it, it quivered and it swelled and put forth every lovely pair.* (22: 5)

Khashi'ah has a totally different context: *And of His signs are the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not yourselves to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate yourselves to God Who created both of them if it is He you had been worshiping. But if they grew arrogant, then, those who are with **your** Lord glorify Him during the nighttime and the daytime and they never grow weary. And among His signs are that **you** have seen the earth as that which is humble. But when We caused water to descend to it, it quivered and swelled. Truly, He Who gives life to it is the One Who Gives Life to the dead. Truly, He is Powerful over everything.* (41:37-41:39)

The comment at the end of the sign refers to bringing the dead back to life, citing the earth as an example:*And among His signs are that **you** have seen the earth as that which is humble. But when We caused water to descend to it, it quivered and swelled. Truly, He Who gives life to it is the One Who Gives Life to the dead. Truly, He is Powerful over everything.*(41:39) This image is frequently used in the Quran as an example of how the dead are resurrected on the Day of Judgement. Indeed, the reviving of the earth points to the facts of resurrection and God's limitless power. The image of the earth stir-

ring with life is close to our hearts, touching them before it addresses our minds. Moreover, when life springs in what is dead it gives a subtle feeling of the power behind it. The Quran addresses human nature in its own language, using the shortest way.

HOW TO DESCRIBE UNFAITH

Against this backdrop of universal signs, the chapter condemns and warns those who deny God's signs and dispute His revelations:

Those who distort the meaning of Our revelations are not hidden from Us. Who is in a better state: he who is cast into the fire, or he who shall come safe on Resurrection Day? Do what you will; He sees all that you do. *Truly, those who blaspheme Our signs are not hidden from Us.* (41:40)

The warning begins in an implicit but fearful way, stating that such people are not hidden from Us. God is fully aware of them. They will have to account for what they perpetrate, no matter how they try to distort meanings or resort to deception. They may think that they can escape God's punishment in the same way as their deception spared them accountability before human authority. However, the warning is then stated clearly: *Is he who is cast down into the fire better off, or he who approaches as one who is safe on the Day of Resurrection?* (41:40) This puts before them the prospect that lies ahead. It is they who will be cast in the fire, in contrast with the believers who will be safe on the Day of Resurrection. The sign concludes with another implicit warning: *Do as you willed. Truly, He is Seeing of what you do.* (41:40) Terrible indeed is the fate of the one who is given the freedom to do what he wills and who distorts the meaning of God's revelations when God sees all that he does.

The chapter then speaks about those who specifically deny the Quranic revelations, describing the Quran as a sublime book, admitting no falsehood: (41:41-41:44)

How could falsehood touch or creep into this book when it comes from God who is the truth absolute? It is a book which clearly presents the word of truth, one that is permanently linked to the truth that ensures the proper conduct of the affairs of the universe. How could falsehood come into it when it is a sublime book, given protection by God who undertakes to keep it intact: *Truly, We, We sent down the Remembrance and, truly, We are ones who guard it.* (15:9)

Anyone who looks carefully at the Quran will find in it the truth it has come to establish. We find this truth in its spirit and its text: it is simple, natural, reassuring, and addresses human nature in its to-

tality with profound effect. *Falsehood approaches it not from before it, nor from behind it. It is a sending down successively from The Wise, The Worthy of Praise.* (41:42) Wisdom is clearly apparent in its structure, directives, the way it was revealed, and in its direct address to the human heart. God who revealed the Quran is worthy of praise. There is in the Quran much that makes our hearts eager to express its praise of God.

The section then establishes a bond between the Quran and earlier revelations, and between the Prophet Muhammad and all messengers sent before his time. It is all one message and one faith. Likewise, it is received in the same way: the same rejection and the same objections. Yet it establishes one bond, making one family which endures the same experience and feels the same pain. Ultimately, it follows the same way, leading to the same goal. It is certainly true: *Nothing is said to you but what, truly, was said to the Messengers before thee.* (41:43) The impact this fact can have when it becomes firmly established in the minds of believers is truly profound.

Included in what was said to God's messengers, and to Muhammad, the last among them, was: *Truly, your Lord is, certainly, the Possessor of Forgiveness, and the Possessor of Painful Repayment.* (41:43) Thus balance is emphasized. A believer then hopes for God's grace and forgiveness, never despairing that these will be bestowed on him by God's will, but always fearing to incur God's punishment. Striking the right balance is an essential characteristic of the Quranic message.

The section then reminds the Arabs of God's blessing by making Arabic the language of the Quran. At the same time, it refers to their contentious disputes and rejection. (41:44) They do not listen to it in its Arabic form. In fact, they feared it because it addressed their Arab nature in their own language. Therefore, they urged each other to adopt this strategy: (41:26) Had God expressed His message in a different tongue, they would still have objected to it, calling for it to be put clearly in Arabic. They would object even if part of it were in Arabic and the other part in a different language. Their notion, therefore, was to argue in all cases and all situations.

The truth that emerges from this argument about the form given to the message is that this book provides guidance and healing to believers. Believers' hearts appreciate its nature and truth, receive its guidance and benefit from its healing. Those who do not believe remain in confusion, and their hearts do not feel the cheerfulness of its message. Therefore, it becomes like deafness to their ears and blind-

ness in their eyes. They recognize nothing, because they are far removed from the nature of this book and its address: *Say: It is a guidance for those who believe and a healing. And as for those who believed not, there is a heaviness in their ears and blindness in their hearts. Those are given notice from a far place.* (41:44)

We feel the truth of this statement in every community and generation. Some people are profoundly affected by the Quran. It transforms them, giving them a different type of life, and enables them to achieve miracles within themselves and in their environment. Others feel this Quran too heavy for their hearts and ears. When they listen to it, they only grow more deaf and blind. The Quran never changes; It is hearts that are different.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What do you believe? How do you see things?
What reasons seem most persuasive to them?
What theory do you think best explains what their teachers are trying to explain?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

LESSON 61(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment

that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 41: THEY WERE EXPLAINED DISTINCTLY (AL-FUSSILAT)

SIGNS 41:45-41:54

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book.*
Then, they were at variance about it.
And if it were not for a Word that had preceded from your Lord,
it would have been decided between them.
But, truly, they are in uncertainty,
ones in grave doubt about it. (41:45)
Whoever did as one in accord with morality, it is for himself.
And whoever did evil, it is against himself,
and your Lord is not unjust to His servants. (41:46)
To Him is returned the knowledge of the Hour.
No fruits go forth from its sheath
and no female conceives or brings forth offspring
but with His knowledge.
And on a Day He will cry out to them:
Where are My ascribed associates? They would say:
We proclaimed to You that none of us
was a witness to that. (41:47)
Gone astray from them is what they had been calling to before.
They would think that there is for them no asylum. (41:48)
The human being grows not weary of supplicating for good,
but if the worst afflicted him, then,
he is hopeless, desperate. (41:49)

And, truly, if We caused him to experience mercy from Us,
after some tribulation afflicted him, he will, certainly, say:
This is due to me. And I think not that the Hour
will be one that arises,
but if I were returned to my Lord,
truly, with Him will be the fairer for me.
Then, certainly, We will tell those who were ungrateful
of what they did.
And We will cause them to experience
a harsh punishment. (41:50)
And when We were gracious to the human being,
he turned aside, withdrew aside.
But when the worst afflicted him,
then, he is full of supplication. (41:51)
Say: Considered you that even though it had been from God,
again, you were ungrateful for it.
Who is one who goes more astray
than he who is in wide breach? (41:52)
We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons
and within themselves until it becomes clear to them
that it is The Truth.
*Suffices not **your** Lord that, truly,*
He is Witness over all things? (41:53)
They are hesitant about the meeting with their Lord.
Truly, He is who One Who Encloses everything. (41:54)

COMMENTARY°

We feel the truth of this statement in every community and generation. Some people are profoundly affected by the Quran. It transforms them, giving them a different type of life, and enables them to achieve miracles within themselves and in their environment. Others feel this Quran too heavy for their hearts and ears. When they listen to it, they only grow more deaf and blind. The Quran never changes; it is hearts that are different.

A reference follows to Moses and his book, and how his people differed in their attitude to the Quran. *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book. Then, they were at variance about it. And if it were not for a Word that had preceded from **your** Lord, it would have been decided between them. But, truly, they are in uncertainty, ones in grave doubt about it*: (41:45) Likewise, He has decreed that judgment on the question of His final message will be similarly deferred. He thus lets people do as they like, and they will ultimately receive what their

action merits: *Whoever did as one in accord with morality, it is for himself. And whoever did evil, it is against himself, and your Lord is not unjust to His servants.* (41:46)

This message proclaims that humanity as attained maturity. This makes us responsible for our choices. Such responsibility is based on individual accountability. Therefore, each one is free to choose, knowing that *your Lord is not unjust to His servants.*

As judgment is deferred to the Day of Judgment, the chapter makes clear that knowledge of its timing belongs to God alone. God's knowledge is described by highlighting some of its aspects in an inspiring way. This serves as a prelude to a scene from the Day of Judgement when the ungrateful are questioned, and their answers are reported: *To Him is returned the knowledge of the Hour. No fruits go forth from its sheath and no female conceives or brings forth offspring but with His knowledge.* . (41:47)

Our mind then imagines those who have gone astray, as they stand before God, realizing that His knowledge encompasses everything, no matter how well concealed it is. They face the questioning: *And on a Day He will cry out to them: Where are My ascribed associates? They would say: We proclaimed to You that none of us was a witness to that.* (41:47) They will declare that none of them will then claim any partners to God.

They will know nothing of their previous claims. They will realize that there is no escape from their fate. They will forget their past and think only of their present situation. *Gone astray from them is what they had been calling to before. They would think that there is for them no asylum.* (41:48)

Such is the day about which they take no precautions despite the fact that we are eager to achieve every good thing and fear what brings us harm. At this point, the chapter shows us our naked reality, without cover or disguise.

Yet should God grant him something of His grace after he has suffered some harm, he will be so elated that he will forget how this grace was given to him, and he will not give due thanks. On the contrary, he will consider that he has deserved this grace and that he should have it forever. He will even dismiss the Day of Judgment thinking that it will never come: *Then, certainly, We will tell those who were ungrateful of what they did.* (41:50) He will boast of his own position, thinking that he deserves favoritism with God. He will even go further than this, denying the Day of Judgment and, thus, disbelieving in God. Nevertheless, he thinks that should he be returned to God, he will have a secure position with Him. This betrays

no small degree of arrogance. Here the chapter issues a suitable warning to those who are so arrogant: *And We will cause them to experience a harsh punishment.* (41:50)

Now that they face their own naked reality, the question is put to them about what they would do if it is proven that the message they deny is actually God's own message? Are they really prepared to expose themselves to the consequences of such rejection: *Say: Considered you that even though it had been from God, again, you were ungrateful for it. Who is one who goes more astray than he who is in wide breach?* (41:52) It is a possibility to be reckoned with. Have they taken any steps to deal with this should it come true?

This is the final note in the chapter, and it is a profound one. It is a promise by God to humanity to put before them some of the secrets in the universe and some of the secrets working within themselves. These are His signs. They will thus be able to realize that this faith, this book and its discourse are the truth. Indeed it is, for it is all from God, and whose word is truer than God's? And God s promise has certainly come true. Over the fourteen centuries that followed this promise He has made many of His signs in the universe and within us known to us, and He continues to show us more of these every day.

Yet we have not reached the end of the road. God's promise remains true and valid: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) Early signs of the fulfilment of the last part of this promise have come to be noticed since the early years of the twentieth century. People are flocking from different parts of the world to join the camp of faith. Many are coming forward through material science. Numerous others are coming from far away, despite the great tide of atheism that almost drowned the earth in the past. This tide of atheism is now on the retreat, although to all appearances it seems still to be rising. By the close of this twentieth century it may almost have disappeared, by God's will. For, God's promise will certainly come true: *Suffices not your Lord that, truly, He is Witness over all things?* (41:53) It is He who has made this promise, and it is He who knows the truth and is witness to it.

They are hesitant about the meeting with their Lord. (41:54) It is because of their doubt that they will meet their Lord that people continue to perpetrate what they do. Yet the promise is true, no doubt. *Truly, He is who One Who Encloses everything.* (41:54) How can they escape meeting Him when He encompasses all?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLSS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, nc of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

EPILOGUE: DHU AL-HIJJA: THE MESSENGER VISITS THE FAIRS AND THE ASSEMBLINGS OF PILGRIMS

The time of pilgrimage alone afforded Muhammad a wider field. That interval of universal amnesty was turned (as it had been before) to careful account in visiting and exhorting the various tribes that flocked to Makkah and the adjacent fiars. Thus the Prophet used to visit the great assemblages at Ukaz and other places, as well as the pilgrim encampments at Makkah and Mina. On these occasions he warned his countrymen against idolatry, invited them to the worship and service of the true God, and promised them not only Paradise hereafter, but prosperity and dominion here on earth, if they would believe.

No one responded to his call. Abu Lahab would dog his crying aloud: Believe him not, he is a lying renegade!

The strangers, too, would reply to Muhammad in taunting words as these: Your own kindred and people should know you best. Why have they have cast you off? So the Prophet, dispirited and grieved, would look upwards and make complaint: O Lord, if You will, it would not be thus!

Al-Wahidi says that Muhammad frequented the three great fairs in the neighborhood every year. There is some foreshadowing of the victories of Islam in his supposed address. This was the alleged drift: O people Say, there is no god but God. You will be benefitted thereby. You will gain the rule of all Arabia, and of the foreign lands, and when you die you will reign as kings in Paradise. There would be numerous Christians and Jews at the fairs, though they did not, of course, attend the Makkan pilgrimage.

And behind him there followed a squint-eyed man, fat, having flowing locks on both sides, and clothed in raiment of fine Aden stuff. And when Muhammad had finished his preaching, this man would begin to address them, saying: This fellow's only object is to draw you away from your gods and jinn, to his fancied revelation wherefore follow him not, neither listen unto him. And who should this be but his uncle Abu Lahab.[7]

The plain fact is that the Quraysh elders did not for an instant believe that Muhammad, whom they knew very well, was a sorcerer or a liar, as they alleged. Their allegations were simply propaganda tools aimed at misleading people. The Quraysh elders recognized that the truth Muhammad preached would do away with all their privileges; privileges that relied on deception and false values. On

one occasion the Quraysh elders held a conference on how to counter the effects of what the Prophet said to people, and how to turn pilgrims from other tribes away from him. It is useful to quote this again here. Al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, a distinguished figure among the Quraysh chaired that conference:

In his opening address, al-Walid said: Now that the pilgrimage season is approaching, people will start arriving from all over the place. They must have heard about your friend [meaning the Prophet]. So you had better agree what to say when you are asked about him. We must guard against having too many opinions, particularly if they are mutually contradictory.

When his audience asked his advice as to what they should say, he preferred to listen to their suggestions first. What concerned al-Walid most was that the opinion they would come out with should take account of the fact that Muhammad was asking people to listen to the Quran, God's message, expressed in beautiful language and a powerful style. The description they would attach to Muhammad should also account for his persuasive, eloquent argument.

Descriptions like 'fortune-teller', 'madman', 'poet' and 'magician' were proposed. None was considered convincing by al-Walid, who pointed out weaknesses in each, one after the other. He told his people that what Muhammad said was nothing like what was said by such men. When nobody could suggest anything more plausible, they asked al-Walid if he had a better suggestion.

He said: What Muhammad says is certainly beautiful. It is like a date tree with solid roots and rich fruit. Every one of these suggestions you have made is bound to he recognized as false. The least disputable one is to claim that he is a magician who repeats magic words which make a man fall out with his father, mother, wife and clan.

They all approved of al-Walid's suggestion and set about preparing their propaganda campaign to make the pilgrims wary of Muhammad and unwilling to meet him.

Such was the scheming of the Quraysh elders and such was their agreed strategy whereby they would accuse the Prophet of sorcery and lying. They said this deliberately even though they knew it was all a lie. They were fully aware that Muhammad was neither a sorcerer nor a liar.

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Aqqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Aqqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'a* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

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(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

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21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

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35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

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2. Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.
3. Ali Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima*.
4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*.
5. Ibid.
6. See Introduction.
7. See Ibn Hisham.

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 9

Laleh Bakhtiar

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in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

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THE YEAR 9 OF THE REVELATION
MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 30, 5 BH
SEPTEMBER 8, 617-AUGUST 28, 618 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 9, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 5 BH/September 8, 617 CE-August 28, 618 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards**, **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
- THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
- DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
- EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
- DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
- CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
- CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
- READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
- LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
- PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
- REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
- REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
- DEEP QUESTIONING

4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
- DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
- ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
- DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
- GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
- ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
- MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
- RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
- NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
- COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facil-

itates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the

act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike

the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge

tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on compre-

hension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 9*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 9* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 9*, we begin with Lesson 62 which is the 62nd Quranic Chapter 42 revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 43, 44, 45, 46, 51 and, finally, Lesson 68 and Quranic Chapter 88.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 62(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO- OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists (Salafists) as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists (Salafists) today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to

radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior

to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

HISTORY

RENOUNCING PROTECTION FROM IDOLATERS:
UTHMAN IBN MAZUN RENOUNCES AL-WALID'S PROTECTION

Salih ibn Ibrahim ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Auf told me from one

who had got it from Uthman saying: When Uthman ibn Mazun saw the misery in which the Messenger's companions were living while he lived night and day under al-Walid's protection he said: It is more than I can bear that I should be perfectly safe under the protection of a polytheist while my friends and co-religionists are afflicted and distressed for God's sake.

So he went to al-Walid and renounced his protection.

He asked: Why, nephew? Can it be that one of my people has injured you?

He answered: No, but I want to be under God's protection: I don't want to ask for anyone else's.

Al-Walid asked him to come to the mosque and renounce his protection publicly as he had given it publicly.

When they got there al-Walid said: Uthman here has come to renounce my protection.

Uthman said: True. I have found him loyal and honorable in his protection, but I don't want to ask anyone but God for protection; so I give him back his promise!

So saying he went away.

[On another occasion when] Labid ibn Rabia ibn Malik ibn Jafar ibn Kilab was in an assembly of the Quraysh when Uthman was present he recited a verse:

Everything but God is vain.
Uthman said: True! But when he went on:
And everything lovely must inevitably cease.

Uthman cried: You lie! The joy of Paradise will never cease.

Labid said: O men of Quraysh your friends never used to be annoyed thus. Since when has this sort of thing happened among you?

One of the audience answered: This is one of those louts with Muhammad. They have abandoned our religion. Take no notice of what he says.

Uthman objected so energetically that the matter became serious. Whereupon that man rose to his feet and hit him and blackened his eye..

Now al-Walid was watching what happened to Uthman and he said: O nephew, your eye need not have suffered this had you remained in sure protection.

Uthman answered: Nay by God my good eye needs what happened to its fellow for God's sake, and I am under the protection of One who is stronger and more powerful than you, O Abu Abdu Shams.

Al-Walid only said: Come, nephew, my protection is always open to you.

But he declined it.[1]

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA)
SIGNS 42:1-42:9

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (42:1)
Ayn Sin Qaf. (42:2)
Thus, He reveals to ***you*** *and to those who were before* ***you,***
God is The Almighty, The Wise. (42:3)
To Him belongs whatever is in
and on the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.
And He is The Lofty, The Sublime. (42:4)
The heavens are about to split asunder from above them
while the angels glorify the praise of their Lord
and ask forgiveness for whoever is on the earth.
Truly, God, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate. (42:5)
As for those who took to themselves other than Him as protectors,
God is Guardian over them and ***you*** *are not*
a Trustee over them. (42:6)
And, thus, We revealed to ***you*** *an Arabic Recitation*
that ***you*** *will warn the Mother of the Towns*
and whoever is around it.
And warn of the Day of Amassing.
There is no doubt about it. A group of people
will be in the Garden and a group of people
will be in the blaze. (42:7)
And if God willed, He would have made them one community
but He causes to enter whom He wills into His mercy.
And the ones who are unjust,
there is not for them either a protector or a helper. (42:8)
Or they took other than Him to themselves as protectors.
But God, He alone is The Protector. And He gives life to the dead.
And He is Powerful over everything. (42:9)

COMMENTARY°

We spoke previously about the separate letters that begin several chapters. Here we have five of these, followed by the sign saying: *Thus, He reveals to* ***you*** *and to those who were before* ***you,*** *God is The Almighty, The Wise.* (42:3) Thus, in this way and following this pattern, God sent down His revelations to you and to messengers before you. It is made of words and phrases composed of those letters

known to people. People know these words and phrases and grasp their meanings, but they cannot compose anything like it out of the letters they know so well.

The section then adds other attributes belonging to God: *To Him belongs whatever is in and on the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And He is The Lofty, The Sublime.* (42:4) People are often deluded, thinking that they own something of what they have in their hands; it appears to be at their disposal and they use it for their own benefit. Theirs, however, is not true ownership. The true owner is God who creates, brings to life and deals death. He alone can give people whatever He wishes, withhold, take away or replace what He chooses. He is *The Lofty, The Sublime.* His ownership is marked by His supremacy, making everything else appear lowly and inferior.

When this truth is well established in our minds, we know to whom we should turn to request what we wish for good things, provisions and earnings. *The heavens are about to split asunder from above them while the angels glorify the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for whoever is on the earth. Truly, God, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.* (42:5)

This section continues with a reference to those who take for themselves protectors other than God, when it has become clear that no one else in the universe can give any protection. In this way, He makes it clear to His Messenger that he is not responsible for them. It is God who watches over them and He will deal with them as He likes: *As for those who took to themselves other than Him as protectors, God is Guardian over them and you are not a Trustee over them.*(42:6)

So We have revealed to you a discourse in the Arabic tongue in order that you may warn the Mother City and all who dwell around it; that you may forewarn them of the Day of the Gathering, of which there is no doubt, when some shall be in paradise and some in the blazing fire. Had God so willed, He could have made them all one single community, but He admits to His grace whoever He will, whereas the wrongdoers will have no one to protect them and no one to support them. Have they chosen protectors other than Him? God alone is the Protector of all; He is the One who gives life to the dead; and He has power over all things. (42:7-42:9)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN

Outline: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Prove: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

Relate: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

Review: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

State: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

Details: and usually illustrations or examples, may be omitted.

Summarize: When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

Trace: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?

Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?

Why did we think that way?

Where did we get these ideas?

How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?

What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•

Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.

Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.

Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.

Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•
Why was she willing to do this? Was she scared?
What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?
Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

Those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them. We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin! For them is a despised punishment. (3:178)

LESSON 62(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA) SIGNS 42:10-42:19

Makkah: *Whatever thing about which*
you were at variance in it,
then, its determination is with God.
That is God, my Lord
in Whom I put my trust
and to Him I am penitent, (42:10)
One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth.
He made for you spouses of yourselves and of the flocks, pairs
by which means He makes you numerous in it.
There is not like Him anything.
And He is The Hearing, The Seeing. (42:11)
To Him belongs the pass keys of the heavens and the earth.
He extends provision for whomever He wills and measures it.
Truly, He is The Knowing of everything. (42:12)
He laid down the law of the way of life for you,
that with which He charged Noah and what We revealed to you
and that with which We charged Abraham and Moses and Jesus.

Perform the prescribed way of life and be not split up in it.
Troublesome for the ones who are polytheists is
*that to which **you** call them.*
God elects for Himself whomever He wills
and guides the penitent to Himself. (42:13)
And they split not up
until after the knowledge drew near them
through insolence between themselves.
*And if it were not for a Word that preceded from **your** Lord*
—until a term, that which is determined—
it would be decided between them.
And, truly, those who were given as inheritance
the Book after them
are in uncertainty, in grave doubt about it. (42:14)
Then, for that, call to this.
*And go **you** straight as **you** were commanded.*
And follow not their desires.
And say: I believed in what God caused to descend from a Book.
And I was commanded to be just among you.
God is our Lord and your Lord.
For us are our actions and for you, your actions.
There is no disputation between us and between you.
God will gather us together.
And to Him is the Homecoming. (42:15)
And those who argue with one another about God,
after He was assented to,
their disputations are null and void with their Lord,
and on them is His anger.
And for them will be a severe punishment. (42:16)
It is God Who caused the Book to descend
with The Truth and the Balance.
*And what causes **you** to recognize it*
so that perhaps the Hour is near? (42:17)
Seeking to hasten are those who believe not in it.
Those who believed are ones who are apprehensive of it.
And they know that it is The Truth, those who altercate, truly, about
the Hour are, certainly, going far astray. (42:18)
God is Subtle with His servants. He provides to whom He wills.
And He is The Strong, The Almighty. (42:19)

COMMENTARY°

The section returns to the central issue, identifying the ultimate

point of reference in judging any dispute. It is this new revelation from God, containing His judgment. This ensures that changeable personal preferences and fleeting desires cannot influence life under the divine code that admits no prejudice:

These signs (42:10-42:12) express a number of facts, but the way these are stated and their sequence and juxtaposition in this short passage is truly remarkable, requiring proper reflection. Upon such reflection, the interlinking between their inner and outer aspects is both subtle and precise. Everything over which dispute arises between people should be judged by God: *Whatever thing about which you were at variance in it, then, its determination is with God.* (42:10) God has made His judgment clear in this Quran, stating His final word concerning this life and the life to come. He also established the code of living which people should follow in their personal and community lives, in their dealings among themselves, their system of government and their moral values and manners. He has made all this abundantly clear, making the Quran a comprehensive constitution for human life, with a scope that is broader than their own constitutions. Therefore, should dispute arise between them, the right judgment is ready for them, outlined in His revelation delivered to them by His messenger.

When this truth has been established, the sign quotes the Prophet's statement whereby he clearly submits himself and all his affairs to God, turning to Him in all situations: *That is God, my Lord in Whom I put my trust and to Him I am penitent.* (42:10) Thus, the Prophet's statement that he turns to God, places all his trust in Him and relies on Him in all situations, occurs at the most suitable point, serving as it does as a comment on the preceding rule. When God's Messenger who receives guidance from God declares his attitude in these terms, how can other people refer their disputes to anyone else or place their trust in other beings? Knowing that God is his Lord who provides everything for him and guides him to what is best, the Prophet makes his choice, turning to Him alone. How can others make a different choice?

A further comment is then made to consolidate this truth: *There is not like Him anything. And He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (42:11) The One who revealed the Quran to provide final judgment on all people's disputes is the Originator of the heavens and the earth, who controls them. The law that governs the heavens and the earth is His final judgment on all that concerns them. Human life is only a part of what takes place in the heavens and the earth. Therefore, His judgment on human matters ensures harmony between human life and the life of the great universe.

God, to whose judgment they should refer all their disputes, is the One who created them and molded their souls: *One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth.* (42:11) Thus He designed your life giving it its very foundation. He knows what is best for you and what suits your life, putting it in harmony with the rest of His creation: *He made for you spouses of yourselves and of the flocks, pairs by which means He makes you numerous in it.* (42:11) This unity in biological form confirms the unity of will and design. Therefore, people and animals multiply and procreate in the same natural process. By contrast, He is alone in the way He is, with no comparability to anything or anyone: *There is not like Him anything.* (42:11) Human nature accepts this without hesitation. The Creator of all cannot be compared to anything He creates. Therefore, His creatures refer to Him when they differ. They cannot refer to anyone else alongside Him because nothing is comparable to Him.

Although God, in His limitless glory, is beyond comparability with anyone or anything, contact between Him and His creation is not severed. *And He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (42:11) His judgment is that of the One who knows, hears and sees.

Having made these points, the chapter immediately returns to its central theme: (42:13-42:15)

The third reference states the unity of the message whereas the first reference identified the unity of its source: *He laid down the law of the way of life for you, that with which He charged Noah and what We revealed to you and that with which We charged Abraham and Moses and Jesus. Perform the prescribed way of life and be not split up in it. Troublesome for the ones who are polytheists is that to which you have called them. God elects for Himself whomever He wills and guides the penitent to Himself.* (42:13)

In this third reference, the chapter clearly states that division occurred because people disobeyed God's injunction. This did not come about as a result of any ignorance on the part of the followers of those noble messengers; they had the knowledge to spare them such division. It simply occurred as a result of injustice and envy: *And they split not up until after the knowledge drew near them through insolence between themselves.* (42:14) The chapter then moves on to describe the conditions of those who came after the generations that differed: *And if it were not for a Word that preceded from your Lord—until a term, that which is determined—it would be decided between them. And, truly, those who were given as inheritance the Book after them are in uncertainty, in grave doubt about it.* (42:14)

At this point it becomes abundantly clear that humanity had sunk into a state of confusion and doubt. It no longer had a wise leadership

following a well-defined code. The divine message that assumes the leadership of humanity suffered from the division that took place between its followers, while succeeding generations viewed it with profound suspicion, thereby precluding the emergence of wise leadership. The chapter therefore declares that this final message and the Messenger delivering it are to assume the role of leadership: *Then, for that, call to this. And go you straight as you were commanded. And follow not their desires. And say: I believed in what God caused to descend from a Book. And I was commanded to be just among you. God is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our actions and for you, your actions. There is no disputation between us and between you. God will gather us together. And to Him is the Homecoming.* (42:15) Thus the detailed description of the Muslim community, which occurs in the second part of the chapter, comes as a natural progression, because it is this community that will assume the leadership of humanity.

Given that He makes His judgment final in all people's disputes, this can only mean that this rule is based on the fact that having originated the heavens and the earth and set their laws in operation, He continues to hold their keys: *To Him belongs the pass keys of the heavens and the earth.* (42:12) Since humanity are only part of what lives in the heavens and earth, the same fact applies to them, which means that the keys and treasures of the universe belong to God. Moreover, it is He who provides them with sustenance, determining its measure in the same way as He conducts all affairs: *He extends provision for whomever He wills and measures it.* (42:12) It is He who gives them the food they eat and the water they drink, providing everything they need in their lives. Can they, then, refer to anyone else for judgment in their affairs? It is the most natural procedure for people to turn to the One who controls all this according to His perfect knowledge: *Truly, He is The Knowing of everything.* (42:12) Needless to say, the One who knows everything is the One who can make a final judgment in all fairness.

This is just one example of how the meanings of the component parts of the chapter's signs converge in complete harmony and perfect subtlety to work on the human heart. It is akin to the harmonious tones that combine to make a superb melody.

Once more the chapter addresses its central theme: In matters of faith, He has ordained for you the same as He had enjoined on Noah—that which We have revealed to you [Muhammad]—and as We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: (42:13-42:15)

Again the chapter speaks of the followers of earlier messengers who divided into sects and groups although the messengers preached

the same faith: (42:14) Their divisions did not come about as a result of ignorance, or because they did not know the single source that grouped their messengers and faiths together. They divided after knowledge was given to them. This division was caused by selfish rivalry and mutual envy. Thus, they were not only unjust to the truth but also to themselves. There was no single reason based on the true faith for their division. Had they been true to their faith, they would have remained united.

They deserved to be immediately taken to task in requital for their division and deviation, but God, in His wisdom, had already ordained to allow them time, up to a specified point only He knows: (42:14) Thus, the truth is established and falsehood is seen in its true guise. Matters are settled in this present life, but judgment is deferred until the Day of Resurrection. The generations that came after the division that split the followers of every one of God's messengers received the faith and the divine book uncertain of its truth. Division, then, had allowed doubt and confusion to creep in, making people unable to determine which of the numerous doctrines and groups was right: *And, truly, those who were given as inheritance the Book after them are in uncertainty, in grave doubt about it.* (42:14)

Therefore, call people to that faith, and follow the straight path as you have been commanded. Do not follow their likes and dislikes, but say: I believe in whatever revelation God has bestowed from on high. I am commanded to ensure justice between you. God is our Lord and your Lord. To us shall be accounted our deeds, and to you, your deeds. Let there be no argument between us and you. God will bring us all together, and to Him we shall all return. (42:15)

This is a new leadership for all humanity; a strong leadership, sure of its way and firm in its beliefs. It advocates its message equipped with true insight, and follows God's orders without deviation, steering away from all conflicting forces. This new leadership of humanity declares that the divine message is one and the way to which it guides people is the same. Thus, all divine faith comes from one source and humanity must turn to that source only: (42:15) Its constitution and policy is based on truth and justice: *For us are our actions and for you, your actions. There is no disputation between us and between you.* (42:15) This new leadership has definite authority enabling it to declare justice among all humanity even at the time when it was confined to the narrow valleys of Makkah, where its followers suffered unrelenting persecution. Yet its authority was clear to all. It clearly announces that: (1) the Lord of the universe is the One Lord: *God is our Lord and your Lord.* (42:15); (2) everyone is responsible for their own actions: *For us are our actions and for you,*

your actions. (42:15); (3) all argument is ended as Gods final word is given: *Le there be no disputation between us and between you.* (42:15); and (4) *God will gather us together. And to Him is the Homecoming.* (42:15)

This single sign with short, clear and decisive statements describes the nature of this last message in all its clarity. It is a message that means to follow its own way, unaffected by people's desires. It aims to extend its authority so as to ensure justice between all people. Its objective is to show the one way leading to God since it is the only way defined by all messages.

As the issues have thus been clarified and the community of believers have assuredly responded to God's message, the argument of those still disputing about God appears to be both singular and trivial, lacking basis and weight. A final word is stated about them making clear that they will have to face the punishment they have been warned against: (42:16) Whoever posits an argument that is null and void in Gods sight has nothing to offer. Not only are his arguments proven false in this life, but in the life to come he will incur God's anger and face severe punishment for persisting with such falsehood.

Yet another round is started to drive the central theme of the chapter home to us: It is God who has bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, and established the balance. For all you know, the Last Hour may well be near. Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, whereas the believers stand in awe of it and know it to be the truth. Those who argue about the Last Hour have gone far astray. God is most kind towards His creatures. He provides for whoever He will. He is the Powerful, the Almighty. To anyone who desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to the one who desires a harvest in this world, We shall give a share of it, but he will have no share in the life to come. . (42:17-42:19)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING YOUR FEELINGS

Raise basic issues to yourself.

Explore beneath the surface of things.

Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view

QUESTIONS

Whenever you discuss someone's feelings in a classroom setting, you can consider what the person might be thinking to have that feeling in that situation:

Why does the "one who turns away" feel this way?
How is he interpreting his situation?
What led him to that conclusion?
Would you have felt the same if you had been in his circumstances?
Why or why not?
What accounts for the difference?
What could he have thought instead?
Then how might he have felt?

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring your thoughts that underlie your feelings. You can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

LESSON 62(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and offers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA)
SIGNS 42:20-42:29

Makkah: *Whoever had been wanting*
cultivation of the world to come,
We increase his cultivation for him.
Whoever had been wanting cultivation
of the present, We give him of it.
And he has not a share in the world to come. (42:20)
Or ascribe they associates who laid down the law
of the way of life for them for which God gives not permission?
Were it not for a decisive word, it would be decided among them.
And, truly, the ones who are unjust,
for them is a painful punishment. (42:21)
***You** will see the ones who are unjust*
as ones who are apprehensive
of what they earned and it is that which falls on them.
And those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
are in the well-watered meadows of the Gardens.
For them will be whatever they will from their Lord.
That it is the great grace. (42:22)
Madinah (42:23)
Madinah (42:24)
Madinah (42:25)
Makkah: *And He responds to those who believed*
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
and increases them of His grace.
And as for the ones who are ungrateful,
theirs will be a severe punishment. (42:26)
Madinah (42:27)
Makkah: *And He it is Who sends down plenteous rain water*

after they despaired and He unfolds His mercy.
And He is The Protector, The Worthy of Praise. (42:28)
And among His signs are the creation
of the heavens and the earth
and whatever of moving creatures He disseminated in them.
And He has the power of amassing them when He wills. (42:29)

COMMENTARY°

The section now speaks about the sustenance God, out of His grace, provides for all people. The link between this sign and the previous one speaking about the Last Hour and the different attitudes people take towards it seems unclear. However, it becomes very apparent when we read the next sign: (42:20)

The section earlier stated that what God has legislated for the Muslim community is the same as He had enjoined on Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. In other words, all this is embodied in what God revealed to Muhammad. At this point, the chapter employs a rhetorical question addressing the ungrateful' beliefs and practices: essentially, these are contrary to what God has ordained in His messages, so who ordained the same for the ungrateful, without God's sanction? (42:21)

Those wrongdoers are shown as they will be on the Day of Judgment, afraid of what will happen to them. During their lives on earth, however, they entertained no such fear. On the contrary, they ridiculed the reckoning and asked for it to be hastened: (42:22) In the Arabic original they are described as full of fear for what they have done, as if their deeds are some fearful beast. Yet they performed these deeds with their own hands, enjoying their actions. Still, when they face these same deeds they are full of fear, realizing that they are bound to fall back on them, as though the deeds themselves are transformed into a punishment they cannot avoid.

Conversely, we see the believers who used to be in awe of what would happen on that day now feeling safe, reassured, enjoying what God grants them: (42:22) The whole image is one of bliss and happiness. Those believers are in the *well-watered meadows of the Gardens* where they will have *whatever they will from their Lord.* There is no limit to His bounty, which is indeed supreme. This is, then, the good news that God gives to His God-conscious servants. It is good news that is shown to be ready, immediate, confirming the earlier promise of good things to come.

And He responds to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, and increases them of His grace. And as for

the ones who are ungrateful, theirs will be a severe punishment. (42:26) It is He who sends down rain when they have lost all hope, and spreads His grace far and wide. He is the Protector, worthy of all praise. *And He it is Who sends down plenteous rain water after they despaired and He unfolds His mercy. And He is The Protector, The Worthy of Praise.* (42:28)

Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and all the living creatures which He placed in them. *And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and whatever of moving creatures He disseminated in them. And He has the power of amassing them when He wills.* (42: 29)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in understanding intellectual curiosity.

What is it to look at things Quranically?
You seem to be approaching this issue from x perspective.
Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I sometimes waste time. That is, I sometimes fail to use all of my time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences.
Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 62(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is to encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA) SIGNS 42:30-42:43

Makkah: *And whatever affliction lit on you*
is because of what your hands earned.
And He pardons much. (42:30)
And you are not ones who frustrate Him on the earth.
And there is not for you other than God
either a protector or a helper. (42:31)
And among His signs are the ones that run
on the sea like landmarks. (42:32)
If He wills, He stills the wind.
Then, they would stay, that which is motionless on the surface.
Truly, in that are signs
for every enduring and grateful one. (42:33)
Or He wreck them because of what they earned.
And He pardons them from much. (42:34)
And those who dispute Our signs know that
there is no asylum for them. (42:35)
So whatever thing you were given
is the enjoyment of this present life.
And what is with God is better and is that which endures
for those who believed and put their trust in their Lord (42:36)
and those who avoid the major sins
and the indecencies and they forgive
when they were angry (42:37)
and those who responded to their Lord
and performed their formal prayer and their affairs
are by counsel among themselves,
and who spend of what We provided them, (42:38)
and those who, when insolence lit on them,

they help each other. (42:39)
And the recompense for an evil deed is the like of an evil deed.
Then, whoever pardoned and made things right,
his compensation is due from God.
Truly, He loves not the ones who are unjust. (42:40)
As whoever helped himself after an injustice,
so those, there is not any way against them. (42:41)
The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity
and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully.
Those, for them is a painful punishment. (42:42)
And whoever endured patiently and forgave,
truly, that is, certainly, a sign of constancy of affairs. (42:43)

COMMENTARY°

The section then tells them of what happens to the ungrateful in this life, as a result of what they perpetrate. Yet God does not take them to task for all this; He overlooks a great many of their actions. It describes their powerlessness as they occupy only a small corner of the living world: *And whatever affliction lit on you is because of what your hands earned. And He pardons much. And you are not ones who frustrate Him on the earth. And there is not for you other than God either a protector or a helper.* (42:30-42:31)

In the first of these two signs we see in action both God's justice and His grace as He bestows it on human beings. Every misfortune or calamity that befalls a person is a direct result of what a person does, but God does not hold him to account for all his deeds. He knows a person's weakness and the desires inherent in his nature which often tempt and overpower him. Therefore, God pardons much of what he does. In the second sign we see a person as he truly is: Weak, powerless and without support. From whom, then, can he seek protection other than from the One who protects all?

And among His signs are the ships that sail like floating mountains through the seas. If He wills, He stills the wind, and then they lie motionless on the surface of the sea. In this there are signs indeed for all who are patient in adversity and deeply grateful to God; or else He may cause them to perish because of what they have wrought and yet He forgives much. Let those who call Our messages into question know that there is no escape for them. (42:32-42:35)

The wind may die down at times and ships will lie motionless, as though life has departed from them. *If He wills, He stills the wind. Then, they would stay, that which is motionless on the surface. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring and grateful one.* (42:33)

He certainly does not punish people for every sinful action they do. Instead, He pardons and forgives much. *And He pardons them from much.* (42:34)

Should God want to smite them, destroy their ships or visit them with some other punishment, they simply have no means of escape. Thus they are made to know that whatever they possess of this life's riches, comforts and pleasures can always be taken away from them. The only thing that is stable in this present life is to maintain a close relation with God. *And those who dispute Our signs know that there is no asylum for them.* (42:35)

The section takes another step forward, alerting them to the fact that whatever they have in life on earth is transient. The only lasting value is what God grants in the life to come to those who have believed and placed their trust in Him. Some of the distinctive qualities that make of true believers a separate community are then given.

Whatever you are given is but for the enjoyment of life in this world, but that which is with God is much better and more enduring. [It shall be given] to those who believe and place their trust in their Lord; who shun grave sins and gross indecencies; and who, when angered, will forgive; who respond to their Lord, attend regularly to their prayer, conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and give generously out of what We have provided for them; and who, when oppressed, defend themselves. An evil deed is requited by an evil like it, but the one who forgives and puts things right will have his reward with God. He does not love wrongdoers. However, no blame attaches to those who defend themselves after having been wronged. Blame attaches only to those who oppress other people and transgress in the land against all right. For such, there is painful suffering in store. As for the one who is patient in adversity and forgives; this requires the exercise of a truly strong resolve. (42:36-42:43)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

Accuracy (to be free from error)

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when students concern themselves with accuracy and truth. They should ask themselves:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand,?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

QUESTIONS

Are the Quranic words clear? Do we have to analyze any concepts?
Do we know when the key Quranic words and phrases apply and don't apply?
Do we clearly understand how they apply to this sign?
Does this question ask something about facts?
About the meanings of words?
Are we evaluating anything?
What? Why? What criteria should we use in the evaluation?
What facts are relevant?
How can we get the evidence we need?
How would the facts be gathered?
What would researchers have to do to conduct such a study?
What problems would they face?
How could those obstacles be surmounted?

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following:s

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

LESSON 62(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

HISTORY

God sends a messenger, who is an angel, to reveal by His command what He will. This takes different forms, which the Prophet explained as follows:

1. The angel would impart to him something he recognized within himself, without seeing the angel. The Prophet said: The Holy Spirit has imparted to me that no soul will ever die until it has had whatever provisions assigned to it. Therefore, remain God-conscious and moderate your requests.

2. The angel would come to the Prophet in the form of a person who spoke to him and made sure that he understood what was being said to him.

3. The angel would give him the revelation in a way that sounded like a bell ringing in his ear. This was the hardest form for the Prophet. He would be perspiring even on a very cold day. If he was riding a camel, his camel would fall to the ground. Once he received revelation in this way when he was seated, with his thigh next to that of Zayd ibn Thabit who felt then that his bone was almost broken.

4. The Prophet would see the angel in the angel's own form, giving him whatever God bid him give. Such were the different forms of contact and revelation. (42:51) He bestows His revelation from on high, to whomever He chooses, according to His wisdom.

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Zayd ibn Thabit witnessed such a great moment. Other companions of the Prophet saw it on many occasions, recognizing the fact as they looked at the Prophet. They left him alone to receive whatever he received. When it was over, he was with them just as he was before.

Then, what sort of special nature distinguishes the human soul that makes this contact with the sublime? What is the element within the human soul that enables it to be the recipient of revelation from

on high? This is yet another issue. In what way did the Prophet's soul, which is a human soul, feel this contact and how did it open its receptive faculties to revelation? How did it feel the universe in those moments when God opened His glory to it, with His words resounding in its every corner?

What care, what grace, what honor are bestowed on the human being, such a small creature, when God in His glory confers on him what enlightens his way ahead and keeps him on the right track? Such honor appears great indeed when we remember that, compared to God's kingdom, a person looks more insignificant than a mosquito compared to him.

The Quran describes the Prophets soul prior to revelation in this way. The Prophet had heard of revelation and faith before, because the Arabs were aware of other communities that had scriptures and believed in a well-defined faith. It is not the mere knowledge of such matters that this statement refers to. The reference here is to how revelation affected the Prophet's heart and conscience and how he interacted with it. He certainly experienced nothing of this before this spirit was revealed to him by God's command.

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA)
SIGNS 42:44-42:53

Makkah: *And whomever God causes to go astray*
has no protector apart from Him.
And you will see the ones who are unjust
when they would see the punishment.
They will say: Is there any way of turning it back? (42:44)
And you will see them being presented to it
as ones who are humbled by a sense of humility
looking on with secretive glances.
And those who believed will say:
Truly, the ones who are losers are those who lost themselves
and their people on the Day of Resurrection.
Truly, the ones who are unjust will be
in an abiding punishment (42:45)
that there had not been for them
any protector to help them other than God.
And he whom God causes to go astray,
there is not for him any way. (42:46)
Respond to the call of your Lord before a Day approaches
for which there is no turning back from God.
There will be no shelter for you on that Day,

nor is there for you any refusal. (42:47)
But if they turned aside, We put you not forward
as a guardian over them.
It is for you not but the delivering of the message.
And, truly, when We caused the human being
to experience mercy from Us, he was glad in it.
But when evil deeds light on him
—because of what his hands sent—
then, truly, the human being is ungrateful. (42:48)
To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
He creates what He wills. He bestows females on whom He wills.
And He bestows males on whom He wills. (42:49)
And He couples them, males and females.
And He makes barren whom He wills.
Truly, He is Knowing, Powerful. (42:50)
And it had not been for a mortal that God speak to him,
but by revelation or from behind a partition
or that He send a Messenger to reveal
by His permission what He wills.
Truly, He is Lofty, Wise. (42:51)
And, thus, We revealed to you the Spirit of Our command.
You had not been informed what the Book is nor what is belief,
but We made it a light by which We guide
whomever We will of Our servants.
And, truly, you, you guide to a straight path— (42:52)
the path of God, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
Truly, will not all affairs come home to God? (42:53)

COMMENTARY°

The second part, taking up the rest of the chapter, begins with a discussion of God's signs that are seen in the way He gives some people abundant provision while others receive small measure, how He sends rainfall, the creation of the heavens and the earth with all creatures therein, and ships that traverse the sea. It then moves on to outline the basic quality that distinguishes believers and their community. This is followed by an image of the Day of Judgment showing the wrongdoers as they face their punishment: (42:44-42:45)

He whom God lets go astray will have no one else to protect him. (42:44-42:46)

What God wills is certain to take place. No one can change a course God has determined. (42:44-42:45)

By contrast, the believers will be in a dignified position, stating the fate that the wrongdoers face: (42:47) Then the chapter reverts to its central theme, the truth of revelation and message, highlighting one of its many aspects: (42:48)

The chapter continues to refer to its central theme, directly and indirectly, up to its end and moves after each reference to address other ideas relating to it. Its conclusion provides the following statement regarding revelation and message: (42:52-42:53)

What God wills is certain to take place. No one can change a course God has determined. (42:44-42:45)

Now the section addresses those who stubbornly opposed the Prophet's message with an order to respond to their Lord before such a fate comes upon them, all of a sudden, when they will be without support. A directive to the Prophet is added instructing him to turn away from them if they persist in their rejection. His task though is only to deliver his message; he is not responsible for anyone: (42:47-44:48)

By way of comment on this, the section makes absolutely clear that whatever happiness or misfortune, affluence or scarcity befalls a person is determined by God. It is very strange therefore for someone, who reacts in this way to blessings and misfortune, to turn away from God when He holds all the strings affecting his life: (42:49-42:50)

Revelation is indeed a reality, but a sublime one. It appears to rise to a high and distant horizon which our faculties can hardly perceive. (42:52-42:53)

It was by means of such contact that revelation was given to the Prophet: (40:52) The process was the same as revelation granted to earlier messengers, bringing to the Prophet a spirit that gives life to souls, motivating them to act and implement the divine message. *And, truly, **you**, **you** have guided to a straight path*—(42:52)

This is the total nature of the message given through this revelation. It is a light that imparts happiness to those hearts that are guided by it. (42:52-42:53) Special emphasis is placed here on relating guidance to God's will, making it clear that He alone grants it only to whom He will on the basis of His own knowledge, shared with no one else. The Prophet is only the means chosen to fulfil God's will. He does not initiate guidance in peoples hearts. He only delivers God's message which opens the way to the fulfilment of God's will.

Guidance shows us the path of God, at which point all ways converge, because it leads to the Sovereign who alone has dominion over the heavens and the earth. Whoever is guided to His path is certain

to know the laws that God has set in operation in the universe, bringing their forces into play and providing sustenance to all. Therefore, the whole universe turns to its Supreme Owner to whom all shall return: *Truly, will not all affairs come home to God?* (42:53) He will then judge them all. Such is the light God has given so that people will go along the way He has chosen for them; they will return to Him having obeyed His command and benefited by His guidance.

Thus the chapter is brought to its conclusion. It began with a discussion of revelation, which provided its main theme. It stated that revelation started with the early prophets, making it clear that divine religion is one, outlining the same code and showing the same way. It gives humanity its new leadership represented by the person of Muhammad and in the community that believes in his message. This community is entrusted with the task of guiding people to the straight path leading to God. The chapter also outlines the characteristics of this community which qualify it to provide sound leadership. It is this community that shoulders the trust bestowed from on high by the sublime process of revelation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in understanding purpose, aim, goal, objective.

Is the purpose of these signs clear?
What would someone who disagreed with this do?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.
I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?
I feel I was an active learner?
I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

LESSON 63(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38: 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF) SIGNS 43:1-43:15

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (43:1)
By the clear Book, (43:2)
We, truly, made it an Arabic Recitation
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (43:3)
Truly, it is in the essence of the Book
from Our Presence, Lofty, Wise. (43:4)
Will We turn away the Remembrance from you,
overlooking as you had been a folk,
ones who are excessive? (43:5)
And how many a Prophet
sent We among the ancient ones! (43:6)
And approaches them not a Prophet,
but that they had been ridiculing him. (43:7)

Then, We caused to perish
the more vigorous in courage
than them and the example of the ancient ones passed. (43:8)
And, certainly, if you asked them:
Who created the heavens and the earth?
They will, certainly, say:
The Almighty, The Knowing created them, (43:9)
Who made the earth a cradle for you
and made in it ways for you
so that perhaps you would be truly guided (43:10)
and Who sent down water from heaven in measure.
Then, We revived with it a lifeless land.
Thus, you are brought out. (43:11)
And it is He Who created all the pairs
and assigned for you the boats
and the flocks on which you ride (43:12)
so that you sit upon their backs.
And, again, remember the divine blessing of your Lord
when you are seated on them and you say:
Glory be to Him Who caused this to be subservient to us
and we had not been ones who are equal to it! (43:13)
And, truly, we, certainly, are to our Lord
ones who are turning. (43:14)
Yet they assigned with Him a part of some of His servants.
Truly, the human being is clearly ungrateful. (43:15)

COMMENTARY°

God states this oath by the two letters and the clear book so as to confirm the purpose of making this Quran in the form it was made when revealed to the Arabs: *We, truly, made it an Arabic Recitation so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (43:3) The purpose, then, is that they should understand it as it is composed in their own tongue. The Quran is God's revelation which He has made, in its spoken form, Arabic as He chose the Arabs to be the bearers of His message. Moreover, God made His choice on the basis of His knowledge that the Arabs were suitable message-bearers and that their language could best express it. God knows whom to entrust with His message.

He then defines what position He has assigned for the Quran with Him and its value in His overall plan for the universe: *Truly, it is in the essence of the Book from Our Presence, Lofty, Wise.* (43:4) We will only in passing refer to the literal meaning of the phrase 'the essence of the Book'. Does it refer to the imperishable tablet men-

tioned elsewhere in the Quran, or to God's eternal knowledge? Both are the same in the sense that they do not have a specific meaning within our sphere of knowledge. Yet the sign transmits a definite impression that the Quran has an especially high value in God's overall knowledge and planning. This is enough for us. The Quran is sublime and full of wisdom. These two qualities give it a specific rationality, and indeed it is so! It is as if the Quran has a soul of its own, with special features and qualities, that respond to the souls of those who interact with it. With its sublime position and wisdom, it provides guidance to humanity, leading it according to its own nature and qualities, imparting to its rational understanding and to its life values, concepts and facts that are also sublime and bear wisdom.

When this fact has been established it makes the people who speak the language in which the Quran has been revealed appreciate the great gift and blessing God has given them. It shows them the extent of their transgression when they turn away from it in disdain. It is they who deserve to be treated with contempt. Therefore, they are told that they may well be ignored because of their transgression: *Will We turn away the Remembrance from you, overlooking as you had been a folk, ones who are excessive?* (43:5)

It is indeed most remarkable that God, in His glory and sublimity, should care for such people, revealing to them a book in their own tongue, telling them about what they feel, explaining the inner aspects of their lives, showing them the path delineated by His guidance, relating to them accounts of earlier communities and reminding them of God's law that was in effect during ancient times. Yet they continue to ignore His guidance, turning away from it. For God to say that they will be deprived of His care and be ignored for their transgression sounds dreadful.

In addition to this threat, they are reminded of God's law that applied to earlier communities that denied the prophets sent to them: *And how many a Prophet sent We among the ancient ones! And approaches them not a Prophet, but that they had been ridiculing him. Then, We caused to perish the more vigorous in courage than them and the example of the ancient ones passed.* (43:6-43:8) What can they expect when God has already destroyed people that were much mightier than they because of their derision of the messengers sent to them?

The Arabs had a faith, which we can imagine as consisting of remnants of the original pure faith of Abraham, that had lost its original shining colors, intermingled with legends. What remained was something that human nature could not deny, namely, that the universe has a Creator who is God: the universe could not have existed

without a Creator and the Creator could only be God. Yet, the Arabs did not take this natural truth to its logical conclusion; they simply stopped at the bare fact: *And, certainly, if you had asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth? They will, certainly, say: The Almighty, The Knowing created them.* (43:9)

The section takes them another step forward in outlining God's attributes and the favors He has given them: *Who made the earth a cradle for you and made in it ways for you so that perhaps you would be truly guided.* (43:10) Smoothing out the earth is a fact understood, in one way or another, by everyone. The people who were the first to be addressed by the Quran would have seen the earth smooth under their feet when they walked, ready for plants to grow. It is smoothed out generally for life to grow. However, we realize this today in a more profound way, taking into account what we have learned about the nature of the earth and its history. Future generations will understand this fact in an even greater way; human knowledge will continue to expand and discover new facts that have so far remained unknown.

The section then looks a step further at the process of life and the emergence of living creatures: *And Who sent down water from heaven in measure. Then, We revived with it a lifeless land. Thus, you are brought out.* (43:11)

We learn from this section that the ungrateful used to assign a portion of their cattle to God and another portion to other beings. God, however, created cattle as one of the favors He bestows on man: people ride cattle as they ride on ships and they should appreciate His blessings and give thanks: (43:12-43:14)

This: *And it is He Who created all the pairs and assigned for you the boats and the flocks on which you ride* (43:12) is to remind us that God has placed us in charge of the earth, putting at our disposal its considerable and varied power and potential. It also invites us to show gratitude for God's choice and blessings, reminds us of the One who grants blessings every time such a blessing is enjoyed. Such expressions of gratitude for God's blessings is sure to keep our hearts alive to their bond with God at every turn in life.

We certainly cannot match His blessings. *And, again, remember the divine blessing of your Lord when you are seated on them and you say: Glory be to Him Who caused this to be subservient to us and we had not been ones who are equal to it!* (43:13) All that we can do is to be truly grateful and give due thanks for all that He has favored us with. We should realize that we will eventually return to God after our term in charge of the earth comes to its end. He will then requite us for what we have done in life when we enjoyed His

favors and what He placed at our service: *And, truly, we, certainly, are to our Lord ones who are turning.* (43:14) Such are the refined manners people should adopt towards God who has granted us countless favors and blessings. Yet we tend to forget Him even when we are enjoying His favors. Therefore, this gentle reminder.

Yet they assign to Him some of His own servants as offspring. Surely a person is clearly bereft of all gratitude? *Yet they assigned with Him a pare of some of His servants. Truly, the human being is clearly ungrateful.* (43:15)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

EXAMINE IN DEPTH

The sacred text should be examined in depth.

Why does the sacred text tell you about the importance of knowledge?
Why does the Quranic message think this (concept, skill, procedure, step) is worth knowing?
Why does the sacred text tell you to do this?
What would happen if you didn't?

8 STAGES OF WRITING

1. Diagram: For a question which specifies a diagram you should present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.

2. Discuss: The term discuss, which appears often in essay questions, directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations pro and con regarding the problems or items involved. This type of question calls for a complete and entailed answer.

3. Enumerate: The word enumerate specifies a list or outline form of reply. In such questions you should recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required.

4. Evaluate: In an evaluation question you are expected to present a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both con-

tributions and limitations.

5. Explain: In explanatory answers it is imperative that you clarify and interpret the material you present. In such an answer it is best to state the how or why, reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. The aim is to make plain the conditions which give rise to whatever you are examining.

6. Illustrate: A question which asks you to illustrate usually requires you to explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example.

7. Interpret: An interpretation question is similar to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate, exemplify, solve, or comment upon the subject and usually to give your judgment or reaction to the problem.

8. Justify: When you are instructed to justify your answer, you must prove or show grounds for decisions. In such an answer, evidence should be presented in convincing form.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 63(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[2]

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF) SIGNS 43:16-43:25

Makkah: *Or took He to Himself*
daughters from what
He creates and selected He sons for you? (43:16)
And if good tidings were given to one of them
of what he cited as an example from The Merciful, his face stayed
one that is clouded over and he chokes. (43:17)
Is whoever is brought up amid glitter one who is
without clarity when he is in an altercation? (43:18)
And made they the angels—who themselves
are servants of The Merciful— females?
Bore they witness to their creation?
Their giving testimony will be written down.
And they will be asked about it. (43:19)
And they would say: If willed The Merciful,
we would not have worshiped them.
And they have no knowledge of that.

They do nothing but guess. (43:20)
Or gave We them any Book before this
so they are ones who hold fast to it? (43:21)
Nay! They said: We found our fathers in a community
holding to a way of life and we are, truly,
in their footsteps ones who are truly guided. (43:22)
And, thus, We sent not a warner to any town before you
without ones who are given ease saying:
We found our fathers in a community.
We are, certainly, ones who imitate their footsteps. (43:23)
He said: Even if I brought about better guidance for you
than what you found your fathers on.
They would say: Truly, we, in that with which you were sent
are ones who disbelieve. (43:24)
So We requited them. Then, look on how had been
the Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (43:25)

COMMENTARY°

God's offspring: *Or took He to Himself daughters from what He creates and selected He sons for you?* (43:16) If God were to take offspring for Himself, why would He choose females and give the males to them? This is nothing less than absurd and especially when they are so distressed when a daughter is born to them. *And if good tidings were given to one of them of what he cited as an example from The Merciful, his face stayed one that is clouded over and he chokes.* (43:17)

What sort of manners are these that make them attribute to God what would fill them with gloom? Indeed, they would be so distressed about parenting a daughter that they could not even face speaking about it. In their environment, it was only brave men who could fight hard in battle that were looked upon with esteem. How come, then, that they assign to God offspring of the type which only cares about jewellery and fine things, unable to refute an argument or fight a case? *Is whoever is brought up amid glitter one who is without clarity when he is in an altercation?* (43:18) Here we see how the chapter uses their own logic, making them ashamed of attributing to God what they themselves hate to father. Should they not, if at all, have attributed to Him what scores highly in their own estimation?

The chapter then refutes another of their absurd superstitions. They alleged that the angels were female. On what basis do they make such a claim? *And made they the angels—who themselves are servants of The Merciful—females? Bore they witness to their cre-*

ation? Their giving testimony will be written down. And they will be asked about it. (43:19)

The ungrateful provide further argument to justify their absurdities, but once again the chapter exposes how flawed their statements are: *And they would say: If willed The Merciful, we would not have worshiped them. And they have no knowledge of that. They do nothing but guess.* (43:20)

When they attribute their own choice to God's will, this is nothing less than wild conjecture. They cannot be certain that God wants them to worship the angels. How can they achieve such certainty? (43:20) They simply indulge in guesswork and delusion. *Or gave We them any Book before this so they are ones who hold fast to it?* (43:21) Do they have such a book as a basis for their claims, giving them clear evidence in support of their worship?

At this point, the section exposes the reality on which they rely when holding to their absurd superstition that makes them offer false worship: *Nay! They said: We found our fathers in a community holding to a way of life and we are, truly, in their footsteps ones who are truly guided.* (43:22) This is a ludicrous and baseless argument. It shows them to be content to follow their ancestors without thinking about or looking into the basis of their actions. Thus, they are no more than a herd of cattle driven to where it does not know. They are totally unaware of their destination or whether they are following the road leading to it.

At the end of this passage, the ungrateful are shown the fates of earlier communities that argued in the same vein and blindly followed their forefathers' footsteps, rejecting the truth clearly presented to them by God's messengers: *So We requited them. Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (43:25)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Feel free to raise questions about passages you read.

What does one of the previous signs say?
What does it imply?

Assume? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way? Why or why not?
What might someone who disagreed with it say?
Does the text leave out relevant information?
Does it favor one perspective? Which?
Why do you suppose it was written this way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs I read.
I can discuss my interpretations of what I read.

LESSON 63(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF)

SIGNS 43:26-43:35

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (43:26)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (43:27)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (43:28)
Nay! I gave enjoyment
to these and to their fathers
until The Truth drew near them and a clear Messenger. (43:29)
And when The Truth drew near them, they said:
This is sorcery and we are ones who disbelieve in it. (43:30)
They said: Why was this, the Quran, not sent down
to some eminent man of the two towns? (43:31)
Would they divide the mercy of your Lord?
It is We Who divided out among them
their livelihood in this present life.
Exalted are some of them above some others in degree so that
some take to themselves others in their bondage.
And the mercy of your Lord
is better than what they gather. (43:32)
And were it not that humanity be one community,
would We have made for whoever is ungrateful for The Merciful,
roofs of silver for their houses, and stairways
which they would scale up (43:33)
and for their houses, doors, and couches
on which they would recline (43:34)

and ornaments? Yet all this would have been nothing,
but enjoyment of this present life.
And the world to come with your Lord is
for the ones who are God-conscious. (43:35)

COMMENTARY°

In this section of the chapter, the Arabs are made to see this historical fact so that they might check their claims against it. The chapter also reports their objections to the Prophet Muhammad's message: *They said: Why was this, the Quran, not sent down to some eminent man of the two towns?* (43:31) It shows the basic flaw in this argument: not only does it disregard the true values on which God wants human life to be based but it also espouses false values which turn them away from true guidance. Once the truth is outlined, the chapter tells them of the fate of those who prefer to remain blind to God's remembrance. It also explains why such a choice was made which boils down to nothing less than following what Satan whispers. At the end of this section, the chapter consoles God's messenger, who is grieved by their choice. He is told that he cannot make the blind see nor the deaf hear. They will have their due requital, whether he lives to see how God punishes them or God chooses to delay such punishment. He is directed, therefore, to hold fast to what is revealed to him as it represents the truth preached by all former messengers.

The truth, which is always clearly manifest, cannot be confused with sorcery. What they said was conjecture and they were the first to know that it was false. The elders of the Quraysh could not have been blind to the truth of the message of the Quran, yet they aimed to deceive the masses: first by alleging that it was sorcery and secondly by reaffirming their rejection of it: *And when The Truth drew near them, they said: This is sorcery and we are ones who disbelieve in it.* (43:30) In this way, they sought to impress the masses by showing themselves to be confident of what they said. Like all who are deluded, the masses would then follow them. What the Quraysh elders feared most was that they might lose their influence over people. Should the people see the truth of the principle of God's Oneness, no leader would have any influence except within the framework of worshipping God alone.

The Quran describes their confused values and standards as they objected to the choice of Muhammad as the one to bring them light and the message of the truth: *They said: Why was this, the Quran, not sent down to some eminent man of the two towns?* (43:31) The two cities they referred to were Makkah and Taif. The Prophet belonged to the most distinguished family in the clan of Hashim of the

Quraysh tribe, which were the elite among Arabs. He was also known to be a person of high principles and fine manners, even before he was chosen as God's messenger. However, he was not a tribal chief, while his environment placed much store on such considerations. Therefore, their objection: *They said: Why was this, the Quran, not sent down to some eminent man of the two towns?* (43:31)

With their narrow view of worldly pleasures and lack of awareness of the nature of the divine message, the Arabs objected to the choice of Muhammad as God's messenger, suggesting that a recognized leader of either of the two cities would have been preferable. The chapter denounces their objections and reminds them of how God bestows His grace on whomever He chooses of His servants. It shows the flaw inherent in their concepts which confuse worldly values with divine ones. It also makes clear to them how their values score in God's accurate measure: *Would they divide the mercy of your Lord? It is We Who divided out among them their livelihood in this present life.* (43:32)

How singular! What business do they have in apportioning Gods grace when they cannot even determine their own provisions? Whatever comes their way of earthly provisions is determined by God, according to His wisdom and how He wants life on earth to progress: *Exalted are some of them above some others in degree so that some take to themselves others in their bondage. And the mercy of your Lord is better than what they gather.* (43:32)

Earthly values are so petty and insignificant that had God so willed, He would have given them in plenty to those who disbelieve in Him. The only reason behind not doing so is that such plenty would then become a source of delusion, preventing many people from accepting the divine faith: (43:33-43:35)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

GUIDE TO LISTENING CRITICALLY

Listen carefully to what the Quranic signs are saying.
Take them seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence among them.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.

Discover implications and consequences.
Seek examples and analogies to them.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of others.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.
Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism.

It is important to engage in an assignment that actually teaches critical listening. This will help you learn how to listen critically to what others are saying or asking you to do. You have to understand the assignment well in order to do a good job in following it. You can describe discussions on videotapes about the Quran in writing, then compare your version in small groups with others, trying to accurately reconstruct what you heard. Whenever possible, you should watch the piece a second time to verify what you heard or settle conflicting accounts of what you heard and what others heard. While watching a video, take notes. Afterward, compare and discuss your notes with your classmates. A leader of your group could every few minutes stop the video and have you outline the main point and raise critical questions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills

LESSON 63(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[3]

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF) SIGNS 43:36-43:45

Makkah: *And whoever withdraws*
from the Remembrance of The Merciful,
We allotted for him a satan, so he is a comrade for him. (43:36)
And, truly, they bar them from the way, but they assume
that they are ones who are truly guided. (43:37)
Then, when he drew near us he would say.
Would that there were a distance between me
*and between **you** of two sunrises!*
Miserable was the comrade. (43:38)
And it will never profit you this Day as you did wrong.
You will be ones who are partners in the punishment. (43:39)
*So have **you** caused someone unwilling to hear, to hear*
*or will **you** guide the unwilling to see,*
or someone who had been clearly going astray? (43:40)
*And even if We take **you** away,*
We will, truly, be ones who requite them (43:41)
*or We will cause **you** to see what We promised them.*
Then, We are ones who are omnipotent over them. (43:42)
*So hold **you** fast to what was revealed to thee.*
*Truly, **you** are on a straight path.* (43:43)
*And, truly, this is a remembrance for **you** and **your** folk.*
And you will be asked. (43:44)
Jerusalem: *And ask ones whom We sent before **you***
of Our Messengers:
Made We gods other than the Merciful to be worshiped? (43:45)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter moves on to explain the fate of those who are given plenty of the luxuries of this world but who remain unmindful of their duty of obedience to God and glorifying Him so as to deserve the great prize He grants on the Day of Judgement to those who fear Him: (43:36-43:39)

In the Arabic text, this sign is stated in the conditional form to express a consistent rule that makes the result inevitable when the cause occurs. Thus the evil comrade will certainly turn his comrade away from the right path, even though such a person may continue to think that he is on the right track: *And, truly, they bar them from the way, but they assume that they are ones who are truly guided.* (43:37) The end comes all of a sudden while they are still deluded: (43:38)

As the curtain drops on them both, we hear a word that crushes all hope for them: (43:39) The suffering of each is given in full measure. It is not something to share out among them so as to reduce its effect.

The chapter now addresses the Prophet with a word of consolation so that he does not grieve about those who turned away from him, disbelieving in his message. It encourages him to hold on to the truth revealed to him from on high, as it is the same word of truth given to every Messenger of God: (43:40-43:45)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DEVELOP QUESTIONS ABOUT QUESTIONS

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
How does the Quran teach us to think critically?
What is the question I am trying to answer?
Can I put the question in a better way?
Is the question I am asking clear? or too complex?
How do you evaluate the question?

What would need to be done to answer this question?
How can we find out?
What does this question assume?
Would x put the question differently?
How could someone settle this question?
Can we break this question down at all?
Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
Does this question ask us to evaluate something?
Do we all agree that this is the question?
To answer this question, what questions would we have to answer first?
I'm not sure I understand how you are interpreting the main question at issue.
Is this the same issue as x?
How would x put the issue?
Why is this question important?
How does the Quran describe the just person?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

Quranic Chapter 43: The Ornaments (al-Zukhruf)
Signs 43:46-43:56

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:49)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:50)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:51)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:52)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:53)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:54)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:55)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:56)

LESSON 63(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF) SIGNS 43:57-43:67

Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:57)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:58)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:59)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:60)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:61)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:62)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:63)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:64)

The confederates were at variance among themselves.
So woe to those who did wrong
from the punishment of a painful Day. (43:65)
Looked they on but for the Hour
that will approach them suddenly
whiles they are not aware? (43:66)
Friends on that Day will be enemies
some to some others, but ones who are God-conscious. (43:67)

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF)

SIGNS 43:68-43:89

O My servants! This Day there shall be
no fear in you
nor will you feel remorse. (43:68)
It will be said to those who believed in Our signs
and had been ones who submit to God: (43:69)
Enter the Garden, you
and your spouses, to be walking with joy! (43:70)
There will be passed around among them
platters of gold and goblets.
And in it will be whatever souls lust for
and all that in which the eyes
delight. And you will be ones who dwell in it forever. (43:71)
This is the Garden that you were given as inheritance
because of what you had been doing. (43:72)
For you there will be much sweet fruit
from which you will eat. (43:73)
Truly, ones who sin will be in the punishment of hell, ones who will
dwell in it forever. (43:74)
It will not be decreased for them and they will be ones who are
seized with despair in it. (43:75)
And We did not wrong them, but they had been
ones who are unjust. (43:76)
And they would cry out: O Malik! Let your Lord finish us.
He would say: Truly, you will be ones who abide. (43:77)
Certainly, We brought about The Truth to you,
but most of you are ones who dislike The Truth. (43:78)
Or fixed they on some affair?
Then, We, too, are ones who fix some affair. (43:79)
Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts
and their conspiring secretly?
Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)
Say: If The Merciful had had a son, then,
I would be first of the ones who worship. (43:81)
Glory be to the Lord of the heavens and the earth,
the Lord of the Throne, from all that they allege! (43:82)
So let them engage in idle talk and play until they encounter
their Day which they are promised. (43:83)
And it is He Who is in the heaven, God, and on the earth, God.
And He is The Wise, The Knowing. (43:84)
Blessed be He to whom belongs
the dominion of the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them

and with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour
and to Whom you will be returned. (43:85)
And those whom they call to possess no power
other than Him for intercession,
only whoever bore witness to The Truth, and they know. (43:86)
And if you asked them: Who created them?
They would, certainly, say: God.
Then, how are they mislead? (43:87)
And his saying: O my Lord! Truly,
these are a folk who believe not, (43:88)
so overlook them and say:
Peace. And they will know. (43:89)

COMMENTARY°

When the section refers to wrongdoers, it includes those factions that disputed about Jesus together with the pagan Arabs who argued with the Prophet on the basis of what those factions perpetrated. It draws a long, spectacular scene showing what happens to them on the Day of Judgement and adds an image of what happens to the God-conscious who receive His favors in heaven: What are they waiting for other than the Last Hour, which will come upon them all of a sudden and take them unawares? On that Day, friends will become enemies to one another, except for the God-conscious.

However, what comes over and above desire satisfaction is that it is all pleasant to the eye, adding beauty to gratification: (43:71) Yet there is more to this blessed enjoyment: there is something greater and far more honorable. They are honored by an address from on high: (43:71-43:73)

What fate awaits the evildoers whom we left a little while ago in dispute, blaming one another? (43:74)

No ray of hope will ever appear nor any chance of deliverance. They endure it, lost in despair: (43:75-43:76)

An outcry is heard from afar. It is an outcry of utter distress, born in despair: *And they would cry out: O Malik! Let your Lord finish us. He would say: Truly, you will be ones who abide.*(43:77) This distressing image is followed by an address to those who hate the truth and turn away from guidance. It portrays to all how singular their attitude is: (43:78-43:80)

Now the Quran directs the Prophet to say something to them and to leave them to face the destiny which has already been described to them: (43:81-43:-83)

The chapter continues its glorification of God, the Creator, at-

tributing to Him what is worthy of His Lordship of the heavens and the earth as well as the mighty throne: (43:84-43:86)

This statement confirms the unity of God throughout the universe, making it clear that no one shares this with God Almighty who does everything according to His infinite wisdom and perfect knowledge. The Arabic word *tabarak*, translated here as blessed, carries connotations of greatness and exaltedness above all their perceptions. It is He who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all in between. He alone knows the timing of the Last Hour and to Him all creation returns. On that day, when all return to Him, none of those whom they allege as His offspring or partners will have the power of intercession for anyone. None can intercede with Him other than one who knows the truth and bears witness to it. A person who testifies to the truth will not intercede on behalf of any who ever stood in opposition to it.

The chapter then confronts them with something that is ingrained in their nature and concerning which they have no doubt. That is, their Creator is God. How, then, can they associate partners with Him in their worship, and how can they expect that anyone will intercede on behalf of anyone who associated partners with Him: *And if you had asked them: Who created them? They would, certainly, say: God. Then, how are they mislead?* (43:87) How can they ignore the truth testified to by their own nature? How can they allow their behavior to be in conflict with its inevitable result?

As the chapter comes to its close, it highlights the fact that the Prophet turns to his Lord complaining of their rejection of the truth and their disbelief: *And his saying: O my Lord! Truly, these are a folk who believe not.* (43:88) This is given in a special form that implies how keenly the Prophet felt this and how well God received it. The answer from on high is a directive to the Prophet to bear with them and not to care for their rejection. On the contrary, he should forbear and feel his heart content. To this is added an implicit warning to those determined opponents of the truth: *So overlook them and say: Peace. And they will know.* (43:89) The time will come when everything is exposed and they will then know the dreadful fate that awaits them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINK ABOUT:

How to think?
How to expand your ideas before they are evaluated?
How to confront new ideas?
How to relate new ideas to your own experience?
How to determine the implications of your ideas and your consequences?

Have a discussion with a friend or in your classroom. Immediately after your discussion, write for five minutes, summarizing the key points, raising new questions, adding analysis, examples, or clarification. Later these notes could be shared and discussed. To develop your abilities to use questioning if you are in a classroom setting, your teacher could present an idea or passage to you and your classmates and have you brainstorm possible questions. Pairs of you can practice questioning each other about issues raised in study, trading the roles of questioner and questioned. Your teacher may provide lists of possible initial questions and perhaps some follow-up questions. You could also be allowed to continue your discussions another day, after you have had time to think. As you practice questioning, see it modeled, and learn the language, skills, and insights of critical thinking. Your mastery of questioning techniques will increase. The direction and structure of a discussion can be made clearer by periodically summarizing and rephrasing the main points made or by distinguishing the perspectives expressed. To practice exploring the idea of illuminating and probing questioning, you could read and evaluate different kinds of interviews, categorizing the questions asked. You could then list probing follow-up questions that weren't asked, and share your lists and discuss them with your friend or in your classroom. Why would you ask this? How could that be followed up? What would that tell you?

How would your rate yourself? I was able to:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what we are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question myself and others.

LESSON 64(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

QURANIC CHAPTER 44: THE SMOKE (AL-DUKHAN)
SIGNS 44:1-44:29

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (44:1)
By the clear Book (44:2)
truly, We caused it to descend on a blessed night.
Truly, We had been ones who warn. (44:3)
Every wise command is made clear in it, (44:4)
a command from Us.
Truly, We had been ones who send it (44:5)
*as a mercy from **your** Lord.*
Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing, (44:6)
Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them.
If you had been ones who are certain. (44:7)
There is no god but He. It is He Who gives life and causes to die.
He is your Lord and the Lord of your ancient fathers. (44:8)
Nay! They play in uncertainty. (44:9)
*Then, **you** be on the watch for a Day*
when the heavens will bring a clear smoke (44:10)
overcoming humanity.
This is a painful punishment. (44:11)

Our Lord! Remove you the punishment from us!
Truly, we are ones who believe. (44:12)
What will there be as a reminder for them?
A clear Messenger drew near them. (44:13)
Again, they turned away from him and they said:
He is one who is taught by others,
one who is possessed. (44:14)
Truly, We are ones who remove the punishment for a little.
Truly, you are ones who revert to ingratitude. (44:15)
On the Day when We will seize by force with the greatest attack,
truly, We will be ones who requite. (44:16)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:18)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:20)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:21)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:27)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:28)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:29)

COMMENTARY°

The section begins with the two separate letters, *Ha Mim*, making an oath by them and by the book composed of letters like them, making things clear. We have spoken elsewhere about these separate letters occurring at the beginning of a number of chapters in the Quran. The point to add here is that making them the subject of an oath is just like taking an oath on the book. Every single letter, representing a sound, is a true miracle, or one of Gods signs manifested in mans make-up, giving him the ability to speak. They also identify the order in which alphabetical sounds occur along the vocal tract, the symbol representing the letter and its sound, as also mans ability to gather information through them. All these are significant facts that grow in our minds when we seriously reflect on them.

What the oath asserts is the revelation of the book on a blessed night: (44:3-44:6) The reference to the night on which the Quran was bestowed from on high most probably means—although God knows best—the night when its revelation first started. It was a night during

the month of Ramadan, which is described in the following words: *The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was caused to descend.* (2:185) The Quran was not revealed in full on that night, nor was all the Quran revealed during Ramadan. It had only started to make contact with the earth, and that night was the first time such contact was made.

Those who were the first to receive the Quran lived during a remarkable period of history when they were in direct contact with God. He told them what they felt in different situations, making them feel, time after time, that He was looking after them. For their part, they took all this into account, in every move and action they performed, and every thought they entertained. They appealed to Him at every turn, trusting that He would always respond to them.

When that generation passed away, the Quran remained an open book that directly addresses human hearts. When people open themselves to it, its effect surpasses magic. It transforms their feelings in a way that is heard of only in great legends. The Quran has remained ever since a complete and clear system that can establish a model human community in any environment and at any time. What it creates is a type of human life that lives within its local environment and time and adopts the unique Quranic system with all its special qualities. This is the distinctive mark of the divine system, and it applies to everything that God makes. Human beings make what suits them at a particular period of time and in a particular situation. God's work, on the other hand, is perfect, fulfilling all needs, suited to all times and situations, combining permanent truths with variable forms, all in perfect harmony.

God bestowed the Quran from on high on that remarkable night to warn people in the first place: *Truly, We had been ones who warn.* (44:3)

The very fact that the Quran was bestowed from on high on that blessed night makes this a deciding point: *Every wise command is made clear in it.* (44:4) The Quran certainly set things apart, distinguishing the permanent truth from powerless falsehood. Limits were established and the road along which we should travel through life was charted. This is the road we should follow for the rest of our life. Thus, none of the fundamental issues of human life are left ambiguous. Everything is made clear in the divine message. All this has been accomplished by God's command and by His will to send messengers to clarify matters for all humanity: *A command from Us. Truly, We had been ones who send it.* (44:5)

All this has been done as an act of mercy bestowed on humanity for all future generations up to the Day of Judgement: *A command*

from Us. Truly, We had been ones who send it. (44:6) Nothing manifests God's mercy like the revelation of the Quran. With consummate ease, it appeals directly to people's hearts as easily as the blood flowing through their veins. In this way, it transforms us into a noble creature. With Quranic guidance, human society becomes more like a dream world, yet it is there for eyes to see. The faith the Quran outlines profoundly engages hearts and minds so as to be loved passionately. The question here is not one of meticulous perfection, goodness and suitability. It is much more than that. It is a scenario in which every one of these qualities is further enhanced until their perfection attains a beauty that permeates all details and combines and harmonizes them while at the same time maintaining their close links to the main body.

As a mercy from your Lord. Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (44:6) He hears and He knows. He reveals what He reveals to people on the basis of His knowledge of what they say and do, as well as what is suitable and beneficial for them of laws, regulations and directives. He is the One who is in control of the universe, taking care of all who live on it. He is: *Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them. If you had been ones who are certain.* (44:7) The revelations He bestows from on high to mold people's lives is part of His Lordship of the universe and of His laws that operate in the universe.

The reference in this sign to firm belief implies an allusion to the confused beliefs of the ungrateful. They recognized God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth but they, nevertheless, associated partners with Him. This means that the central principle of Gods Oneness was blurred in their minds, and this precluded them from having firm and reassured beliefs.

God is also the One who gives life and deals death, the Lord of all generations of creation: *There is no god but He. It is He Who gives life and causes to die. He is your Lord and the Lord of your ancient fathers.* (44:8) Both the initiation of life and its deathly end are witnessed by all and are recognized as being beyond the power of any creature. This is clear at first sight and with simple consideration. The scene of death, like the scene of new life, touches the human heart and leaves a very strong influence on it, making it ready to respond. Therefore, they are often mentioned in the Quran to attract people's attention to them.

CLARIFYING SMOKE

At this point, the chapter refers to the situation of the ungrateful, which was the opposite of the seriousness with which they should

have dealt with God's revelations: (44:9-44:16)

The chapter tells the Prophet that they are playing about when the situation requires seriousness, and that they continue to be in doubt about God's confirmed revelations. He is, therefore, instructed to leave them until they face a day of great hardship: *Then, you be on the watch for a Day when the heavens will bring a clear smoke overcoming humanity. This is a painful punishment.* (44:10-44:11)

Scholars during the early period of the Quranic message differed in their views about what the smoke mentioned in this sign means. Some of them maintained that it will occur on the Day of Judgment, which makes the warning implied here similar to other warnings in the Quran about that day. They said that this will surely take place and that the Prophet awaited it. Others said that it actually did take place just as the Quran states. It was then lifted after the Prophet prayed God to so remove it.

We, though, are more in agreement with the view expressed by Ibn Abbas and explained by Ibn Kathir making it clear that the smoke will appear on the Day of Judgment. Similar warnings also occur elsewhere in the Quran. What it means here is that these people doubt and play. Leave them, then, in anticipation of that terrible day when the skies shall bring smoke that makes things clear. As it envelops people, their suffering will be particularly painful. Their appeals for help is described thus: *Our Lord! Remove you the punishment from us! Truly, we are ones who believe.* (44:12) They are told that a positive response to their appeal is impossible. It is now too late: (44:13-44:14) They claimed that a non-Arab person or people taught the Prophet the Quran, and they further alleged that Muhammad was a madman.

Having given them this image of a time when they appeal in vain, they are told that they still have a chance, which they should not lose. While they are still in this life, their punishment is delayed. If they believe now, as they will later promise they would if returned, they will have acted whilst they have the time to prove their sincerity. Nothing is lost yet, so they better act now before they are returned to God. When they are returned to Him: *On the Day when We will seize by force with the greatest attack. . .* when the smoke envelops people, *truly, We will be ones who requite* for the play you indulge in and the falsehood you level at the Prophet describing him as taught by others, a madman, when he is God's trusted messenger.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How do you understand these signs?
Would others see it this way?
Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?
What does X think is the cause? Y?
Why do they differ?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialogical reasoning after studying these verses.

LESSON 64(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

QURANIC CHAPTER 44: THE SMOKE (AL-DUKHAN)

SIGNS 44:30-44:42

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Children of Jacob (44:30)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Children of Jacob (44:31)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Children of Jacob (44:32)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Children of Jacob (44:33)
Truly, these say: (44:34)
There is nothing but our first singled out death
and we will not be ones who are revived. (44:35)
Then, bring our fathers bac
if you had been ones who are sincere. (44:36)
Are they better or a folk of Tubba
and those who were before them?
We caused them to perish.
They, truly, had been ones who sin. (44:37)
And We created not the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them as ones who play! (44:38)
We created them not but with The Truth
but most of them know not. (44:39)
Truly, the Day of Decision is the time appointed
for them one and all, (44:40)
a Day when a defender will not avail
another defender at all
nor will they be helped (44:41)
but him on whom God had mercy.
Truly, He is The Almighty, The Compassionate. (44:42)

COMMENTARY°

Once more this section takes up the doubts and denial of resurrection and accountability of the ungrateful. Here, too, resurrection is linked to the fact that the structure of the universe is raised on a foundation of truth and seriousness that requires accountability and

requital after resurrection: Now these people assert: (44:34-44:42)

The Arab idolaters used to say that people die once only and that is the end; no resurrection and no further life. They called this the first death, meaning that it precedes what they were promised of a second life after resurrection. To them, the proof of this assertion was contained in the fact that none of their forefathers who died had ever returned; none had been resurrected. They demanded that their forefathers should be brought back to life before their eyes if resurrection were indeed true.

They thus betrayed their ignorance of the purpose of resurrection. They did not understand that it is a further stage of human life, with a definite purpose and a clear goal, which is the administration of requital for what was done in the first stage. Thus, God's obedient servants reach their noble destination, which they have earned through acting well in their first lives, while hardened sinners arrive at the miserable and filthy end they deserve. This means that resurrection will come about after the entire first stage of life has ended, i.e. the human being's time on earth has concluded. It precludes that resurrection should be the result of a human wish expressed by an individual or a community, so that they can believe in it. Indeed, faith is not complete unless one believes in resurrection, which God's messengers have confirmed, and which is apparent to anyone who reflects on the nature of life and God's wisdom in creating it in this way. Such reflection is sufficient on its own to believe in the Day of Judgment.

Before the section invites them to reflect on the design of the universe, it shakes their hearts strongly, reminding them of the fate suffered by the people of Tubba (title given to the kings of Himyar, a major tribe), in South Arabia. This story must have been well known to the Arabs, as the chapter makes only a brief reference to it, warning them against a similarly terrible fate: *Are they better or a folk of Tubba and those who were before them? We caused them to perish. They, truly, had been ones who sin.* (44:37)

As this reminder makes them shudder, they are called upon to reflect on the perfect design of the heavens and earth, and how the universe is finely balanced and well planned, indicating that it is deliberately made in this way for a particular purpose: (44:38-44:42) There is a fine and delicate relation between the creation of the heavens, the earth and all that is in between them on the one hand and the question of resurrection and accountability on the other. Human nature can easily understand this when attention is drawn to it in the way described here.

That the human being is so created, with both tendencies, and

that God's action cannot be mere idle play, means that we will have a specific fate which we meet after our journey on earth is over. This is the essence of the hereafter. Therefore, it is mentioned after attentions have been drawn to the wise purpose that lies beyond the creation of the universe: (44:40-44:42)

This statement comes naturally at this point, closely related as it is to what went before it. It is absolute wisdom that requires that creatures should have a day when judgment is made between those who follow true guidance and those who go astray; when goodness is rewarded and evil humiliated; when people have no support, bond or relation. They will return to their Creator as individuals, just like He created them, to be requited for what they did in life. No one will support them or offer a gesture of mercy, except for those on whom God bestows His grace. It is from God's hand that they came out to work in life, and to His hand they will return to receive what their actions deserve. In between, they have a chance to act, just as they are being tested.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

This Quranic Studies program has been developed to clarify and settle questions peculiar to itself. You should use such questions to organize and unify details covered in Quranic studies. The basic questions we all face include the nature of right and wrong, how we know things, and so on. In order to develop a framework for organizing details, both general and specific, Quranic ideas should be continuously raised. You need to learn to come to your own conclusions, raise thought-provoking issues, be allowed extended discussion of them and help keep the discussion focussed. Have extended discussions on thought-provoking ideas. Maintain a focus in the discussion so that multiple issues are discussed. Be clear about your objectives so that you feel that you are moving towards them in an affective way.

QUESTIONS

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?

Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to elaborate further on the deep questioning strategy in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 64(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATION

HOW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 44: THE SMOKE (AL-DUKHAN) SIGNS 44:43-44:59

Makkah: *Truly, the tree of Zaqqum* (44:43)
will be the food of the sinful. (44:44)
Like molten copper it will bubble in the bellies, (44:45)
like boiling, scalding water. (44:46)
It will be said: Take him and drag him violently
into the depths of hellfire. (44:47)

Again, then, unloose over his head
the punishment of scalding water! (44:48)
Experience this! Truly, you, you are seemingly
the mighty, the generous. (44:49)
Truly, this is what you had been contesting. (44:50)
Truly, the ones who are God-conscious will be
in the station of trustworthiness (44:51)
among Gardens and springs (44:52)
wearing fine silk and brocade, ones who face one another. (44:53)
Thus, it is so. We will give in marriage lovely,
most beautiful eyed ones. (44:54)
They will call therein for every kind of sweet fruit,
ones that are safe. (44:55)
They will not experience death with them
but the first singled out death.
And He will protect them from the punishment of hellfire, (44:56)
a grace from your Lord. That, it is the winning
the sublime triumph! (44:57)
Truly, We made this easy in your language
so that perhaps they will recollect. (44:58)
So be on the watch!
Truly, they are ones who watch. (44:59)

COMMENTARY°

The scene begins with an image of the Zaqqum tree, which is stated to provide the food of sinners. It is a powerful image that strikes fear and panic in the audience's hearts. The closest thing we know to this food is the lees, the sediment that remains when oil has been long boiled. This lees continues to boil in their bellies like molten lead. The sinful person who behaved towards his Lord and His trusted Messenger with arrogance will be standing there. An order is issued to the guards of hell to take him away in a brutal manner that suits his honorable position: *It will be said: Take him and drag him violently into the depths of hellfire. Again, then, unloose over his head the punishment of scalding water!* (44:47-44:48) Drag him away so as to make him feel his humiliation, for there is no honor for such sinners! When he gets there, pour scalding water over his head so as to burn his skin. Then, added to all this punishment is a strong rebuke: *Truly, this is what you had been contesting.* (44:50) When you were warned against this fate, you received the warning with mockery, doubting that it would ever happen.

Our eyes stretch to the other side to see the God-conscious who

took the warning seriously and feared what may happen on this day of decision. We see them in a safe position, where there is nothing to fear and no harsh treatment. They revel in their splendor amid gardens and fountains. Their garments are made of silk and brocade. They take their positions facing one another talking about whatever is of concern to them. In addition, they are given pure companions with beautiful eyes to make their bliss perfect. There, in heaven, they are the owners of the place. They can ask for whatever they want and it will be given: *They will call therein for every kind of sweet fruit, ones that are safe.* (44:55) They expect no end to this happiness, as death does not occur here. They have already died once and they will not be made to taste death again. This contrasts with what the ungrateful used to say in this present world: *There is nothing but our first singled out death and we will not be ones who are revived.* (44:35) In the ungrateful' case, the one death is followed by suffering in hell. The believers, who are in heaven, *they will not experience death with them but the first singled out death. And He will protect them from the punishment of hellfire.* (44:56) This is yet another aspect of God's favor which He bestows on believers. No one is saved from suffering on the Day of Judgment unless the Lord grants this favor. It is all through *a grace from your Lord. That, it is the winning the sublime triumph!* (44:57)

The chapter concludes with a reminder of the great blessing God has bestowed on us by sending His message to warn us against the consequences of disbelief: (44:58-44:59)

It is a fitting conclusion that sums up the message of the chapter reflects its ambiance, and fits with its beginning and line of discussion. It started with a reference to the book God revealed as a reminder for people so that they may take heed. It warned against what may happen on the Day of Judgment, with God saying: *On the Day when We will seize by force with the greatest attack, truly, We will be ones who requite.* (44:16) The two short signs at the end remind them of the favor God granted them by giving them the Quran in the Arabic tongue, which they understand. They are finally given an implicit but nonetheless fearful warning: *So be on the watch! Truly, they are ones who watch.* (44:59)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

LESSON 65(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 45: THE ONES WHO KNEEL (AL-JATHIYAH)
SIGNS 45:1-45:11

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (45:1)
The sending down the Book successively is from God,
The Almighty, The Wise. (45:2)
Truly, in the heavens and the earth are signs
for the ones who believe. (45:3)
And in your creation
and what He disseminates of moving creatures
are signs for a folk who are certain, (45:4)
the alternation of the nighttime and the daytime
and what God caused to descend from the heaven of provision.
He gave life with it to the earth after its death
and the diversifying of the winds—
signs for a folk who are reasonable. (45:5)
These are the signs of God We recount to you with The Truth.
Then, in which discourse, after God
and His signs, will they believe? (45:6)
Woe to every false, sinful one! (45:7)
He hears the signs of God being recounted to him.
Again, he persists as one who grows arrogant
as if he hears them not.
So give him good tidings of a painful punishment! (45:8)
And if he knew anything about Our signs,
he took them to himself in mockery.
Those, for them is a despised punishment. (45:9)

Behind them there is hell.
What they earned will avail them not at all
nor whatever they took to themselves
other than God as protectors.
And for them will be a tremendous punishment. (45:10)
This is a guidance. Those who were ungrateful
for the signs of their Lord,
for them there is a punishment of painful wrath. (45:11)

COMMENTARY°

Ha Mim. This book is bestowed from on high by God, the Almighty, the Wise. Surely, in the heavens and the earth there are signs for those who believe. And in your own creation, and in the animals God scatters on earth there are signs for people of sure faith. And in the alternation of night and day, and in the means of subsistence God sends down from the skies, reviving with it the earth after it had been lifeless, and in the shifting of the winds there are signs for those who use their reason. (45:1-45:5)

The chapter mentions the revelation of this book, the Quran, by God, the Almighty, the Wise after having introduced the two separate Arabic letters *Ha Mim*, to point to this book's source. In speaking about the separate letters introduced at the beginning of a number of chapters, we have mentioned elsewhere that they highlight the fact that the Quran is composed of the letters forming the Arab's own language, yet they cannot produce even a very small portion like it. This, then, constitutes permanent evidence that the Quran is bestowed from on high by God, the Almighty who can do whatever He wishes, the Wise who creates everything according to a certain measure and to serve a particular purpose. This is an apt comment that fits the ambience of the chapter and its discussion of different types of people.

Before speaking about the ungrateful and their attitude towards the Quran, the chapter refers to signs pointing to the Creator that are available everywhere in the world around them. Alone, these signs should have been enough to direct them to believe in God. Now, the chapter turns their minds to such signs so that they may open their hearts to them and realize that it is God who has bestowed this book from on high and that it is He who has created this great universe: *Truly, in the heavens and the earth are signs for the ones who believe.* (45:3) The signs scattered everywhere in the heavens and the earth are not limited to any area or situation. Wherever we look around us we find signs. Is there anything in this wonderful universe that is not

a sign pointing to its great Maker?

Everything on earth and every living thing, indeed every part of every living thing, large or small, is a sign. This applies to fine, little things in the same way as it applies to the large and huge: a small leaf in a great high tree or a frail plant is a sign when we contemplate its shape, size, color and feel. A hair on the body of a person or animal and a bird's feather are equally signs whether in terms of quality, length, material or function. Wherever we stretches our eyes to look at the skies or the earth, we will find a great multitude of signs that stand clear before us. Yet, who looks at these signs and understands their message? To whom are they addressed? *Truly, in the heavens and the earth are signs for the ones who believe.* (45:3)

The section then points out that God's signs can also be seen within people themselves. They feel these close at hand: *And in your creation and what He disseminates of moving creatures are signs for a folk who are certain.* (45:4) Our wonderful constitution, unique qualities, varied and fine functions are all miraculous indeed, but we tend to forget this because of long familiarity. Indeed the physical make-up of any human organ fills us with wonder. In its most simple and primitive form, in the amoeba and even smaller forms, life is a miracle. If this is apparent in our highly complex constitution how much more complex then is our psychological and emotional constitution?

The chapter then highlights a number of natural phenomena and their effects on human life and on the lives of other creatures: *The alternation of the nighttime and the daytime and what God caused to descend from the heaven of provision. He gave life with it to the earth after its death and the diversifying of the winds—signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (45:5) The alternation of day and night is a phenomenon that has lost its significance in the minds of most people because of its regular frequency. Yet, what wonder would fill the heart of anyone who sees the approach of night or the creeping of the day for the first time? An alert mind and an open heart will always see this great wonder and marvel at it as they see in it God's hand that controls the universe.

The Quran, revealed by God, highlights these universal signs in a way that inspires believers who have certainty of faith and who use their reason. In this way, it touches hearts and minds and addresses people's natures. The profound link between human nature and the universe means that it only requires some inspiring words, such as the signs of the Quran, for senses to be alerted and made responsive. Anyone who does not believe as a result of contemplating these signs is totally unlikely to believe in some other way; and the one who is

not fully alerted by the inspiring signs of the Quran will not be alerted by loud outcries from any other source: *These are the signs of God We recount to you with The Truth.* (45:6)

No words will be as effective as the Quran, God's word. Nor will any creation be equal to God's creation in the universe. Likewise, no truth will be as clear and confirmed as the truth of God: *Then, in which discourse, after God and His signs, will they believe?* (45:6) The only requital fit to be given to an unbeliever is severe punishment:

Woe to every lying, sinful person who hears God's revelations being recited to him, and yet persists in his haughty disdain, as though he had not heard them. So, give him the news of painful suffering. When he learns something of Our revelations, he ridicules it. For such people there is humiliating suffering in store. Hell lurks behind them; and all that they may have gained shall be of no avail whatsoever to them, nor shall any of those which they took for their protectors beside God. Grievous suffering awaits them. (45:7-45:10)

These signs describe, in part, the reception by the ungrateful of the Quranic message in Makkah, their stubborn refusal to listen to the clear word of truth and their insistence on falsehood. They take a hostile attitude to the truth, as if it has never even been presented to them. These signs also mention the rudeness and impudence of the ungrateful as they speak of God and His word. The Quran severely rebukes them for this, putting before them the grievous and humiliating suffering they are certain to endure.

This sign: *Woe to every false, sinful one!* (45:7) threatens every habitual liar who frequently indulges in sin. The threat is issued by God Almighty who is able to bring about the total destruction of any community, and whose promises and warnings always come true. This makes the warning all the more serious and frightening.

The mark of such a lying, sinful person is that he persistently holds on to what is false, looks with disdain on the truth, feels too proud to respond to God's revelations and behaves with insolence towards God. *He hears the signs of God being recounted to him. Again, he persists as one who grows arrogant as if he hears them not. So give him good tidings of a painful punishment!* (45:8) Although this hateful type of person could be found among the idolaters in Makkah, the same type is seen in every society based on tribal honor, immersed in ignorance, whether in the past, present or future. Many are those all over the world, including some who are described as Muslims, who behave with disdain when they hear God's revelations being recited and who persist in their erring ways as though they have never heard such revelations. They do so because what

God has revealed is contrary to their desire and will not approve the evil and false practices in which they indulge.

This statement describes the punishment such a person will receive, but the Arabic text uses the word *bashshir* for giving news, even though the word is only used for giving good news. As used in this sign to bring news of painful suffering, it thus carries connotations of ridicule. If this person does not listen to the warning, let him receive the news of his suffering in a voice that signals good news. What mockery!

How many are those, including some described as Muslims, who ridicule God's revelations, mocking them and those who believe in them. *And if he knew anything about Our signs, he took them to himself in mockery. Those, for them is a despised punishment.* (45:9) Humiliation is the fitting requital for everyone who ridicules God's revelations.

This suffering is ready and close at hand. It may not be time for it yet, but it is nevertheless present: *Behind them there is hell. What they earned will avail them not at all nor whatever they took to themselves other than God as protectors. And for them will be a tremendous punishment.* (45:10) The phrase, *behind them*, has connotations that are specifically intended. Since the suffering is *behind* them, they do not see it and remain oblivious to it. Therefore, they do not try to avoid it. Yet it will surely engulf them. *What they earned will avail them not at all nor whatever they took to themselves other than God as protectors.* (45:10) Nothing that they might have done or gained is of any use to them. Even if some of their deeds are good, they cannot benefit from them because they have been scattered by the wind like dust. Their deeds were not founded on a solid basis of faith. Likewise, their possessions will be of no use to them. Nor can their deities, friends, supporters or soldiers offer them help or protection. Nor can they intercede on their behalf. *And for them will be a tremendous punishment.* (45:10) Their punishment is not only humiliating, as fits their offense for mocking God's revelations, it is also grievous to suit the magnitude of that offense.

This section concludes with a word that describes, in general terms, the true nature of God's revelations and the punishment to be meted out to those who disbelieve them: *This is a guidance. Those who were ungrateful for the signs of their Lord, for them there is a punishment of painful wrath.* (45:11) It is a fact that this Quran is true and pure guidance that admits no error whatsoever. Therefore, anyone who denies its truth deserves such grievous suffering. The nature of the pain is described here as abominable, which serves to emphasize its description in the previous signs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions::

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

LESSON 65(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN?

CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

QURANIC CHAPTER 45: THE ONES WHO KNEEL (AL-JATHIYAH)

SIGNS 45:12-45:21

Makkah: *God! It is He Who caused the sea to be subservient to you that the boats may run through it by His command and so that you be looking for His grace and so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (45:12)
And He caused to be subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. All is from Him.

Truly, in that are signs for a folk who reflect. (45:13)

Madinah (45:14)

Makkah: *Whoever did as one in accord with morality,*
it is for himself and whoever did evil, it is against himself.
Again, to your Lord you will be returned. (45:15)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (45:16)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (45:17)

Makkah: *Again, We assigned **you** an open way of the command*
so follow it and follow not the desires
of those who know not. (45:18)
*Truly, they will never avail **you** against God at all.*
And, truly, the ones who are unjust, some of them
are protectors of some others.
But God is Protector of the ones who are God-conscious. (45:19)
This is a clear evidence for humanity and a guidance
and a mercy for a folk who are certain. (45:20)
Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds
that We will make them equal
with those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality?
Are their living and dying equal?
How evil is the judgment they give! (45:21)

COMMENTARY°

It is God who has subjected the sea for you, so that ships sail through it by His command, and that you may seek of His bounty, and that you give thanks. And He has subjected to you, as a gift from Himself all that is in the heavens and on earth. In this there are signs for people who think. (45:12-45:13)

Having specified the sea, the section makes a general reference to God's favors. He has made all the forces, potentials and blessings in the universe that have a bearing on the human being's task on earth subservient to him: (45:13) Everything in the universe is created by God. He controls it and determines its operation. The human being, a small creature in the universe, is given the ability to understand a part of the laws of nature that operate, by God's will, in this universe. This enables him to make use of powers and forces that are immeasurably greater than his own. Without God's grace, he would not have been able to do so. In all this, there are signs to reflect upon: (45:13)

Now the chapter calls on believers to show magnanimity and forbearance to those who are weak because their hearts do not open to the great source of power. They are urged to show kindness to

those who are blind to the great truths, and as a result, do not look forward to God's great days when some aspects of His majesty are clearly shown:

This directive: (45:15) is issued to the believers, requiring them to be forbearing towards those who do not look forward to God's days. Theirs should be an attitude of forgiveness that combines generosity with power and dignity. The truth is that such people deserve pity and sympathy because they are deprived of the benefit of believing in God, which is a rich treasure of grace, strength, wealth, reassurance and kindness. It provides true protection in moments of stress and weakness. They are also deprived of true knowledge that understands the nature of universal laws and what they can bring of power and riches for human benefit. Those who enjoy the wealth of grace and benefits that come with faith are the ones who should be forbearing. They should forgive the slips and errors of the ones who are deprived of them.

On the other hand, the believers should leave the matter to God and He will requite all as they deserve. He will then credit them with their forbearing attitude and reward them for it as a deed of goodness. Such forgiveness naturally applies to what does not spread corruption on earth and does not constitute a transgression of the bounds set by God: (45:14) This is followed by an assertion about every person's individual responsibility and about fair judgment for all. It further confirms that all will return to God: (45:15) When this is made clear, a believer is able to be forbearing and to overlook personal offenses, but this forbearance is not out of weakness. Instead, he is the one who is strong and magnanimous. He holds the torch of guidance to enable the ones deprived of light to see. He comes forward with the cure for those who are ill. He will be rewarded according to his deeds, unharmed by those who do evil. All matters are ultimately judged by God, to whom all shall return.

God assigned a new leadership, imparted a new message to a different messenger, put His divine law back on its right course and gave back to divine faith its absolute clarity. This new leadership is thus guided by God's law, not by any human desire: *Again, We assigned you an open way of the command so follow it and follow not the desires of those who know not.* (45:18) Thus matters are defined in absolute clarity: it is either God's law or people's changing desires that are devoid of knowledge. There can be no third alternative and no middle way. No one abandons divine law unless they choose to pursue human desires. Everything that differs with God's law is the expression of desire that pleases those who lack knowledge. God warns His Messenger against following the desires of those who have

no knowledge of the truth, as they will be of no avail to him. They only try to protect one another. Thus, they cannot harm him in any way as God will support and protect him: *Truly, they will never avail you against God at all. And, truly, the ones who are unjust, some of them are protectors of some others. But God is Protector of the ones who are God-conscious.* (45:19)

This sign and the one before it charts the way for the advocates of the divine message, leaving no need for any comment or further detail: (45:18-45:19) There is only one law that fits this description; everything else is the result of desire and ignorance. Every advocate of the divine faith must follow only that. Those who espouse desire cannot help a believer: they only help one another and will not abandon their course. Yet they are too weak to be able to cause a believer any harm, since God is the One who protects the God-conscious.

Commenting on this decisive clarification, the chapter mentions the certainty of faith and what the Quran provides of insight, guidance and divine grace: *This is a clear evidence for humanity and a guidance and a mercy for a folk who are certain.* (45:20) Describing the Quran as a means of insight emphasizes its role of providing enlightenment. The Quran provides insight, and insight makes matters clear. Moreover, the Quran itself is guidance and mercy, but all this is dependent on certainty of faith which admits no doubt or worry. With such certainty, we know the way as it appears before us clear, straight, leading to a well defined goal. We go along this way sure o step and without hesitation. The Quran is our source of light anc guidance. It is indeed the embodiment of God's grace.

The section clearly distinguishes between those who commit evil and those who do good as a result of being believers. There is no way that they can be judged in the same way. They are different in God's sight. Furthermore, God has established His universal law on the basis of truth and justice.

Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give! (45:21) may be understood to refer to those among the people of earlier revelations who deviated from their scriptures and indulged in sin, but who nonetheless continued to think of themselves as believers. They might have thought themselves to be on the same level as Muslims who do good deeds. They might also have considered that the two groups are equal in God's sight, both in this life and in the life after death when people are given their reward or punishment. These signs may also be taken as a general discourse defining how people are judged on Gods scales. It shows that believ-

ers who do good deeds are definitely in a higher position. It says that putting the evildoers and the God-conscious on the same level, either in this life or in the next, conflicts with the basic and permanent rule upon which the universe is founded, namely, the truth. Thus the truth is fundamental to both the universe and the divine law.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Evaluating Reasoning by:•
Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

LESSON 65(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

QURANIC CHAPTER 45: THE ONES WHO KNEEL (AL-JATHIYAH)
SIGNS 45:22-45:26

Makkah: *And God created the heavens*
and the earth with The Truth
so that every soul would be given recompense for what it earned
and they, they will not be wronged. (45:22)
Had you considered he who took to himself
his own desire as his god and whom God
caused to go astray out of a knowledge,
sealed over his having the ability to hear
and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight?
Who, then, will guide him after God?
Will you not, then, recollect? (45:23)
And they said: There is nothing, but this present life of ours.
We die and we live and nothing causes us to perish
but a long course of tim
And there is for them not any knowled
Truly, they are but surmising. (45:2
And when are recounted to them Our signs, clear portent
then, disputation had not been but that they said:
Bring our fathers if you had been ones who are sincere. (45:25)
Say: God gives you life. Again, He causes you to die.
Again, He will gather you on the Day of Resurrection
in which there is no doubt
but most of humanity knows not. (45:26)

COMMENTARY°

Consequently, both the universe and human life are set to progress by means of this truth. This manifests itself in the distinction between evildoers and those who do good in all respects, and in the individual judging of people on the basis of what each has earned through life. Justice is, thus, administered to all: (45:22) This is the constant truth, the foundational stone of the entire universe.

The chapter then refers to desire, which is by nature changing and fleeting. Yet some people make of desire a deity and thus they are unable to recognize true guidance: (45:23)

The inimitable Quranic style draws here an extraordinary image of the human soul when it abandons the basic and permanent rule of truth in order to follow fleeting desires, making of them a deity from which concepts, rules, feelings and actions are derived. In this way do we submit to desire and obey its dictates. This extraordinary situation is painted in a tone that invites strong censure.

The Arabic phrase, *ilm*, may be translated as, in full knowledge, in which case it refers to God's knowledge that such a person deserves to be left astray. Alternatively, it can be translated as despite his knowledge. In other words, his knowledge of the truth does not deter him from pursuing his desires. Such a person deserves to be left straying in blindness: *God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight* allowing no light or guidance to seep through. His judgment is, thus, fundamentally impaired.

All guidance comes from God. No one can provide anyone with guidance or error, not even His chosen messengers. It is all determined by God alone. *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23) When a person takes heed, he will break the chains of desire and return to the straight path of truth. No one who treads this path will ever go astray.

So short-sighted were they that they considered life to be nothing beyond what they saw before their very eyes: one generation dies and another replaces it in life. (45:24-45:26) Apparently, no hand deals death; it is all a question of days that pass and time that elapses bringing death to all. It is time, then, that ends their lives, making them die. This is a superficial outlook that does not go beyond appearances to discover subtle reasons and causes. They do not ask what brings them life; or, when it is there, what takes it away? They see that death does not occur according to a defined system or after a certain number of days and years. Instead, they think that only the passage of time deprives them of life. Death comes to all: children and the elderly, the healthy and the ill, the strong and the weak. Therefore, when we carefully consider the reason behind all this, time is an inadequate explanation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above sign?
What the assumption of those who say that all disbelievers should be killed?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of one of the Quranic signs.
II was able to analyze my actions today and evaluate them.

LESSON 65(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY TO RELEVANCE

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

QURANIC CHAPTER 45: THE ONES WHO KNEEL (AL-JATHIYAH)

SIGNS 45:27-45:37

Makkah: *And to God belongs the dominion*
of the heavens and the earth.
And on a Day that the Hour will be secure,
on that Day the ones who deal in falsehood will lose. (45:27)
Thou wilt see each community one who crawls on its knees.
Each community will be called to its book:
This Day you will be given recompense
for what you had been doing. (45:28)
This is Our Book that speaks for itself against you with The Truth.
Truly, We registered what you had been doing. (45:29)
Then, as for those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
their Lord will cause them to enter in His mercy.

That will be the winning the clear triumph. (45:30)
But as for those who were ungrateful:
Be not My signs recounted to you?
Then, you grew arrogant and you had been a folk,
ones who sin! (45:31)
And when it was said: Truly, the promise of God is true
and the Hour, there is no doubt about it.
You said: We are not informed about the Hour.
Truly, We think it but an opinion
and we are not ones who ascertain it. (45:32)
And shown to themselves will be the evil deeds they did.
They will be surrounded by what they had been ridiculing. (45:33)
It would be said: This Day We will forget you
as you forgot the meeting of this your Day.
Your place of shelter will be the fire
and there is not for you anyone who helps. (45:34)
This is because you took to yourselves
the signs of God in mockery
and this present life deluded you.
So this Day they will not be brought out
from there nor will they ask to be favored. (45:35)
So The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the heavens
and the Lord of the earth,
and the Lord of the worlds. (45:36)
And His is the domination of the heavens and the earth
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (45:37

COMMENTARY°

They are now presented with a scene from the day that they doubt will ever come: When the Last Hour strikes, those who follow falsehood will on that Day lose all. You will see every community on its knees. Every community will be summoned to its record: (45:27-45:29)

All those waiting on their knees look anxiously, breathless and with dry mouths. They are told: (45:28-45:29) All of them, belonging to different communities, races and generations, are split into two groups—believers and unbelievers—for there is no other banner to raise on that occasion. One is God's party and the other is Satan's.

They are the ones who are given comfort to dispel all worry and anxiety: (45:30) The outcome of their situation is given straightaway, easily and without delay, so as to spread over them a pleasant air. But what do we find as we stretch our eyes through the words of the

text to look at the other party? We hear a long and shameful rebuke one that reminds them of their worst sayings and deeds: (45:31-45:32)

How do you view your situation now? Are you convinced? Then the chapter turns away for a moment to give us a glimpse of what happens to them: (45:33) Further reproach is heaped upon their heads, and they are told that their lot will be nothing other than total disregard, humiliation as well as painful doom: (45:34-45:35)

As their ultimate fate is announced, the curtains are drawn leaving them in hell from which they cannot hope to leave and where they are not asked for excuses or justification: (45:35) As we listen, we almost hear the doors of hell as they are finally closed. The scene is completed; nothing of it will change.

The chapter concludes with voices praising and glorifying God: (45:36-45:37)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How would you answer the Quranic question?
What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear an other's heavy load?
What issues are the sign addressing?
Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Read a chapter of the Quran with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Share and discuss your lists.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understand what a rhetorical question is.
I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.
It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 66(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QURANIC CHAPTER 46: THE CURVING SANDHILLS (AL-AHQAF)
SIGNS 46:1-46:10

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (46:1)
The sending down successively of the Book
is from God The Almighty, The Wise.(46:2)
We created not the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between the two,
but with The Truth and for a term, that which is determined.
And those who disbelieved in what they were warned
about are ones who turn aside.(46:3)
Say: Considered you what you call to other than God?
Cause me to see what of the earth they created.
Have they an association in the heavens?
Bring me a Book from before this,
or a vestige of knowledge
if you had been ones who are sincere.(46:4
And who is one who has gone more astr
than one who calls to other than Gc
one who responds not to him until the Day of Resurrection
And they are of their supplication to them,
ones who are heedless.(46:5)
And when humanity will be assembled,
they will become their enemies
and will be ones who disavow their worship.(46:6)
And when Our signs are recounted, clear portents,
those who were ungrateful for The Truth said
when it drew near them:
This is clear sorcery!(46:7)
Or they say: He devised it.
Say: If I devised it, you still possess nothing for me against God.
He is greater in knowledge of what you press on about.
He sufficed as a Witness between me and between you.
And He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.(46:8)
Say: I had not been an innovation among the Messengers,
nor am I informed of what will be wreaked on me,

nor with you. I follow only what is revealed to me and I am only a clear warner.(46:9)

(46:10) Madinah

COMMENTARY°

The present section, revealed in Makkah except for the last sign, addresses the question of faith: belief in God's Oneness and His absolute Lordship of the universe. As in other Makkan chapters, faith here also includes belief in the revelation of the divine message to Muhammad, God's Messenger, who was preceded by other messengers, and to whom the Quran was bestowed from on high, confirming earlier scriptures. It also includes belief in the resurrection and accountability for all that is done in this present life, whether good or evil.

These are the fundamental principles upon which the Quranic message builds its whole structure. Therefore, the Quran elaborates on these principles in all the Makkan chapters. It also touches upon these aspects in the chapters revealed later in Madinah, and specifically whenever it lays down legislation or addresses a directive to the Muslim community. Part of the nature of the Quranic faith is that it considers belief in God's Oneness, Muhammad's message and accountability in the life to come the pivot upon which all its principles, systems, laws and morality turn. All are closely related to this belief. Therefore, they remain proactive.

The chapter treats this question of faith in every possible way, presenting it against different backdrops and adding universal, psychological and historical effects. It makes faith a question for all existence, not merely the human race. It gives us a glimpse of how some of the jinn listened to the Quran, and refers to the attitude of some of the Children of Jacob to it, presenting one testimony from uncorrupted human nature and another from some Israelites. It takes us on a journey so that we can look at the expanse of the heavens and the earth, and it also presents images from the Day of Judgment. It further shows us the fate of the people of Hud, and touches on the fates of some of the townships around Makkah. According to the chapter, both the universe itself and the Quran are books stating the same truth.

The chapter consists of four inter-related parts that can be seen as a single whole. The first part begins with the two separate letters *Ha Mim*, that also began the six chapters preceding this one. These two letters are immediately followed by a reference to the book of the Quran and its being a revelation from God: *The sending down*

successively of the Book is from God The Almighty, The Wise. (46:2) The chapter follows this with a reference to the book of the universe, which is established on the basis of His truth and created according to elaborate planning. *We created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two, but with The Truth and for a term, that which is determined. And those who disbelieved in what they were warned about are ones who turn aside.* (46:3) Thus, the recited book of the Quran and the book of the universe we behold confirm the truth as well as the elaborate planning. (46:3)

After this powerful and comprehensive opening, the chapter begins to present the question of faith, starting with a denunciation of polytheism, upheld by the pagan Arabs, demonstrating that it lacks all basis in the universe, and that it further lacks true pronouncement and inherited knowledge: *Say: Considered you what you call to other than God? Cause me to see what of the earth they created. Have they an association in the heavens? Bring me a Book from before this, or a vestige of knowledge if you had been ones who are sincere.* (46:4) It shows the error of the one who worships instead of God someone or thing who cannot hear or respond to its worshipper and who disputes with him on the Day of Judgment dissociating itself from all such worship.

It then speaks of the appalling reception they gave to the truth as presented by Muhammad, describing it as plain sorcery. *And when Our signs are recounted, clear portents, those who were ungrateful for The Truth said when it drew near them: This is clear sorcery!* (46:7) They even had the temerity to go further than this and alleged that the Prophet had fabricated it all. The chapter instructs the Prophet to give them a reply that suits his position as a Messenger of God, one that reflects his fear of God and accepts His judgment both in this world and the next: (46:8-46:9)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Does this description stick to the facts?

Or, is reasoning or response included?

Is this something that can be directly seen?

Or would you have to interpret what you saw to arrive at this statement?
Is this how anyone would describe the situation?
Or would someone else see it differently?
What alternative descriptions or explanations are there?

Students could then examine the assumptions and inferences underlying the alternatives.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

LESSON 66(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore in-

volves interpretive acts on your part.

QURANIC CHAPTER 46: THE CURVING SANDHILLS (AL-AHQAF)
SIGNS 46:11-46:20

Makkah: *Those who were ungrateful said*
of those who believed:
If it had been good, they would not have preceded us towards it.
And when they are not truly guided by it, they say:
This is a ripe, aged calumny. (46:11)
Yet before it was the Book of Moses for a leader and as a mercy.
And this is a Book, that which establishes
as true in the Arabic language
to warn those who did wrong and as good tidings
to the ones who are doers of good. (46:12)
Truly, those who say: Our Lord is God again, go straight,
neither will there be fear in them,
nor will they feel remorse. (46:13)
Those are the Companions of the Garden,
ones who will dwell in it forever
as a recompense for what they had been doing. (46:14)
Madinah (46:15)
Those are those from whom We will receive
the fairer of what they did and we will pass on by their evil deeds.
They are among the Companions of the Garden.
This is the promise of sincerity
that they had been promised. (46:16)
But he who would say to ones who are his parents
a word of disrespect to both of them:
Promise you me that I will be brought out when
generations before me passed away?
And they will both cry to God for help: Woe unto you!
Believe! Truly, the promise of God is true.
But he said: This is only the fables of the ancient ones. (46:17)
Those are those against whom the saying was realized
about the communities
that passed away before of the jinn and humankind.
Truly, they had been ones who are losers. (46:18)
And for each there will be degrees according to what he did
and He will pay them their account in full for their actions
and they, they will not be wronged. (46:19)
On a Day when they will be presented

—those who were ungrateful—to the fire, it will be said:
You caused what is good to be put away in your present life
while you enjoyed it.
Then, you will be given recompense
with a punishment of humiliation because you
had been growing arrogant on the earth without right
and because you had been disobeying. (46:20)

COMMENTARY°

The section also mentions the flimsy justification of the attitude of the ungrateful as they said in reference to the believers: *Those who were ungrateful said of those who believed: If it had been good, they would not have preceded us towards it. And when they are not truly guided by it, they say:* (46:11) This explains their true stance: *This is a ripe, aged calumny.* (46:11) The chapter also refers to the book of Moses and the fact that the Quran confirms it, highlighting its role: (46:12) This part concludes with details of the good news given to those who believe in God and follow the right course: (46:13-46:14)

The second part of the chapter portrays two patterns of human nature, one upright and the other deviant, highlighting their different attitudes to the question of faith. It depicts both natures as they commence their lives, reared by their parents. It describes their respective attitudes when they come of age and are able to make their own choices. The first recognizes God's blessings, is dutiful towards his parents, eager to give thanks, and seeking forgiveness for slips and mistakes: (46:16) The other is disobedient of both his parents and God, denies the Day of Resurrection, and creates tremendous distress for his parents: (46:18)

This part of the chapter concludes with a swift scene of the Day of Judgment portraying the fate of this second type of person: . (46:20)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?

What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 46: THE CURVING SANDHILLS (AL-AHQAF)

SIGNS 46:21-46:26

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:21)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:22)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:23)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:26)

LESSON 66(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, VOCABULARY

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

QURANIC CHAPTER 46: THE CURVING SANDHILLS (AL-AHQAF)
SIGNS 46:27-46:35

Makkah: *And, certainly,*
We caused to perish towns around you
and We diversified the signs
so that perhaps they will return. (46:27)
Then, why helped them not those whom they took to themselves
other than God
as gods as a mediator. Nay!
They went astray from them.
And that was their calumny
and what they had been devising. (46:28)
And when We turned away from you groups of men or jinn
who listen to the Quran,
when they found themselves in its presence,

they said: Pay heed.
And when it was finished, they turned to their folk,
ones who warn. (46:29)
They said: O our folk! Truly, We heard a Book
was caused to descend after Moses,
that which establishes as true what was in advance of it.
It guides to The Truth and to a straight road. (46:30)
O our folk! Answer one who calls to God and believe in Him.
He will forgive you your impieties
and will grant protection to you
from a painful punishment. (46:31)
And who answers not to one who calls to God?
He is not one who frustrates Him in and on the earth.
And there will not be for him other than God any protectors.
Those are clearly gone astray. (46:32)
Considered they not that God
Who created the heavens and the earth
and is not wearied by their creation—
is One Who Has Power to give life to the dead?
Yea! He, truly, is Powerful over everything. (46:33)
And on a Day when will be presented those who were ungrateful
to the fire saying: Is not this The Truth?
They would say: Yea! By our Lord!
He will say: Then, experience the punishment
because you had been ungrateful! (46:34)
(46:35) Madinah

COMMENTARY°

The Makkan ungrateful are also reminded of the fate their own ancestors met, given they too had adopted the same attitude. They are told in no uncertain terms that they will suffer the same fate. The chapter also shows them the line the divine message follows: it is consistent and unchanging. Likewise, God's law applies to all and does not change. We see the tree of faith with firm roots, its branches stretched wide across the generations. It is the same faith for all times and communities.

This last part of the chapter presents a different way of tackling the basic question of faith. It tells us the story of a group of jinn who heard the Quran being recited and who listened to it. They felt, at heart, that it was the word of truth and believed in it instantly. They then rushed to their own people calling on them to believe, giving them the good news of earning forgiveness for their past sins and

warning them against turning away and persisting in error. The effect of the Quran on this group of jinn is clearly indicated in their advice to each other to hearken to its recitation, as well as the report they gave to their people about it, urging them to believe too. Reporting the story in this way should touch the hearts of human beings to whom the message of the Quran is firstly addressed. It should have a telling and profound effect on them. At the same time, a reference to the link between the book given to Moses and the Quran is mentioned by the jinn. This is a fact ignored by humans but highlighted by the jinn. Again this has a profound effect which is consistent with the message of the chapter.

The jinn discourse also refers to the open book of the universe, testifying to God's great power manifested in the creation of the heavens and the earth and His ability to bring the dead back to life. Needless to say, people argue endlessly about this, often denying it altogether.

In the context of resurrection, the section portrays a scene from the Day of Judgment speaking of the time when the ungrateful are brought before the fire of hell. Finally, the Prophet is instructed to remain patient in adversity and not to hasten their punishment. Rather, he should leave them to live their lives until the appointed time, which is bound to come soon, in no more than an hour of a day during which the message is given.

We sent to you a group of jinn to listen to the Quran. When they heard it, they said to one another: Listen in silence! When the recitation ended, they returned to their people to warn them. Our people, they said, we have been listening to revelation bestowed from on high after Moses, confirming what came before it. It guides to the truth and to a straight path. Our people! Respond to God's call and have faith in Him. He will forgive you your sins and deliver you from grievous suffering. He who does not respond to God's call cannot elude Him on earth, nor will they have any protector against Him. They are indeed in manifest error. Are they not aware that

God, who has created the heavens and the earth and was not wearied by their creation, has the power to bring the dead back to life? Yes, indeed. He has power over all things. (46:29-46:33)

Those jinn who listened to the Quran in silence made a comment that embraced faith in its entirety: belief in God's revelation; the unity of the message given in the Torah and the Quran; acknowledging the truth to which the Quran guides; belief in the Day of Resurrection and which actions earn forgiveness and which incur punishment; acknowledging God's power of creation and His overall authority over all creatures, and recognizing the link between creation in the first

place and bringing the dead back to life. These are the principles the chapter discusses from start to finish. They are presented here by the jinn, in a voice that comes from beyond the human world.

The fact that the Quran mentions how a number of jinn were sent to listen to the Quran as the Prophet recited it, and reports what they did and said afterwards, is sufficient to confirm the existence of the jinn and the event related. It further confirms that they were able to listen to the Quran in its Arabic wording as pronounced by the Prophet. It also makes clear that the jinn are able to accept faith or deny it, that they have the choice to follow guidance or continue in error. There is no need for any further confirmation. No person can add anything to the reliability of a fact stated by God in the Quran. We, however, merely try to clarify it in our human perception.

His gift with gratitude and take it as He gives it to us, adding nothing and omitting nothing. Such knowledge comes to us directly from God, and He has chosen to give it to us in a particular measure. There is simply no other source to give us more.

And when We turned away from you groups of men or jinn who listen to the Quran, when they found themselves in its presence, they said: Pay heed. And when it was finished, they turned to their folk, ones who warn.(46:29)

It was, then, a purposeful act of God's that He sent this group of inn to listen to the Quran; in other words, it was not mere coincidence. God wanted the jinn to know about His final message, just as they had earlier learnt about Moses' message. According to His design, some of them will then believe and spare themselves punishment in hell, which is the abode of ungrateful jinn or humans.

The chapter draws before our eyes an image of this group, between three and ten jinn, as they listened to the Quran. It paints for us their feelings as it was being recited: an overwhelming awe leading to submission and action. *And when We turned away from you groups of men or jinn who listen to the Quran, when they found themselves in its presence, they said: Pay heed.*

This short sign gives a clear impression of their attitude as they hearkened to the Quranic recitation. Then, *when it was finished, they turned to their folk, ones who warn.* (46:29) This sentence confirms the effect the Quran had on them. They listened in complete silence, attentions focused throughout the recitation. When it was over, they returned at speed to their own people. They felt that what they had heard must be immediately told and passed on. Their people needed to know so that they could be warned. It is a situation where one is highly influenced by something which motivates him to immediate action that seeks to spread the benefit and to get others to adopt the

same serious attitude: *They said: O our folk! Truly, We heard a Book was caused to descend after Moses, that which establishes as true what was in advance of it.* (46:30)

They give expression to their feelings as they listened to the Quran: *It guides to The Truth and to a straight road.* (46:30) The truth and the guidance provided by the Quran have a profound effect on people. Only a sealed heart and an arrogant, stubborn soul, motivated by selfish interests, will resist it. Therefore, it had an immediate and telling effect on the hearts of those jinn, prompting them to give this testimony of its truth. They proceeded with their warning to their people, full of enthusiasm and expressing their firm conviction of the truth they had learnt. In other words, this recitation of the Quran placed a duty on them to inform and warn others: *O our folk! Answer one who calls to God and believe in Him. He will forgive you your impieties and will grant protection to you from a painful punishment.* (46:31) They considered the revelation of the Quran a call on everyone who learned of it, whether human or jinn, to believe. They also considered Muhammad to be the one who called them to believe in God merely by reciting the Quran. Therefore, their appeal to their people: *O our folk! Answer one who calls to God and believe in Him.* (46:31) They also believed in the Day of Judgment and learnt that belief and positive response to the divine call ensured forgiveness of sins and deliverance from punishment. So they imparted this news to their people.

Ibn Ishaq considers that this concludes what the jinn said to their people, but the context suggests that the next two signs were also stated by them. We think that this is more likely, particularly the next sign:*And who answers not to one who calls to God? He is not one who frustrates Him in and on the earth. And there will not be for him other than God any protectors. Those are clearly gone astray.* (46:32) This is a logical complement to the warning given by the jinn to their people whom they advised to believe in the new message. It is also likely that they explained that a negative response leads to dire consequences. No one who rejects the divine call can escape God: He is always able to inflict punishment. The unbeliever will find none to support him against God or protect him from His punishment. He is, therefore, indeed in manifest error.

Likewise, the next sign most probably reports more of what the jinn said, as they wondered at those who reject God's call, thinking that they are immune from punishment or that there will be neither reckoning nor requital: *Considered they not that God Who created the heavens and the earth and is not wearied by their creation—is One Who Has Power to give life to the dead? Yea! He, truly, is Pow-*

erful over everything. (46:33)

This is a reference to the book of the universe mentioned at the chapter's outset. The Quran often provides such a close connection between a direct statement and a similar one occurring within a story or historical account, ensuring the confirmation of the same fact from two sources. The book of the universe testifies to His great might. It imparts to us the feeling that bringing the dead back to life is easy. This is what is intended here. That this point is made here in the form of a question and a reply makes it more emphatic. This is followed by the general comment that God has power over all things. Thus, bringing the dead back to life is included within His limitless power.

AS RESURRECTION TAKES PLACE

Having referred to bringing the dead back to life, the chapter paints a picture of reckoning and accountability as though we see all this before our eyes: *And on a Day when will be presented those who were ungrateful to the fire saying: Is not this The Truth? They would say: Yea! By our Lord! He will say: Then, experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful!* (46:34)

The scene here begins with a narrative, or an introduction to a narrative: *And on a Day when will be presented those who were ungrateful to the fire saying:* The audience are waiting for the narrative describing what will happen, but instead of a description, the scene is present before our eyes, with a dialogue taking place: *Is not this The Truth?* What a question! It falls like a hammer on the heads of those who used to reject the truth, ridicule the message and hasten the punishment they were warned against. Now they are face to face with the truth they used to deny. They arrive at an answer, in fear and humility: *They would say: Yea! By our Lord!*, the very Lord whose Messenger they rejected and whose Lordship they denied. Now they swear by Him affirming the truth they once denied.

At this point, the matter reaches maximum rebuke. The dialogue is over and the issue is settled: *He will say: Then, experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful!* (46:34) It is just an answer to a simple question: the crime is seen in full clarity and the criminal admits his guilt. The outcome is settled.

This scene is portrayed very speedily. This is deliberate because the confrontation is decisive. There is no room for argument. They used to deny the truth; now they acknowledge it and are made to suffer the consequences.

Following this scene that decisively spells out the fate of the ungrateful, and the one that touches the hearts of a group from a different world, the chapter makes its final statement. It instructs the

Prophet to remain patient with them and not to hasten their punishment. He has seen what awaits them, which is close at hand.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What inferences, judgments or conclusions does this sign make?
What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on this Quranic sign?
Here is the information.
How are you interpreting it?
What is it telling you?
What meaning would you give to it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the inferences in these Quranic signs.
I was able to gather the information the Quranic signs give.

LESSON 67(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAME INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when

a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This

method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[4]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 51: THE WINNOWING WINDS (AL-DHARIYAT)

SIGNS 51:1-51:23

Makkah: *By the winnowing winds*
of ones that winnow (51:1)
by the burden-bearers, the ones who carry a heavy burden (51:2)
and the ones that run with ease (51:3)
and the ones who distribute the command, (51:4)
truly, what you are promised is that which is sincere. (51:5)
And, truly, the judgment is that which falls. (51:6)
By the heaven that is full of tracks, (51:7)
you are ones who are at variance in your sayings. (51:8)
He is misled there by he who was misled. (51:9)
Perdition to those who guess, (51:10)

ones who are inattentive because of obstinacy. (51:11)
They ask: When will the Day of Judgment be? (51:12)
A Day when they are tried over the fire: (51:13)
Experience your test. This is that for which
you had been seeking to hasten. (51:14)
Truly, the ones who are God-conscious
will be in the Garden and springs, (51:15)
ones who take what their Lord gave them.
Truly, they had been before this
—ones who are doers of good. (51:16)
They had been slumbering little during the night. (51:17)
And at the breaking of the day, they ask for forgiveness. (51:18)
And there is an obligation from their wealth
for the one who begs and the one who is deprived. (51:19)
On the earth are signs for the ones that are certain (51:20)
and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? (51:21)
And in the heaven is your provision as you are promised (51:22)
by the Lord of the heaven and the earth.
It is, truly, The Truth just as you yourselves speak. (51:23)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter has a special character. It begins by mentioning four forces that work by God's command, using ambiguous terms which give us an initial impression that we are being introduced to thing wrapped in secrecy. God Almighty makes an oath by these four forces to emphasize a certain matter: (51:1-51:6)

The words used in this opening for those four forces mentioned in the oath are not usually used to refer to immediately recognized objects. They invite questions and requests for explanation. Indeed, their very sounds impart this feeling of ambiguity, which is perhaps intended so as to give the chapter its particular aura.

The first oath is hardly stated when it is followed by a second. God states this oath: (51:7-51:8) What you say is inconsistent, based on conjecture, not fact.

With this particular opening and by its general drift, the chapter sets itself a particular objective, which is the establishment of a bond between the human heart and the sky, or rather what lies beyond the reach of human perception and known only to God. The human heart will thus become free of the constraints of this world, unchained by anything that prevents it from being dedicated to God's service. It will then be ready to move unhindered towards Him.

Since preoccupation with one's livelihood and what the future

may bring with regard to it is one of the hardest of these hindrances, the chapter takes particular care to free man of it, and to reassure him so that his heart turns to God, free of earthly chains. References to this point are found in several places in the chapter. For example, explicit references include: *And in the heaven is your provision as you are promised* (51:22) and *Truly, God, He is The Provider, The Possessor of Strength, The Sure.* (51:58) Other references are implicit, as in the sign describing the attitude of the God-conscious towards money. *And there is an obligation from their wealth for the one who begs and the one who is deprived.* (51:19) Likewise, the chapter describes Abraham's hospitality and the welcome he gave to his guests, or rather the angels he thought to be his guests. When they greeted him, he went straight to his household and brought a fat calf, yet prior to their arrival at his doorstep, they were total strangers to him.

Thus, we see in the picture the chapter draws early on the main characteristics of those who are God-conscious: dedication to God, worship at night, sacrifice of money, assigning a portion of it to the poor and the deprived: *Experience your test. This is that for which you had been seeking to hasten. Truly, the ones who are God-conscious will be in the Garden and springs, ones who take what their Lord gave them. Truly, they had been before this—ones who are doers of good. They had been slumbering little during the night. And at the breaking of the day, they ask for forgiveness. And there is an obligation from their wealth for the one who begs and the one who is deprived.* (51:15-51:19)

To achieve the same purpose, the chapter directs our attentions to God's signs on earth and within ourselves, while also emphasizing that provisions are given by heaven. We must not, therefore, give undue importance to its immediate means on earth: *On the earth are signs for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? And in the heaven is your provision as you are promised.* (51:20-51:22)

The same may be said about the reference to the building of the skies with ample space, while the earth has been made easy for people to traverse, and to the fact that all creatures are created in pairs. All this leads to the all-important advice that we should all turn to God paying full heed to the warnings given by His Messenger: *And We built the heaven with potency. And, truly, We are ones who extend wide. And the earth, We spread it forth. How excellent are the ones who spread! And of everything We created pairs so that perhaps you will recollect. So run away towards God. Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him.* (51:47-51:50)

The chapter concludes with a statement reiterating the same

message, making clear the purpose of creating humans and jinn, and their major roles in life: *And I created not jinn and humankind but that they worship Me. I want no provision from them nor want I that they feed Me. Truly, God, He is The Provider, The Possessor of Strength, The Sure.* (51:56-51:58)

Thus the chapter plays on the same theme throughout, using different tunes but maintaining the same beat, directing our heart to look to the sky.

Sign (15:5) is mainly to the fact that God's promise always comes true: *Truly, what you are promised is that which is sincere.* (51:5) Another reference to this is made at the conclusion, where the ungrateful are issued with a clear warning: *And, truly, the impiety of those who did wrong is like the impiety of their companions. So let them not seek to hasten the Judgment.* (51:59) This comes after the statement that implies that generations of ungrateful seem to have recommended to each other that they reject God's messengers: *There approached not those who were before them any Messenger but that they said: One who is a sorcerer or one who is possessed! Counseled they this to one another? Nay! They are a folk, ones who are defiant!* (51:52-51:53) Thus the historical accounts in the chapter are closely related to its main theme, namely, pure and complete heart devotion to God, freeing it from all hindrances, strengthening its bond with heaven, first by faith and then by removing obstacles that prevent it from flying to that open horizon. (51:1-51:6)

The chapter begins with a quick beat, using ambiguous phrases to imply that it is talking about a serious matter that deserves our full attention. Inevitably though, the four ambiguous words used in the first four signs have made people ask questions, even in the very early days of the Quranic message, as they sought further explanation.

God states an oath by the winds that move and scatter things such as dust, grain, pollen, clouds and other material known or unknown to us; by the clouds carrying water and driven by God Almighty to wherever He pleases; by the ships that easily float on water making use of the characteristics God has given to water, shipping and the whole universe, and by the angels carrying God's commands and delivering them as He pleases, giving details as to what matters they are concerned with.

God states an oath by these four types of creation: *Truly, what you are promised is that which is sincere. And, truly, the judgment is that which falls.* (51:5-51:6) God has promised humanity that He will reward their good actions with what is better, and that He will requite their bad deeds with what is bad. If He delays holding them to ac-

count during their lives on earth, He will not ignore doing so in the life to come, where all reckoning and accounting will inevitably take place: *And, truly, the judgment is that which falls.* (51:6) The promise is undoubtedly true, and will be fulfilled in either life. He has also promised people that their sustenance, in plenty or limited measure, is guaranteed. Again His promise in this matter is true.

The same may be said about the second oath: *By the heaven that is full of tracks, you are ones who are at variance in your sayings. He is misled there by he who was misled.* (51:7-51:9) This oath is by the sky that is perfectly built, with pathways that are carefully interconnected, like the links of a chain. This may be one form clouds take as they gather in the sky, looking like a watery or sandy surface during or after a windy period. On the other hand, this description may be true of the permanent order of orbits that are perfectly coordinated and probably interconnected.

The section goes on to state that the ungrateful are deluded about the major question of the life to come. Their opinions are without a firm or true basis. They argue and dispute about a clear question of truth.

It then goes on to portray the Day of Judgment in such a way as they can actually see it: (51:10-51:14)

Such people indulge in blind guessing. It is God who invokes their killing. How terrible! Needless to say, such an invocation is a firm sentence, one that is certain to be enforced. *Perdition to those who guess.* (51:10) Further clarification of their identity is added: *Ones who are inattentive because of obstinacy.* (51:11) They are so steeped in delusion and falsehood that they are unable to wake themselves up. The chapter shows them to be totally unaware of anything around them, as if they are excessively drunk. They cannot see for themselves something that is very clear to anyone with a sound mind. *They ask: When will the Day of Judgment be?* (51:12) It is not a question that seeks information; rather, it is an expression of doubt and denial. Therefore, the chapter shows them their position on that day which they claim to be highly improbable: *A Day when they are tried over the fire:* (51:13) They will burn in the fire just as some metals are exposed to fire to determine their make up. This burning is coupled with strong remonstration: *Experience your test. This is that for which you had been seeking to hasten.* (51:14) A quick scene showing their miserable end is the most fitting answer to their question that sought no information. This powerful scene of their end contrasts with the state of confusion that plagues their lives. Moreover, it confirms that Gods invocation of their deaths is fulfilled in a most terrible way.

Next, a contrasting image is drawn. This depicts a different group, reassured in their certainty, eager to do what is good without boasting about it, fully awake at night when they volunteer their night worship: (51:15-51:19)

This group are fully alert, sensitive to the fact that God watches them and, therefore, they carefully watch their own behavior. *Truly, the ones who are God-conscious will be in the Garden and springs, ones who take what their Lord gave them. Truly, they had been before this—ones who are doers of good.* (51:15-51:16) God grants them blessings in abundance as a reward for what they do in this their first life, worshipping Him as if they see Him and realizing that He sees them: *Ones who take what their Lord gave them. Truly, they had been before this—ones who are doers of good.* (51:16) Their desire to excel is portrayed in a splendid image: *They had been slumbering little during the night. And at the breaking of the day, they ask for forgiveness.* (51:17-51:18) They are the ones who stay up at night when others are fast asleep. They turn to their Lord, appealing to Him to forgive them their sins. They sleep but little during the night, preferring to address their Lord and enjoy the pleasure of being in close contact with Him, when no one else is aware of that contact.

This is their situation with regard to their relations with God. As for their relations with people and their attitude to money, these people are of the type that is keen to do good:*And there is an obligation from their wealth for the one who begs and the one who is deprived.* (51:19) They not only give a share of what they have to those who ask for help and the one who is too shy to ask and thus remains deprived of help, but they make that a rightful share, committing themselves to it as though they are duty bound to do so even though it is voluntary.

This point fits well with the treatment of the issue of possessions and earnings in the chapter, as it helps to free the believer's heart of the shackles of personal greed and their preoccupation with livelihood. It also serves to prepare us for the next section of the chapter.

These signs: *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? And in the heaven is your provision as you are promised by the Lord of the heaven and the earth. It is, truly, The Truth just as you yourselves speak.* (51:20-51:23) turn our attentions to the countless signs testifying to God's Oneness, both on earth and within ourselves. They also guide us to look to heaven for our means of sustenance, as it is all measured. They finish with a great oath by God Himself, the Lord of the heavens and earth, confirming that the message given to them from Him is absolutely true.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

Was Prophet Muhammad in a position to know?
What would someone need to be in a position to know?
Could the Prophet have directly seen or heard, or would he have to have reasoned to what he knew?
What do we know about the Prophet's expertise and experience?
What experience would you need to have to be an expert?
What must you have studied?
What does he claim about this issue?
Where did he get his information?
Is there reason to doubt him?
Has he been reliable in the past?
Does he have anything to gain by convincing others?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to respond to the following in class:

What evidence do the above signs give?
Why would the facts be true?
What assumptions are you making?
Do you have reason to think your assumptions are true?

QURANIC CHAPTER 51: THE WINNOWING WINDS (AL-DHARIYAT)

SIGNS 51:24-51:46

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:24)

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:25)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:26)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:27)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:28)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:29)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:30)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:31)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:31)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:32)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:33)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:34)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:35)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:36)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:37)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (51:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (51:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (51:40)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (51:41)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (51:42)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (51:43)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (51:44)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (51:45)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (51:46)

LESSON 67(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

QURANIC CHAPTER 51: THE WINNOWING WINDS (AL-DHARIYAT)

SIGNS 51:47-51:60

Makkah: *And We built the heaven with potency.*
And, truly, We are ones who extend wide. (51:47)
And the earth, We spread it forth.
How excellent are the ones who spread! (51:48)
And of everything We created pairs
so that perhaps you will recollect. (51:49)
So run away towards God.
Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him.
(51:50) *And make not with God any other god.*
Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him. (51:51)
There approached not those who were before them
any Messenger but that they said:
One who is a sorcerer or one who is possessed! (51:52)
Counseled they this to one another?
Nay! They are a folk, ones who are defiant! (51:53)
So turn ***you*** *away from them that* ***you*** *be not*
one who is reproached. (51:54)
And remind, for, truly, the reminder profits
the ones who believe. (51:55)
And I created not jinn and humankind
but that they worship Me. (51:56)
I want no provision from them
nor want I that they feed Me. (51:57)

Truly, God, He is The Provider,
The Possessor of Strength, The Sure. (51:58)
And, truly, the impiety of those who did wrong
is like the impiety of their companions.
So let them not seek to hasten the Judgment. (51:59)
Then, woe to those who disbelieved in that Day of theirs
that they are promised. (51:60)

COMMENTARY°

These signs (51:47-51:51) take us back to the great universal exhibition the chapter presented in its opening, providing here yet another image the Quran puts before our eyes and minds. Further references are added to God's signs, linking that provided by Noah and his people with that of the heavens, the earth and other creatures. This culminates with a call to humanity to flee to their Lord, submitting themselves to Him and associating no partners with Him.

The same applies to the reference to the earth and its being spread out: *And the earth, We spread it forth. How excellent are the ones who spread!* (51:48)

This is a fascinating truth that reveals the basic rule common to all creation on earth, and possibly in the universe. *And of everything We created pairs so that perhaps you will recollect.* (51:49) As it stands, the statement does not limit the pairs to rule to the earth. It is clearly seen among living creatures, but the phrase, all things, also includes inanimate objects. Therefore, the statement means that both animate and inanimate things are created in pairs.

These signs referring to the great universe, the width of the earth and the system of creation all culminate in a call on people to flee to God, the Creator of all, shedding all that shackles their souls, acknowledging His absolute unity: *So run away towards God. Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him. And make not with God any other god.* (51:50-51:51) Use of the words *run away* here is very significant. It points to the burdens, shackles and handcuffs that restrain people, pulling them towards the earth and its material life, preventing free movement and ensuring they are always restrained. Most cogent among these are the restraints of earning one's livelihood, maintaining ones income and preoccupation with improving ones lot. Therefore, the call to shed all these and flee to God, alone, without partners, is very powerful. It reminds people, twice in succession, that they have no excuse for not doing so: *Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him.* (51:50-51)

Next we have a comment on the references to earlier Messengers mentioned in the chapter: Thus whenever a Messenger came to those

that lived before them. (51:52-51:55)

It is the same nature common to all the ungrateful. They all give the same response to the divine message: *There approached not those who were before them any Messenger but that they said: One who is a sorcerer or one who is possessed!* (51:52) This is exactly what the Arab ungrateful said. It is as if one generation of ungrateful handed down such a legacy to the next in a continuing process. Needless to say, there was no such handing down. It is all in the nature of transgression and unbelief whereby the present ungrateful ones and their predecessors are brought together.

The natural result of this repeated stand is that the Prophet should not pay any attention to what the ungrateful say. He is not responsible for them as they choose to remain in error. He has spared no effort in trying to get them to follow divine guidance: *So turn you away from them that you be not one who is reproached.* (51:54) His only task is to remind people and to continue to give them reminders, no matter how persistent they are in their rejection of the truth: *And remind, for, truly, the reminder profits the ones who believe.* (51:55) Such reminders will not benefit the hardened ungrateful. Yet the task assigned to God's Messengers is to give such reminders. It is not within their ability to ensure that people follow proper guidance. That is outside their remit. It is God alone who gives guidance.

The last note in the chapter explains the meaning of fleeing to God and shedding all burdens and encumbrances in order to fulfil the mission for which He created people: *And I created not jinn and humankind but that they worship Me. I want no provision from them nor want I that they feed Me. Truly, God, He is The Provider, The Possessor of Strength, The Sure.* (51:56-51:58)

The Quran strengthens this feeling, letting us overcome our concerns about our livelihood and our selfish desires. Everybody's livelihood is guaranteed by God. Needless to say, He needs neither sustenance nor food from them when He asks them to spend some of their money on those who are in need: *I want no provision from them nor want I that they feed Me. Truly, God, He is The Provider, The Possessor of Strength, The Sure.* (51:57-51:58) What this means in effect is that a believer's incentive to work and exert his best efforts in discharging his duties of building human life on earth is not to earn a livelihood. His incentive is to fulfil the meaning of worship, which requires him to exert his best efforts. Thus his mind is focused on the fulfilment of the worship concept in doing whatever he is doing. He is free of concerns about the results of this effort. These are, then, noble feelings, which can only exist within such a noble concept.

Thus do we understand some aspects of this great truth stated in a single short sign: *And I created not jinn and humankind but that they worship Me.* (51:56) This truth is great indeed; it can change how people live when it takes hold of their hearts.

In the light of this great truth, the chapter concludes with a warning to the wrongdoers who hasten the fulfilment of Gods warnings: *And, truly, the impiety of those who did wrong is like the impiety of their companions. So let them not seek to hasten the Judgment. Then, woe to those who disbelieved in that Day of theirs that they are promised.*(51:59-51:60)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What is the difference between important and trivial?
What are his people like? What kinds of people are there?
What is the difference between right and wrong?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the following guidelines:

Arrive on time for class.

Teachers do not take lateness lightly.

Position yourself in the classroom to focus on the subject matter; consider the best location for:

listening
asking questions
seeing visual materials
discussing—not only with the teacher but also your classmates

LESSON 68. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[5]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues

which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[5]

QURANIC CHAPTER 88: THE OVERWHELMING EVENT (AL-GHASHIYAH)

SIGNS 88:1-88:26

Makkah: *Approached you the discourse*
of the Overwhelming Event? (88:1)
Faces on that Day will be ones that are humbled, (88:2)
ones that work and ones that are fatigued, (88:3)
roasting in a hot fire. (88:4)
They will be given to drink from boiling receptacles. (88:5)
Is it not that there is no food for them but a thorny fruit. (88:6)
It will not fatten nor will it avail hunger. (88:7)
Faces on that Day will be ones that are pleasant, (88:8)
ones who are well-pleased by their endeavoring (88:9)
in a magnificent Garden. (88:10)
They will hear no babble in it. (88:11)
In it is a running spring. (88:12)
In it are exalted couches (88:13)
and goblets that are set down (88:14)
and cushions arrayed (88:15)
and rugs, ones that are dispersed. (88:16)
Will they not, then, look on the camel, how it was created? (88:17)
And of the heaven, how it was lifted up? (88:18)
And the mountains, how they were hoisted up? (88:19)
And the earth, how it was stretched out? (88:20)
Then, remind for you are only one who reminds. (88:21)
You are not over them one who is a register of their deeds. (88:22)
But whoever turned away and is one who is ungrateful, (88:23)
God will punish him with the greater punishment. (88:24)
Truly, to Us is their reversion. (88:25)
Again, truly, on Us is their reckoning. (88:26)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter is a deep and calm melody which invites meditation, hope and fear. It warns us to be ready for the day of reckoning. It carries a person's heart into two vast spheres: the life hereafter with

its limitless world and moving scenes; and the visible sphere of existence, with the signs God has spread in all the creatures sharing this existence held out for everyone to see. After these two great scenarios, the chapter reminds us of the reckoning on the Day of Judgment, of God's power, and of the inevitable return to Him. Throughout, the style is characterized by its depth of tone: it is calm but highly effective, powerful and awesome.

With this introduction: *Approached you the discourse of the Overwhelming Event?* (88:1), the section wants to make hearts turn back to God, to remind men of His signs in the universe, His reckoning on the Day of Judgment, and His certain reward. It starts with this inquiry, which implies greatness and indicates a positive statement. It points out that the question of the hereafter had already been affirmed and earlier reminders had been given. The Day of Resurrection is here given a new name, "the Overwhelming Event", which suggests that a calamity will befall humanity and envelop them with its horrors. It is one of the many evocative names mentioned in the chapters included in this volume. Others are: The Overwhelming, The Deafening, The Stunning Event. They all suit the general tone and nature of these chapters.

Whenever the Prophet listened to this chapter, he felt that the address: *Approached you* was directed to him personally, as if he was receiving it from his Lord directly for the first time. He was extremely moved by this. The reality of this divine address was always present in his mind. A tradition related by Umar ibn Mayma says that the Prophet once passed by a woman who was reciting this chapter. When she recited: *Approached you the discourse of the Overwhelming Event?* he stopped to listen and said: Yes, I have heard it.

The address is nevertheless a general one, directed at everyone who hears the Quran. The story of the Overwhelming Event is an oft-repeated theme in the Quran, reminding people of the hereafter, warning them of its punishment, and promising its rewards. It is a story which aims to awaken people's consciences, to arouse their fear and apprehension as well as their hope and expectancy.

The chapter opens with a question: *Approached you the discourse of the Overwhelming Event?* (88:1) It follows this by relating part of its story: (88:2-88:7) The scene of suffering and torture is given before the scene of joy, because the former is closer to the connotations of the name given to the event, the Overwhelming Event, and the impressions it generates.

Thus we are told that there are on that day faces which look humble, downcast and worn out. They belong to people who have labored and toiled without satisfactory results. Indeed the results they

get are a total loss, which increases their disappointment, and causes looks of humiliation and exhaustion on their faces. *Ones that work and ones that are fatigued.* (88:3) They had labored and toiled for something other than God's cause. Their work was totally for themselves and their families, for their own ambitions in the life of this world. Then they come to reap the fruits of their toil, not having made any provision for their future life. Therefore, they face the end with a mixture of humiliation, exhaustion, misery and hopelessness *roasting in a hot fire.* (88:4)

The Arabic text uses the term dry thorns. (88:5-88:7) However, some commentators say that it refers to a tree of fire in hell.

On the other hand we find: (88:8-88:16) Here are faces bright with joy, animated with pleasure. They are well pleased with what they are given. The Quran gives precedence to this kind of happiness over the joys of heaven. Then it describes heaven and the joys it affords to its happy dwellers *in a magnificent Garden.* (88:10) It is glorious and sublime, with lofty positions and elevated gardens.

The description of height and elevation gives us a special feeling: *They will hear no babble in it.* (88:11) This expression creates a sense of calmness, peace, reassurance, love, satisfaction and pleasant discourse between friends.

The description: *In it is a running spring* (88:12) combines a sense of quenching thirst, with beauty of movement and flow. Running water gives a sense of liveliness and youth. It is pleasant to the eye and the mind, and touches the depths of human feeling.

The adjective, *exalted*: *In it are exalted couches* (88:13) gives an impression of cleanliness and purity so they are ready for drinking. *And goblets that are set down* (88:14)—there is no need to order or prepare them. *And cushions arrayed* (88:15)

When this account of the hereafter comes to its close, the chapter refers to the present world, which is in itself a manifestation of the power and perfect planning of God, the Almighty: (88:17-88:20) These four short signs join together the boundaries of the world of the Arabs — the first people to be addressed by the Quran. They also group together the prominent ends of creation in the universe as they speak of the sky, earth, mountains and camels. The last of these stands for all animals, although the camel has its own distinctive features and a special value for Arabs.

The Quran: *And of the heaven, how it was lifted up?* (88:18) repeatedly directs our reflective faculties to the skies. The desert people should be the first to undertake this, because in the desert the sky is much richer and more inspiring—if it has a unique existence.

For the Arab in particular, a mountain is a refuge and a friend.

And the mountains, how they were hoisted up? (88:19)

The earth is obviously outstretched and made suitable for human life and its full and varied range of activities. *And the earth, how it was stretched out?* (88:20) The human being could not have made it so, as its creation was completed long before his existence. So should we not consider who spread out the earth and made life feasible on it? Intelligent reflection on all these aspects will always inspire minds and excite souls into recognition of God, the Creator.

Having dealt first with the hereafter, and pointed out some apparent aspects of the universe, the chapter now addresses the Prophet, laying down the nature of his mission and limits of his role. It then concludes with a final reminder to humanity: (88:21-88:26)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

QUESTIONS

Learning and studying techniques
Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...
Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi dent you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Aqqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Aqqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. See Ibn Ishaq.
2. See Introduction to this Book Year 9.
3. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance from Error.*
4. Ali Shariati, *Shariati on Shariati.*
5. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*

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CRITICAL THINK[illegible]

AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL [illegible]

IN THE LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

THE YEAR 10

OF THE REVELATION (4 BH/618-619 CE)

REVISED EDITION

INTRODUCTION BY
MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 10

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 10

of the Revelation (4 BH/618-619 CE)

Revised Edition

Laleh Bakhtiar

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

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THE 10TH YEAR OF THE REVELATION
MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 29, 4 BH
AUGUST 29, 618 CE-AUGUST 17, 619 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 10, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 4 BH/August 29, 618 CE-August 17, 619 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facil-

itates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the

act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike

the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge

tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the

intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowl-

edge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends

farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long be-

fore it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remem-*

brance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones*

who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah.*

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad.* Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad.* Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh.*

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad.* Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. For the majority of Muslims today are woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 10*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 10* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 10*, we begin with Lesson 69, that is, Quran Chapter 18 which is the 69th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 18 and, finally, Quranic Chapter 16, the 70th Chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 69(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF) SIGNS 18:1-18:12

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God*
Who caused the Book to descend to His servant
and makes not for it any crookedness, (18:1)
truth-loving, to warn of severe violence from that
which proceeds from His Presence
and to give good tidings to the ones who believe,
those who do as the ones in accord with morality,
that they will have a fairer compensation, (18:2)
ones who will abide in it eternally (18:3)
and to warn those who said: God took to Himself a son. (18:4)
They have no knowledge about it, nor had their fathers.
Troublesome is a word that goes forth from their mouths.
And they say nothing but a lie (18:5)
*so that perhaps **you** will be one who consumes **yourself** with grief*
for their sake if they believe not
in this discourse out of bitterness. (18:6)
Truly, We assigned whatever is in and on the earth as adornment
for it so that We try them with it
as to which of them are fairer in actions. (18:7)
And, truly, We are ones who make
whatever is on it, barren dust, dry earth. (18:8)
*Have **you** assumed that the Companions of the Cave*
and the Bearers of Inscription had been
a wonder among Our signs? (18:9)
And when the spiritual warriors took shelter in the Cave,
then, they said: Our Lord! Give us mercy from Thy Presence
and furnish us with right mindedness in our affair. (18:10)
So We sealed their ears in the Cave for a number of years. (18:11)
Again, We raised them up so that We might know
which of the two confederates

was better in calculating the space of time they lingered in expectation. (18:12)

COMMENTARY°

The section states its case very clearly from the outset: (18:1-18:8) This opening speaks of a very straightforward and decisive position. It combines this with praising God and expressing gratitude to Him for revealing the Book, i.e. the Quran , to 'His servant', Muhammad, and for making it clear, free of distortion and absolutely straight. There is nothing in it that may be described as evasive or dodgy. Its purpose is *to warn of severe violence from that which proceeds from His Presence.* (18:2)

The picture is clear right at the outset. There is no ambiguity or equivocation about the Quranic message. It is God who has bestowed the book from on high, and He is to be praised for so bestowing it. Muhammad is God's servant, which means that everyone else is also His servant. God has no son or partner. The Book itself is free of distortion and 'unerringly straight'. The concept of the Quran being straight is given first in the form of negating any possibility of distortion, and then reiterated in describing it as 'unerringly straight'. This makes for very strong emphasis.

Such clarity is maintained as the purpose of revealing the Quran is outlined. Indeed it has a dual purpose: *Truth-loving, to warn of severe violence from that which proceeds from His Presence and to give good tidings to the ones who believe, those who do as the ones in accord with morality, that they will have a fairer compensation.* (18:2) However, the stern warning is more strongly emphasized throughout. It begins in a general way, speaking of a severe punishment that God Himself may inflict. Then the warning is reiterated for a particular group of people: *And to warn those who said: God took to Himself a son.* (18: 4) In between the two warnings we have the happy news given to believers who do good works. This serves as a condition that ensures that faith should have practical evidence in real life. It is not confined to theoretical principles that may be endlessly discussed without effect in practice.

The chapter then moves to expose their false approach by which they judge the most important issue of all, i.e. faith: *They have no knowledge about it, nor had their fathers.* (18:5) Theirs is a despicable attitude when they utter such an enormity without proper consideration or real knowledge: *Troublesome is a word that goes forth from their mouths.* (18:5)

The description here makes use of the sound of the words to add

to the impression of horror given to the listeners. It begins with the adjective, '*troublesome*', to enhance the anticipation of something totally unacceptable. This is further increased by the inversion used in the sentence. The sound and rhythm of the Arabic original is particularly significant in giving a true sense of the enormity those ungrateful utter. This is brought to its climax in the last sentence which utilizes the form of negation and limitation: *And they say nothing but a lie.* (18:5)

The chapter then addresses the Prophet in a way that is akin to disapproval of his being saddened by his people's attitude which denies the truth of the Quran . He was pained by their rejection of God's guidance and their insistence on following the way which he knew would lead them to ruin. In a hint of disapproval, the Prophet is asked: *So that perhaps you will be one who consumes yourself with grief for their sake if they believe not in this discourse out of bitterness.* (18:6) Would your grief at their rejection of the truth cause you to kill yourself? These people do not deserve that you should feel any sorrow on their account. It is better that you should abandon them.

The Prophet is also reminded that God has made all the comforts and pleasures available on earth, and all riches and offspring, a sort of a test for humanity. The test will prove who of them does good in this life so as to earn its benefit as well as a happy destiny in the life to come: *Truly, We assigned whatever is in and on the earth as adornment for it so that We try them with it as to which of them are fairer in actions.* (18:7)

God certainly knows the position of every one of His creatures, but he rewards everyone only on the basis of the actions a person takes. It is actual deeds that are rewarded according to their merit. The chapter does not mention here those who do not do good works because the statement is clear with all that it entails.

The eventual outcome of all such adornment that is available on earth is inevitable. The earth will shed it all, and all living things on earth will die. Thus before the Day of Resurrection, the earth will be nothing more than a coarse and lifeless surface: *And, truly, We are ones who make whatever is on it, barren dust, dry earth.* (18:8) There is a clear element of toughness in the expression and in the scene it portrays. We are faced with an earth that has a desert-like surface with no trace of life over it.

After its brief opening, the chapter speaks about the people of the cave, depicting the effect faith has on believers: giving them reassurance and inner peace. Therefore, they prefer it to all material

riches and pleasures. When they find it hard to live as believers within their community, they seek refuge in a cave where they receive God's care and protection and enjoy His grace.

There are countless reports that speak about the sleepers in the cave, and just as many versions of their story. However, we have no use for any of these; we will confine ourselves to what the Quran tells us about them as it is the only source that provides true information. There may be other reports that have found their way into books of commentary on the Quran, but we will disregard all these as they lack proof of authenticity. In this we rely on good counsel, because the chapter contains an order prohibiting all argument concerning the people of the cave and reference to any source other than the Quran in trying to establish the truth about them.

The structure of the story begins with a short summary before its narration in detail. It is shown in a series of scenes with some gaps left in between. Nevertheless, all omissions are clearly understood.

Do you think that the people of the cave and the inscription were a wonder among Our signs? When those youths took refuge in the cave, they said: (18:9-18:12)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.

Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.

Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a way to get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.

Do not negate or embarrass the students.

Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.

Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Why? If that is so, what follows? Are you assuming that...?

How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...? For example? Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?

Can I summarize your point as ...? What is your reason for saying that?

What do you mean when using this word? Is it possible that...?

Are there other ways of looking at it?
How else could we view this matter?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked. Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:13-18:17

Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:13)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:14)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:15)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:16)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:17)

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:18-18:22

Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:18)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:19)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:20)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:21)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:22)

LESSON 69(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[1]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues

which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[2]

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:23-18:31

Makkah: *And, surely, he will not*
say about something:
Truly, I will be one who does that tomorrow, (18:23)
but that you add: If God wills.
*And remember **your** Lord when **you** forgot.*
And say: Perhaps my Lord will guide me
nearer to right mindedness than this. (18:24)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:25)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:26)
*And recount what was revealed to **you** from the Book of Thy Lord.*
There is no one who changes His Words.
*And **you** will never find other than Him,*
that which is a haven. (18:27)
Madinah (18:28)
Makkah: *And say: The Truth is from your Lord.*
Then, let whoever willed, believe,
and let whoever willed, disbelieve.
Truly, We made ready a fire for the ones who are unjust.
They will be enclosed by its large tent.
And if they cry for help, they will be helped with rain,
water like molten copper that will scald their faces.
Miserable was the drink and how evil a place of rest! (18:29)
Truly, those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
truly, We will not waste the compensation of him
who did good actions. (18:30)
Those, for them are Gardens of Eden beneath which rivers run.
They will be adorned in them with bracelets of gold
and they will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade.
They will be ones who are reclining in it on raised benches.
Excellent is the reward for good deeds
and how excellent a place of rest! (18:31)

COMMENTARY°

In connection with the prohibition of dispute about unknown events of the past, an order is given not to pre-judge the future or its events. It is impossible for a person to know what may happen in the future. Therefore, he should not give any definite judgment of it: *And, surely, he will not say about something: Truly, I will be one who does that tomorrow* (18:23)

This is what a Muslim should do when he forgets to relate his intentions to God's will. He should remember God and renew his reliance on Him. *But that you add: If God wills. And remember your Lord when you had forgotten.* (18:24) He should also hope to remain always conscious of God, turning to Him in all situations and all future actions, always saying: *And say: Perhaps my Lord will guide me nearer to right mindedness than this.* (18:24) This short prayer indicates that it is not so easy to always turn to God in all affairs. Therefore, the prayer to try always to maintain it and improve on one's situation.

A further comment is added in the form of a directive to the Prophet to recite what God has revealed to him, as it represents the final word, and the truth that admits no falsehood whatsoever. He should seek refuge with Him, for no one can provide any shelter other than He. When the young men of the cave sought His protection, He spread His grace over them and provided them with His guidance: *And recount what was revealed to you from the Book of Your Lord. There is no one who changes His Words. And you will never find other than Him, that which is a haven.* (18:27)

Some reports suggest that these signs: (18:28-18:29) were revealed when some of the noblemen of the Quraysh demanded that the Prophet should expel his poor Companions if he were to hope that the chiefs of the Quraysh tribe would ever come to believe in his message. Thus people like Bilal, Ammar, Suhayb, Khabbab and Abd Allah ibn Masud would have to be expelled from his companionship. Or at least the Prophet should make special arrangements, whereby he could meet the masters of the Quraysh on their own, in a place where none of the poor and the deprived were admitted. The rich, they argued, would be irritated if they had to sit in the same place with them, because their clothing smelled of perspiration.

God revealed to him the sign which starts with His command: *And have you patience yourself with those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance. And let not your eyes pass over them wanting the adornment of this present life. And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remem-*

brance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

Thus He sets the true values clearly and permanently. These establish a standard that never fails. When this has been accomplished and the true criterion has been put in place. *And say: The Truth is from your Lord. Then, let whoever willed, believe, and let whoever willed, disbelieve. Truly, We made ready a fire for the ones who are unjust. They will be enclosed by its large tent. And if they cry for help, they will be helped with rain, water like molten copper that will scald their faces. Miserable was the drink and how evil a place of rest!* (18:29) The Quranic message will never seek to bend its values in order to please anyone and gratify his wishes. It does not borrow any value from any society implementing standards of tribal honor. It has its own values and it will continue to implement these only.

The Prophet is thus to remain patient, and not to precipitate matters. He is to content himself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His countenance. Their aim is to win His pleasure. Therefore, to Him only should they appeal at all times, and in all situations. They should never change their purpose. Indeed they determinedly seek their goal which is more honorable and far superior in every way to any goal sought by people who are content with this life and seek nothing beyond its confines.

Being content and patient means that the Prophet should have for his true companions those very people the chiefs of the Quraysh wanted expelled. He is to sit with them and instruct them in their faith and its requirements. They are indeed the better set of people. It is their type that supports new messages best. A new faith or message does not rely on those who accept it only when it appears victorious, or when it gives them a position of leadership or other type of material gain. A new message is truly supported and firmly consolidated when it has adherents of sincere heart who turn to God seeking nothing other than to win His pleasure. No position of honor, pursuit of pleasure or achievement of any material gain discolors their sincerity .

Do not let your attention pass them by in order to contemplate the superficial comforts of this world, in which people compete. *And let not your eyes pass over them wanting the adornment of this present life.* (18:28) All this is no more than an outward beauty which remains much inferior to the high horizon to which those who call on their Lord morning and evening' aspire to, because they seek only to please Him and win His acceptance.

The Prophet is further instructed: *And obey not him whose heart*

We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28) He must not pay any attention to them when they demand that they must be separated from the poor. Had they remembered God, they would have banished from their minds any thoughts of conceit and arrogance. They would have recognized their position in front of God, who looks at all humanity in the same way and places them in the same rank. They would have felt that in faith all people are brothers. But they continue to implement standards of tribal honor, allowing fleeting desires to dictate their attitudes. Therefore, both they and their views are worth no attention, because they themselves have not paid attention to God and His commandments.

The Quranic message places all human beings on the same level before God. They do not claim a position on the basis of their wealth, lineage or social standing. All these are transient. The real criterion to distinguish people is their standing with their Lord, which is determined by their sincerity in seeking His pleasure and their dedication to His cause.

We have left his heart alone because he directed all his attention and all his efforts to his selfish pursuits, wealth, family, pleasures and desires. Such preoccupations leave no time and no room for remembrance of God. Indeed when anyone places them at the top of his list, he does not have time for God, and in consequence, God lets him pursue these goals further and become even more removed from His remembrance. His days pass rapidly and he comes to his end in order to face what God has in store for those who wrong themselves.

This: *And say: The Truth is from your Lord. Then, let whoever willed, believe, and let whoever willed, disbelieve. Truly, We made ready a fire for the ones who are unjust. They will be enclosed by its large tent. And if they cry for help, they will be helped with rain, water like molten copper that will scald their faces. Miserable was the drink and how evil a place of rest!* (18:29) is what the Prophet should proclaim in all clarity and firmness. The truth does not bend for the sake of anyone. It follows its own straight way. It is clear, solid, strong, free of all crookedness and manipulation. It is, then, each individual's own decision whether to take it up or leave it: Whoever does not like the truth may banish himself from it. Anyone who does not wish to make his desires fall in line with the truth should know that no privileges are given at the expense of faith. A person who does not lower his head to God and His majesty has no place in the service of God's message.

Faith does not belong to anyone who makes concessions in it. It

belongs to God who needs no one. Faith does not obtain strength if it is supported by people who do not seek it for its own sake, or who do not accept it as it is. A person who does not wish to sit with people dedicated to God's cause because he feels himself above them will have nothing to contribute to the Muslim community. Such a person is better left out.

The section then portrays a scene of the hereafter, describing what is prepared for the ungrateful on the one hand and for the believers on the other. The ungrateful will have a fire that has been made ready to receive them: *And say: The Truth is from your Lord. Then, let whoever willed, believe, and let whoever willed, disbelieve. Truly, We made ready a fire for the ones who are unjust.* (18:29) It is all made, set and brought forward. It does not require any new effort to receive them. No one is needed to kindle that fire, and it does not take any time to light or burn fiercely. God does not need anything to create whatever He wishes other than to actually will it, and it exists. The expression here uses the term, 'prepare', to indicate speed of action. Everything is put in place to take the wrongdoers and the ungrateful straight to the fire that is already prepared to receive them.

It is a fire that has huge folds that surge to encompass its inhabitants. They are securely captured there, with no hope of escape or rescue. Nor is there any chance of having a breath of cooling air, or the chance of a reduction in the suffering. Should they cry for help or to be spared the burning fire, help is given to them in the form of filthy water which is described in words which some commentators believe to mean 'molten lead', while others define it as 'boiling oil'. Should anyone's face get near it, it would certainly scald them. What will it do, then, to throats and stomachs, should the wrongdoers attempt to drink it? *They will be enclosed by its large tent. And if they cry for help, they will be helped with rain, water like molten copper that will scald their faces.* (18:29) It is a terrible situation that they find themselves in when they so urgently need a drink, but they only have what the Quran truthfully describes as: *Miserable was the drink.* (18:29) Moreover, the fire and its billowing folds are not the place where to seek rest: *And how evil a place of rest!* (18:29) In this description there is an element of bitter irony. They are not in the fire to take rest, but to be burnt in punishment for their wrongdoing. But this description also serves as a contrast with the fate of the believers in heaven. The two ends are opposite extremes.

The opposite picture shows the believers who have done God-conscious deeds in heaven where they will permanently stay: *Those, for them are Gardens of Eden beneath which rivers run. They will*

be adorned in them with bracelets of gold and they will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade. They will be ones who are reclining in it on raised benches. Excellent is the reward for good deeds and how excellent a place of rest! (18:31)

These running waters provide all the elements of a cool atmosphere, pleasant scenery, gardens and a fresh breeze. The believers are in these gardens where they actually recline and rest, in full luxurious attire made of different types of fine silk, some of which is light, while the other is thick like velvet. They also wear bracelets of gold and enjoy other luxuries. The comment here is accurate: *Excellent is the reward for good deeds and how excellent a place of rest!* (18:31)

These are the two widely different ends. Let everyone choose which one to have. The truth has been made absolutely clear by none other than God Himself, and the choice is open to everyone: (18:29) We see here a subtle reference to the attitude of the Quraysh ungrateful who demanded that the Prophet should either expel the poor from among his followers, or at least set up a different meeting place for the elders of the Quraysh, because it was beneath them to sit with the poor. They are again given the choice, either to sit with the believers, even though they are poor or they can have their resting place in the billowing folds of the fire and enjoy molten lead for refreshment. For those smelly clothes contain within them hearts that are full of faith, and minds that always remember God.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer

Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

Lesson 69(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

Quranic Chapter: The Cave (al-Kahf) Signs 18:32-18:44

Makkah: *And propound to them*
the parable of two men:
We assigned to one of them two gardens of grapevines
and We encircled them with date palm trees
and We made crops between them. (18:32)
Both the gardens gave their produce and fail nothing at all.
We caused a river to gush forth in the midst of them. (18:33)
And there had been fruit for him.
Then, he said to his companion while he converses with him:
I have more wealth than thee
and am mightier than a group of men or jinn. (18:34)
And he entered his garden
while he is one who is unjust to himself.
He said: I think that this will not be destroyed ever. (18:35)
And I think that the Hour will not be one that arises.

And if I would be returned to my Lord, I would,
surely, find better than this as an overturning. (18:36)
And his companion said to him while he converses with him:
*Were **you** ungrateful to Him Who created **you** out of earth dust,*
again, out of seminal fluid and,
*again, shaped **you** into a man?* (18:37)
Certainly, He is God, my Lord,
and I will not ascribe partners with my Lord anyone. (18:38)
*Would that when **you** had entered **your** garden **you** had said:*
What God willed! There is no strength but with God!
*If **you** see I am less than you in wealth and children.* (18:39)
*Then, perhaps my Lord will give me better than **your** garden*
and will send on it a thunderclap from heaven.
And it will come to be in the morning
a place of slippery earth. (18:40)
Or it will come to be in the morning
that its water will be sinking into the ground
*so that **you** will never be able to seek it out.* (18:41)
And its fruit was enclosed. It came to be in the morning
he turns around and around
the palms of his hands in wretchedness
for what he spent on it
while it was one that has fallen down in ruins.
And he says: Would that I not ascribe partners
with my Lord anyone! (18:42)
And there is no faction to help him other than God.
And he had been one who is helpless. (18:43)
All protection there belongs to God, The Truth.
He is Best in rewarding for good deeds
and Best in consequence. (18:44)

COMMENTARY°

This passage is followed by a story of two men and two gardens, given as an example of what is permanently valuable and what is no more than transitory. It paints two examples of human beings: the first seeks pride in the luxuries of this world, while the other is fully content with his relationship with God. Each is seen in practical life. The first who, in the Quranic example, has two gardens delineates a man dazzled with riches. He feels himself powerful with what he has been given, so he forgets the Supreme Power who controls everything in people's lives, and thinks that his wealth is permanent. This gives him a feeling that his power is everlasting.

The other is a believer who derives his position and status through faith. He always remembers his Lord, realizing that the blessings he enjoys are in themselves evidence of the One who grants all such blessings. Therefore, he knows that he should always praise his Lord and express his gratitude to Him for what he has been granted:

Set forth to them the case of two men, to one of whom We gave two vineyards and surrounded them with date palms, and placed a field of grain in between. Each of the two gardens yielded its produce and never failed to do so in any way. In the midst of them We caused a stream to flow. And so [the man] had fruit in abundance. (18:32-18:34)

The two gardens are full of fruit, having vineyards which are made even more splendid with a siege of date palms. In between the two gardens is a large field which the man uses to cultivate grains and other plants. A river running in between the two gardens adds much that is pleasant to the whole scene, because the running water reassures the owner of inexhaustible produce that, in turn, bring much wealth.

This: *Both the gardens gave their produce and fail nothing at all. We caused a river to gush forth in the midst of them.* (18:33) is again a picture of continuing prosperity. What is worth noting here is that in the original Arabic text, negating any failure by the two gardens to yield their produce is described as 'doing no wrong or injustice' in that respect. This gives an element of contrast with their owner who does himself great wrong by being arrogant and ungrateful to God for all the blessings he enjoys. He does not praise his Lord for what He has given him. This is an action full of conceit which means, in effect, that he is unfair to himself.

We actually see the man going into one of his gardens, gratified as he looks at it. He is full of pride, strutting like a peacock, calling for admiration. He speaks arrogantly to his friend whom he knows to be of limited means: (18:34)

He then walks into one of the two gardens with his friend. His attitude is that of someone conceited and ungrateful. He has completely forgotten God, thinking that the two gardens will never fail to yield their produce. In the height of this conceit, he denies the Last Hour, when all are resurrected and gathered together before their Lord. Besides, should this Last Hour be true, he is certain to have a position of favor there. He has been favored here in this life when he has been given his two gardens. So he is sure to have more favors granted to him in the hereafter.

And having thus wronged his soul: (18:35-18:36) This is plain arrogance. It makes people who have wealth, position, power and influence think that the values that dictate the way they are treated here in this life will apply in their favor in the life to come. They think they will be treated in the same way in God's Supreme Society. Their line of thinking is that since they enjoy such privileges in this life, they must then have a position of favor with the Lord of heavens.

His poor friend, who does not possess wealth, position, gardens or crops, is more confident as to the results of his nobler and better established values. He feels strong as a result of his faith, and he is certain of the support he receives from God Almighty, to whom all creatures submit. Therefore, he confronts his arrogant friend with the truth showing him how conceited he is. He reminds him of how he is created from clay and from a sperm. He also directs him to the sort of attitude he should maintain towards God. He warns him against the result to which his conceit could lead him. He declares that he hopes to receive what is better than, and superior to, his friend's gardens and their fruit:

His friend replied in the course of their discussion: Do you deny Him who has created you out of dust, and then out of a drop of sperm, and in the end fashioned you into a man? But for my part, I believe that He is God, my Lord, and none shall I associate with my Lord. If only you said as you entered your garden: (18:37-18:41)

This is an example of how faith makes a believer very powerful. He does not care for wealth, might, or arrogance. He states the truth clearly, without hesitation or cowardice. There is no room for bending the truth in order to please anyone, be that a friend or someone mighty. A believer feels that he is far higher than all power and wealth. What God has for him is far superior to any riches or pleasures this life may bring. God's grace is all that he seeks, and His grace is plentiful and always available. On the other hand, God's punishment is severe and could befall the arrogant at any time.

The story then takes us suddenly from the scene of growth and prosperity to one of destruction and barrenness, from arrogance and conceit to repentance and seeking forgiveness. What the man of faith warned against has come true:

So his fruitful gardens were encompassed with ruin, and there he was, wringing his hands over all that he had spent on that which now lay waste, with its trellises caved in; and he could only say: (18:42)

The whole scene is raised before our eyes, and we see all the fruit of the gardens destroyed, as though the calamity befell it from

all sides, leaving nothing untouched. The two gardens are totally destroyed with their trellises caved in. The owner realizes that he can do nothing to save any portion of his gardens or the plantation in between. He wrings his hands in sorrow, bewailing his misfortune which has left all his wealth destroyed and all his labour wasted. He is now repentant for having associated partners with God, acknowledging that He alone is the Lord of the universe. Although the man never previously mentioned the ascribing of divinity to anyone other than God, the fact that he placed a worldly value higher than the values of faith represents such association of partners with God. He now regrets his past attitude and dissociates himself from it. Alas! It is too late.

At this point the chapter declares in all clarity that all protection comes from God: all power belongs to Him; all support comes from Him; His reward is the best reward; and what He stores for us is best and everlasting: (18:43-18:44)

Thus the curtains fall with the gardens in total destruction, and the owner wringing his hands in regret and sorrow. Beyond that, we realize that God's power and majesty overwhelm all.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?
What is the difference between an implication and a consequence?

LESSON 69(4). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT
BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF) SIGNS 18:45-18:49

Makkah: *And propound for them*
the parable of this present life:
It is like water that We caused to descend from heaven.
Then, plants of the earth mingled with it
and it becomes straw in the morning that winnows in the winds.
And God had been over everything
One Who is Omnipotent. (18:45)
Wealth and children are the adornment of this present life.
But that which endures are ones in accord with morality.
These are better with ***your*** *Lord in reward for good deeds*
and better for hopefulness. (18:46)
And on a Day We will set in motion the mountains
and ***you*** *will see the earth as that which will depart.*
And We will assemble them
and not leave out anyone of them. (18:47)
And they were presented before ***your*** *Lord ranged in rows.*
Certainly, you drew near Us as We created you the first time.
Nay! You claimed that We never assign for you
something that is promised. (18:48)
And the Book was set in place and ***you*** *will see*
the ones who sin being ones who are apprehensive
as to what is in it.
And they will say: Woe to us! What is this Book?
It neither leaves out anything small or great,
but counted everything.
They will find present what their hands had done.
And ***your*** *Lord does not wrong anyone.* (18:49)

COMMENTARY°

Now this section draws another scene showing life on earth in its totality, and we realize that it is similar to those destroyed gardens. It is of a fleeting nature, lasting only a very short while and lacking solid substance: *And propound for them the parable of this present life: It is like water that We caused to descend from heaven. Then, plants of the earth mingled with it and it becomes straw in the morning that winnows in the winds. And God had been over everything One Who is Omnipotent.* (18:45)

This scene, with all its movement, is depicted rapidly so as to enhance within us the feelings of a transitory life, one which is short and ends in death. Here we see water pouring down from the skies,

but it does not run or form watercourses. It is immediately absorbed by plants, but these plants do not grow, nor do they yield ripe fruit. It is all destroyed, becoming nothing more than dry stubble, blown away by the winds. The whole duration of life is thus ended within three short sentences. The original Arabic text uses all forms that indicate rapid transition from one stage to the next: the fall of water, then its absorption by plants, and then its blowing away by the wind. How short is life, and how worthless!

Having shown this scene of the present, transitory life to full effect, the chapter makes a contrast between the values to which people attach great importance in this life and those which have the upper position at all times. All this is stated from the point of view of the divine faith: *Wealth and children are the adornment of this present life. But that which endures are ones in accord with morality. These are better with your Lord in reward for good deeds and better for hopefulness.* (18:46)

Wealth and children are the most important things people covet in this life. The Quranic message does not forbid enjoying these, provided that they are derived through legitimate means. Moreover, it gives them their appropriate value in relation to the everlasting life to come. They are adornments, but not criteria to evaluate people with. It is not right that people's status should be measured according to what they have of these. True value should be given to what endures, and that means all good works, including words, actions and worship.

People's hopes are normally very closely linked to wealth and children. However, the deeds that endure, i.e. good works, bring better reward and fulfil greater hopes. Therefore, believers should look to these for a more wholesome fulfilment of their hopes. They are bound to receive their result and reward on the Day of Reckoning.

In all this we see a consistent line, starting with the directive to the Prophet to remain patient and content: *And have you patience yourself with those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.* (18:28) We also see the same message imparted in the story of the two gardens and the two friends, as well as in the scene showing the value of the present life. This is all perfected with this last statement explaining the values of this life and those of the life to come. All this serves to put human values into the proper perspective.

These signs: (18:47-18:49) portray an image in which nature forms an essential part. Horror is seen in its every detail as well as in people's hearts. Here we see firm mountains disappearing. What then

will happen to hearts? The whole earth will appear void and barren, without hills, mountains, slopes or valleys to block anyone's view. The same applies to hearts and consciences: they will be unable to hide anything away.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

LESSON 69(5). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:50-18:53

Makkah: Book 25: Adam (18:50)
I called them not to witness
the creation of the heavens and the earth

nor to their own creation of themselves
nor took I to myself
the ones who are led astray as assistants. (18:51)
And on a Day when He will say:
Cry out to My associates, those who you claimed.
Then, they will call out to them, but they will not respond to them
and We will make a gulf of doom between them. (18:52)
And the unjust will see the ones who sin in the fire.
They thought that they are ones who are about to fall in it
and they will not find a place to turn from it. (18:53)

COMMENTARY°

The guilty facing such a difficult situation are certainly aware, in this life, that Satan is their enemy. Nevertheless, they befriended him and he led them to their predicament. How strange that they should take Satan and his progeny for friends and protectors when they know them to be hostile since the first encounter between Adam and Iblis: *And mention when We said to the angels: Prostrate yourselves to Adam! So they prostrated themselves but Iblis. He had been among the jinn and he disobeyed the command of His Lord. Will you, then, take him to yourselves and his offspring to be protectors other than Me while they are an enemy to you? Miserable was it to give in place ones who are unjust!* (18:50)

This story highlights the singularity of some people's attitude as they take Satan and his progeny for protectors and patrons in preference to God. It represents an outright disobedience of God's commands and the neglect of obligations and duties He has assigned to them.

Why do they befriend these, their enemies, when they possess neither real knowledge nor reliable strength? God has not brought them to witness His creation of the heavens and the earth, or even their own creation. Nor does He seek help or support from them: *I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth nor to their own creation of themselves nor took I to myself the ones who are led astray as assistants.* (18:51) They are no more than creatures whom God has created. They do not know what God has chosen to keep hidden from them, nor does He need their help.

Another scene of the Day of Judgment follows, portraying the end that awaits the guilty and those to whom they ascribe a share of divinity: (18:52-18:53)

They are in a position where no claim has any value unless it is supported by irrefutable proof. The Lord who sits for judgment on

that day commands them to bring their partners whom they alleged to enjoy favor with God. He tells them to call them up. Yet such people are lost. They forget that they are already witnessing the Day of Reckoning. So they call on their former partners who do not make any kind of response. They are no more than creatures of God who cannot avail themselves or anyone else of anything. They also have to face the great events that take place on the Day of Judgment. God places between such worshipped deities and those who worshipped them a gulf of doom too wide for either group to cross over. That gulf is the fire of hell: *And on a Day when He will say: Cry out to My associates, those who you claimed. Then, they will call out to them, but they will not respond to them and We will make a gulf of doom between them.* (18:52)

Those who are guilty will look around and fear will overwhelm them. They expect that at any moment they will fall into the fire. It is extremely hard to expect to be punished, particularly when the punishment is ready and there is no chance of escape: *And the unjust will see the ones who sin in the fire. They thought that they are ones who are about to fall in it and they will not find a place to turn from it.* (18:53)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask: What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?

How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question you are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things you are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which you have some control from questions over which you have no control. Set aside the questions over which you have no control, concentrating your efforts on those questions you can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information you need and actively seek that in-

formation.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information you collect, drawing what reasonable inferences you can.

5. Figure out your options for action. What can you do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under your control from questions beyond your control. Recognize explicitly your limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate your options, taking into account your advantages and disadvantages in the situation you are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When you act, monitor the implications of your action as you begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise your strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift your strategy or your analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 69(6). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

HISTORY

This sign: *And **you** Lord is Forgiving, Possessor of Mercy. If He were to take them to task for what they earned, He will quicken the punishment for them. But for them is what they are promised, from which they will never find a way to elude it* (18:58) was revealed about Umayya ibn Khalaf al-Jumahi. He asked the Prophet to do something that he disliked. He asked him to chase away the poor from his assembly and draw to him, instead, the leaders of Makkah. God revealed: *And have **you** patience **yourself** with those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance. And let not **your** eyes pass over them wanting the adornment of this present life. And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28) That is, God sealed the heart such that a person who follows his own lust (i.e. idolatry) will never believe in God's divine Oneness.[3]

Wahidi says in regard to (18:58): Uyaynah ibn Hisn, al-Aqra ibn Habis and their families came to the Messenger of and said: O Messenger, if only you could sit at the front of the assembly and remove these people, meaning: Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari and other poor Muslims—and their smelly outer garments— because the only thing they had on them were these woolen outer garments—from us, then we could sit with you, talk to you and learn from you!

As a response, God revealed 18:57-18:58, threatening them with

hell. *And who does greater wrong than he who was reminded of the signs of his Lord, then, turned aside from them and forgot what his hands put forward? Truly, We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they should not understand it and heaviness in their ears. And if **you** call them to the guidance, yet they will not be truly guided ever.* (18:57) *And **you** Lord is Forgiving, Possessor of Mercy. If He were to take them to task for what they earned, He will quicken the punishment for them. But for them is what they are promised, from which they will never find a way to elude it.* (18:58)

The Prophet stood up and went looking for them. He found them at the back of the mosque making remembrance of God. He said: Praise be to God Who did not take away my soul until He commanded me to restrain myself with men of my community. It is with you that I live and with you that I die.[4]

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:54-18:59

Makkah: *And, certainly, We diversified in this, the Quran,*
every kind of example for humanity.
And the human being had been
more than anything argumentative.(18:54)
Nothing prevented humanity from believing
when the guidance drew near to them
or from asking forgiveness of their Lord,
but that approaches them a custom of the ancient ones
or approaches them the punishment face to face. (18:55)
We send not the ones who are sent,
but as ones who give good tidings and as ones who warn.
And those who were ungrateful dispute with falsehood
in order to refute The Truth by it.
And they took My signs to themselves
—and what they were warned of—in mockery. (18:56)
And who does greater wrong
than he who was reminded of the signs of his Lord,
then, turned aside from them
and forgot what his hands put forward?
Truly, We laid sheathes on their hearts
so that they should not understand it
and heaviness in their ears.
*And if **you** call them to the guidance,*
yet they will not be truly guided ever. (18:57)
*And **you** Lord is Forgiving, Possessor of Mercy.*

If He were to take them to task for what they earned,
He will quicken the punishment for them.
But for them is what they are promised, from which
they will never find a way to elude it. (18:58)
And these towns, We caused them to perish
when they did wrong
and We assigned for their destruction
what is promised. (18:59)

COMMENTARY°

They could certainly have escaped the fire and all punishment, had they only opened their hearts to the Quran and not opposed the truth it lays down. God certainly gave them all sorts of examples, covering all situations and circumstances: *And, certainly, We diversified in this, the Quran, every kind of example for humanity. And the human being had been more than anything argumentative.* (18:54) The chapter describes a person here as 'a thing'. The literal translation of the above sentence reads: But of all things, the human being is the most contentious.

It chooses such expression in order to encourage a person to be less arrogant and to feel that he is one of God's countless creatures, although he is the worst in argument and contention, after God has given solid, irrefutable argument, clearly expounded in the Quran .

The section then documents the false arguments which the ungrateful, who represent the majority of humanity, have sought to provide:

What is there to keep people from accepting the faith now that guidance has come to them, and from seeking forgiveness from their Lord, unless it be that they are waiting for the fate of the [sinful] people of ancient times to befall them as well, or for the suffering to be brought before their eyes? *Nothing prevented humanity from believing when the guidance drew near to them or from asking forgiveness of their Lord, but that approaches them a custom of the ancient ones or approaches them the punishment face to face.* (18:55)

They have received guidance in plenty, which should have been sufficient for them to believe and follow God's orders. But they demanded for themselves the sort of suffering that befell nations of old. They made such a demand thinking that God's punishment would never overtake them, or they did so in mockery. Sometimes they modified their demands, asking for the punishment to be shown directly to them. That, they argued, would prove what the Prophets preached and then they would believe in them.

Answering such demands is not a matter for God's Messengers to decide. God's rule that applied to past communities meant that when miracles were given and people continued to disbelieve, they were destroyed. To do this or to cause a scourge to overwhelm people are matters which only God determines. His Messengers have a different duty, which is to bring happy news and to warn: *We send not the ones who are sent, but as ones who give good tidings and as ones who warn. And those who were ungrateful dispute with falsehood in order to refute The Truth by it. And they took My signs to themselves—and what they were warned of—in mockery.* (18:56)

The truth is clear, but the ungrateful resorted to false arguments, trying to disprove the truth. Their attitude was perverted, because even when they demanded miracles or hastened God's punishment, they still did not wish to be convinced. Essentially they were only ridiculing God's revelations and mocking His Messengers.

Who could be more wicked than one who, when reminded of his Lord's revelations, turns away from them and forgets what his own hands have done? Over their hearts We have cast veils which prevent them from grasping the truth, and into their ears, deafness. Even if you call them to the right path, they shall never be guided. *And who does greater wrong than he who was reminded of the signs of his Lord, then, turned aside from them and forgot what his hands put forward? Truly, We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they should not understand it and heaviness in their ears. And if you have called them to the guidance, yet they will not be truly guided ever.* (18:57)

These people who treat what God has bestowed from on high with mockery and who ridicule His warnings cannot understand the Quran or comprehend its message. Therefore, God places over their hearts screens which prevent them from understanding it. In their ears He causes a sort of deafness so that they cannot hear it. He has also willed that, because of their deliberate refusal and wilful turning away from His guidance, they will never be guided. For guidance to penetrate people's hearts, such hearts must be open to receive it in the first place. *And your Lord is Forgiving, Possessor of Mercy. If He were to take them to task for what they earned, He will quicken the punishment for them.* (18:58)

Rather, He gives them respite and allows them time, because He is Kind and Merciful. He wishes to allow them every chance so that they can see the issues clearly. He does not hasten their punishment as they demand. However, He will not abandon them completely and leave them unpunished: *But for them is what they are promised, from*

which they will never find a way to elude it. (18:58) They have a term in this life which they will fulfil. During this time a portion of their punishment will be inflicted on them. And they have a time appointed in the hereafter when whatever they have deserved will be given in full.

They have done wrong and they have been unjust. Therefore, they deserve punishment, or even destruction in the same way as communities of old. However, God in His mercy has determined to give them a chance for the full duration of their term on earth. That is to fulfil a purpose which He, in His wisdom, wishes to be accomplished. Therefore, He treats them differently and allows them respite until the time appointed for them, which they cannot evade:

The same applied to other communities which We destroyed when they persisted in wrongdoing. For We had set a time for their destruction. *And these towns, We caused them to perish when they did wrong and We assigned for their destruction what is promised.* (18:59)

They must not be deluded by the respite they are given. Their time will inevitably come. The rules God has made applicable will never fail, and He does not leave any promise unfulfilled.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,

3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:60-18:70

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:60)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:61)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:62)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:63)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:64)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:65)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:66)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:67)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:68)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:69)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:70)

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF) SIGNS 18:71-18:82

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:71)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:72)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:73)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:74)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:75)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:76)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:79)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:80)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:81)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:82)

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF) SIGNS 18:83-18:101

Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:83)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:84)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:85)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:86)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:87)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:88)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:89)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:90)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:91)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:92)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:93)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:94)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:95)
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Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:97)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:98)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:99)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:100)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:101)

LESSON 69(7). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

HISTORY

This sign: *Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is One, so whoever had been hoping for the meeting with his Lord, let him do with his actions as one in accord with morality and ascribe no partners—in the worship of his Lord, ever* (18:110) was revealed about Judus ibn Zachary al-Amici who said: I do the deed seeking God, but I become happy when other people come to know about it.[5]

The Messenger said to him: God is He, is pure and does not accept except that which is not pure. He does not accept that in which

other than Him is associated. God then revealed this sign (18:110).

A person went to see the Prophet and said: I give alms and keep my ties of kinship and do this only for God. However, when other people mention this and praise me for it, it makes me happy and I like it. The Messenger did not respond to him. Then, God revealed (18:110).[6]

Quartic Chapter: The Cave (al-Kahl)
Signs 18:102-18:110

Malkah: *Assumed ones who were ungrateful*
that they take My servants to themselves as protectors
instead of Me?
Truly, We made hell ready with hospitality
for ones who are ungrateful. (18:102)
Say: Shall We tell you who will be
ones who are losers by their actions? (18:103)
It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life
while they assume that they are doing good
by their handiwork. (18:104)
Those were those who were ungrateful for the signs of their Lord
and the meeting with Him so their actions were fruitless.
And so We will not perform for them
on the Day of Resurrection, any weighing. (18:105)
That will be their recompense—hell—
because they were ungrateful
and took to themselves My signs and My Messengers
in mockery. (18:106)
Truly, those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality,
their hospitality had been in the Gardens of Paradise, (18:107)
ones who will dwell in them forever.
They will have no desire for relocation from there. (18:108)
Say: If the sea had been ink for the Words of my Lord,
the sea would come to an end before the Words
of my Lord came to an end
even if We brought about replenishment the like of it. (18:109)
Say: I am only a mortal like you.
It is revealed to me that your God is One,
so whoever had been hoping for the meeting with his Lord,
let him do with his actions as one in accord with morality
and ascribe no partners—
in the worship of his Lord, ever. (18:110)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter concludes with a few signs that bring together its many different lines of discussion in harmonious tone and rhythm. We have here three different aspects which, together, sum up the whole theme of the chapter. The first of these revolves around values and standards as they are reflected in deviant societies and as they truly are. These relate to both actions and people. *Assumed ones who were ungrateful that they take My servants to themselves as protectors instead of Me? Truly, We made hell ready with hospitality for ones who are ungrateful. Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork. Those were those who were ungrateful for the signs of their Lord and the meeting with Him so their actions were fruitless. And so We will not perform for them on the Day of Resurrection, any weighing.* (18:103-18:105)

These are the ones whose loss cannot be exceeded by any human being in history. The answer to this question comes very quickly. *It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:104) It did not lead them to follow any proper guidance. It did not yield any real fruit, nor did it achieve any objective. (18:104) This tells how misguided these people are. They have no inclination that whatever they do in this world takes them further into error and is thus completely wasted. Therefore, they continue spending their whole lives in such vain pursuits.

Now the listeners are asked whether they want to know who these people are. The question heightens their curiosity, holding the attentions of everyone within hearing range. Then when everyone eagerly anticipates the information, the identity of these unrivalled losers is revealed: *Those were those who were ungrateful for the signs of their Lord and the meeting with Him so their actions were fruitless. And so We will not perform for them on the Day of Resurrection, any weighing.* (18:105) The linguistic sense imparted by the Arabic term, habitat, describing their actions as 'vain' is derived from a very special case. It is that of an animal feeding on poisonous grass. Its belly is swollen before it dies. The same is the case with the actions of those who are misguided. They grow and seem fair and rewarding, but the fact is that they come to nothing whatsoever. *That will be their recompense—hell—because they were ungrateful and took to themselves My signs and My Messengers in mockery.* (18:106)

Contrast in the scene is given by showing how the believers fare and what their value score is on the true scales used on the Day of Judgment. *Truly, those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality, their hospitality had been in the Gardens of Paradise, ones who will dwell in them forever. They will have no desire for relocation from there.* (18:107-18:108) This abode in the gardens of paradise is contrasted here with the other abode in hell. The gulf between the two is colossal.

There is also here a fine reference to human nature and its appreciation of pleasure and enjoyment. *They will have no desire for relocation from there.* (18:108) We need to reflect a little on this statement which assures us that the believers are to dwell in paradise permanently. By nature however human beings are bored with any state that continues *ad infinitum*. When they are satisfied that the blessings they enjoy are permanent, they are no longer keen to preserve them, seeking changes instead.

The second concluding element shows the limits of human knowledge when compared with God's infinite knowledge. As our imagination cannot reach the absolute, the Quran gives us a simple analogy which we can easily comprehend, using its method of image drawing: *Say: If the sea had been ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would come to an end before the Words of my Lord came to an end even if We brought about replenishment the like of it.* (18:109) The sea is the largest and richest thing known to humanity. People use ink to write down whatever they want to record. This is how they document their knowledge which they imagine to be great. Therefore, the Quran puts forward the image of the sea with all its vast expanse, but which is now made of ink with which to write down God's words that indicate His knowledge. Even though the whole sea is used, God's words are not finished. At this point another sea of similar magnitude is brought forward, but it too is used in full while God's words are far from finished.

It is with such a clear image and movement that the concept of the infinite is placed before the finite human intellect. A universal and abstract concept remains beyond human conception until it is described in specific terms. No matter how powerful a human being's ability to understand the abstract is, he needs to relate an abstract concept to images and shapes, types and characteristics. This applies to abstract concepts of what is limited or tangible. How then can it fathom what is unlimited and intangible?

Therefore, the Quran gives analogies and draws on similarities in order to give people images and scenes that describe the great con-

cepts it wants them to understand. It often uses what is tangible, and what has shape and definite characteristics and recognizable features in the same way as is employed here. In this example, the sea represents human knowledge which people imagine to be great. But huge and rich as the seas and the oceans may be, they remain limited. God's words, on the other hand, represent His infinite knowledge for which people cannot set any limit. Indeed they cannot receive or record it all, let alone comprehend it.

With such a comparison that shows our knowledge to be extremely limited in relation to God's, the final touch in the chapter paints the highest and noblest degree for us, which is that of recipient of God's final message. This again is something close and finite in relation to the limitless horizon our sight cannot reach: *Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is One, so whoever had been hoping for the meeting with his Lord, let him do with his actions as one in accord with morality and ascribe no partners—in the worship of his Lord, ever.*(18:110)

That is the ultimate horizon of God. How does the horizon of prophethood compare with it, when it is, after all, a human horizon? *Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is One, so whoever had been hoping for the meeting with his Lord, let him do with his actions as one in accord with morality and ascribe no partners—in the worship of his Lord, ever.* (18:110) This is the passport to that splendid meeting.

Thus ends the chapter which began by mentioning revelation and the Oneness of God, utilizing themes and tones that gradually grow more and more profound until they reach this final climax. It is a distinguished beat which generates all the tunes in the splendid music of faith.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QUARTIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected

to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

INTERLUDE 1: ECONOMIC SANCTIONS END

There are various accounts of how the economic sanctions and isolation of the Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib clans came about. We begin with Ibn Ishaq's version:

> The Hashim and the al-Muttalib clans were in the quarters which Quraysh idolaters had agreed upon in the document they wrote, when a number of Quraysh took steps to annul the boycott against them. None took more trouble in this than Hisham ibn Amr for the reason that he was the son of a brother to Nadia ibn Hashim ibn Abd al-Manaf by his mother and was closely attached to the Hashim clan. He was highly esteemed by his people.
>
> I have heard that when these two clans were in their quarter he used to bring a camel laden with food by night and then when he had got it to the mouth of the alley he took off its halter, gave it a whack on the side, and sent it into the alley to them. He would do the same thing another time, bringing clothes for them.
>
> He went to Zuhayr ibn Abu Umayya ibn al-Mughayra whose mother was Atika bint Abd al-Muttalib and said: Are you content to eat food and wear clothes and marry women while you know of the condition of your maternal uncles? They cannot buy or sell, marry, nor give in marriage. By God I swear that if they were the uncles of Abu 'l-Hakam ibn Hisham and you asked him to do what he has asked you to do he would never agree to it.
>
> He said: Confound you, Hisham, what can I do? I'm only one man. By God if I had another man to back me I would soon annul it.
>
> He said: I have found a man. Myself.
>
> He said: Find another as well.
>
> So Hisham went to al-Mutim ibn Adiyy and said: Are you content that two clans of the Abd al-Manaf tribe should perish while you look on consenting to follow the Quraysh? You will find that they will soon do the same with you.
>
> He gave the same reply as Zuhayr and demanded a fourth man, so Hisham went to Abu 'l-Bakhtari ibn Hisham who asked for a fifth man and then to Zamaa ibn al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib ibn Asad and reminded him of their kinship and duties.
>
> He asked whether others were willing to co-operate in this task and he gave him the names of the others. They all arranged to meet at night on the nearest point of al-Hajun above Mecca, and there they bound themselves to take up the question of the document until they had secured its annulment. Zuhayr claimed the right to act and speak first.

So the next day when the people met together Zuhayr clad in a long robe went round the Kabah seven times; then he came forward and said: O people of Makkah, are we to eat and clothe ourselves while the Hashim perish, unable to buy or sell? By God I will not sit down until this evil boycotting document is torn up!

Abu Jahl, who was at the side of the mosque, exclaimed: You lie by God. It shall not be torn up.

Zamaa said: You are a greater liar. We were not satisfied with the document when it was written. Abu 'l-Bakhtari said: Zamaa is right. We are not satisfied with what is written and we don't hold with it.

Al-Mutim said: You are both right and anyone who says otherwise is a liar. We take God to witness that we dissociate ourselves from the whole idea and what is written in the document.

Hisham spoke in the same sense.

Abu Jahl said: This is a matter which has been decided overnight. It has been discussed somewhere else.

Now Abu Talib was sitting at the side of the mosque. When al-Mutim went up to the document to tear it in pieces he found that worms had already eaten it except the words: In **Your** Name, O God.

The writer of the deed was Mansur ibn Ikrima. It is alleged that his hand shrivelled.

When the deed was torn up and annulled, Abu Talib composed the following verses in praise of those who had taken part in the annulment:

Has not our Lord's doing come to the ears of those
Far distant across the sea (for God is very kind to men),
Telling them that the deed was torn up
And all that was against God's wish had been destroyed?
Lies and sorcery were combined in it,
But sorcery never gets the upper hand.
Those not involved in it assembled together for it in a remote place
While its bird of ill omen hovered within its head.
It was such a heinous offense that it would be fitting
That because of it hands and necks should be severed
And that the people of Makkah should go forth and flee,
Their hearts quaking for fear of evil
And the plowman be left in doubt what to do—
Whether to go down to the lowland or up to the hills—
And an army come up between Makkah's hills
Equipped with bows, arrows, and spears.

He of Makkah's citizens whose power rises
(Let him know) that our glory in Makkah's vale is older.
We grew up there when men were few
And have ever waxed great in honor and reputation.
We feed our guests till they leave a dish untasted
When the hands of the *maysir* players would begin to tremble.
God reward the people in al-Hajun who swore allegiance
To a chief who leads with decision and wisdom,
Sitting by the near side of al-Hajun as though princes,
Nay they are even more noble and glorious.
Every bold man helped therein
Clad in mail so long that it slowed his stride,
Running to portentous deeds
Like a flame burning in the torchbearer's hands.
The noblest of Luayy ibn Ghalib's line
When they are wronged their faces show their anger.
With long cord to his sword half his shank bare.
For his sake the clouds give rain and blessing.
Prince son of prince of princely hospitality
Gathering and urging food on his guests.
Building and preparing safety for the tribesmen
When we walk through the land.
Every blameless man kept this peace.
A great leader, there was he praised.
They accomplished their work in a night
While others slept; in the morning they took their ease.
They sent back Sahl ibn Baida well pleased
And Abu Bakr and Muhammad rejoiced thereat.
When have others joined in our great exploits,
From of old have we shown each other affection?
Never have we approved injustice.
We got what we wanted without violence.
O men of Qusayy, won't you consider,
Do you want what will befall you tomorrow?
For you and I are as the words of the saying:
You have the explanation if you could only speak, O Aswad.

Waqidi's version follows:

The conspiracy of the Quraysh does not weaken the faith of the Muslims. Finally, the death of the children of the Hashim clan and the terrible conditions of the Muslims who had sought refuge in the valley becomes blatantly apparent. A group of those who had signed

the agreement become conscious-struck and want to end the sanctions. Hisham ibn Amr goes to Zahira ibn Umayyah and says: How can you eat food and wear good clothing while your relatives have nothing but rags to wear and they go hungry?

Zahira replies: I cannot break the agreement of the Quraysh alone, but if someone concurs with me, I will tear up the agreement. Hisham says: I concur. Hisham says: We need a third person. Hisham seeks out Mutim ibn Adi and says: I never thought you would agree to allow the two families of Bani Hashim and Makhzum, children of Abd al-Muttalib, which you are honored to be a part of, to remain in such a state. He says: What can I do? I cannot do anything alone. He answers: Two other people concur with you, myself and Zahira. Mutim says: Someone else must also join us as well. Hashim speaks to Abu 'l-Bakhtari ibn Hisham and Zamah ibn Qays. They also agree.

They agree to meet at the Kabah the following day. At that time, Zahira says: Oh people of Makkah. We eat well and dress well, but the children of Hashim are dying. Neither is anything sold to them nor bought from them. I swear by God that we must break this oppressive allegiance. Abu Jahl says: This agreement cannot be broken. Zamah says: We did not want to sign it in the first place. Abu 'l-Bakhtari agrees and says: We do not agree with the pledge and we do not accept it as official.Mutim says: Both of them are speaking the truth and whoever says otherwise is lying. I seek refuge in God from what has been written there. Abu Jahl senses that the affair has been decided previously. He stands up proclaims his refusal to allow it to happen. At that point, Mutim goes to get the document to tear it up. He finds that termites have eaten it all up except the words *bismilla, Allahumma.*

A group goes to the Hashim Clan and informs them they can leave the valley and return to their homes. This occurs in the middle of Rajab, 3 BH/ca. March 8, 619 CE. They had been under economic sanctions in the valley of Abu Talib for ca. 31 months from Muharram 8 AH (ca. September 19, 616 CE) to the middle of Rajab 5 AH (ca. March 8, 619 CE).

During these three years, the vast fortunes of Khadija and Abu Talib had run out. They had to make, as it were, a new beginning in life, by putting their blocks into place—one by one. Ten years had passed since Muhammad had first proclaimed his mission. The boycott of the Quraysh had failed to produce the intended result. The members of these clans were defiant, and their morale was high. It was just as unthinkable for them, at the end of the siege, as it had been at the beginning, to surrender Muhammad to his enemies.

LESSON 70(1). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:1-16:9

Makkah: *Approached the command of God?*
Seek not to hasten it.
Glory be to Him and exalted is He above partners

they ascribe with God. (16:1)
He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command
on whom He wills of His servants to warn
that there is no god but I,
so be God-conscious of Me. (16:2)
He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth.
Exalted is He above partners they ascribe. (16:3)
He created the human being from seminal fluid.
That is when he is a clear adversary. (16:4)
And He created the flocks, for you
in which there is warmth and profits and of them you eat (16:5)
and in them is a beauty for you when you give them rest and when
you drive forth flocks to pasture. (16:6)
And they carry your lading to a land, being that which reaches you
not but under adverse circumstances to yourselves.
Truly, your Lord is Gentle, Compassionate. (16:7)
And He creates horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride
and as an adornment. And He creates what you know not. (16:8)
And with God is showing of the way
yet some of them are ones who swerve.
If He willed, He would have guided you one and all. (16:9)

COMMENTARY°

God's judgment is bound to come; so do not seek to hurry it on. Limitless is He in His glory and sublimely exalted above anything people may associate with Him. He sends down angels with this divine inspiration, [bestowed] by His will on such of His servants as He pleases: *Approached the command of God? Seek not to hasten it. Glory be to Him and exalted is He above partners they ascribe with God. He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command on whom He wills of His servants to warn that there is no god but I, so be God-conscious of Me.* (16:1-16:2)

The ungrateful in Makkah used to ask the Prophet to hasten their punishment in this life, or to hasten the punishment God has in store for them in the life to come. As time passed with no punishment being inflicted, they urged the Prophet more and more to hasten it, demonstrating that they could not care less. They thought that Muhammad was warning them against something that would never happen. His only aim, as they imagined, was to get them to believe what he said and accept his faith. They could not understand God's wisdom in giving them time. Nor could they appreciate His grace. They would not reflect on the signs He has placed everywhere in the

universe around them. Nor would they reflect on His revelations in the Quran which address people's minds and hearts. That is after all a much more effective address than punishment and suffering. It is more worthy of us whom God has honored when He gave him a mind, feelings and an independent will to study, reflect and make free choices.

The opening of the chapter is very decisive. It implies that the command has been given, and that God's will has been made. This is sufficient for the judgment to come to pass at the time appointed for it by God Himself. God's laws operate in accordance with His will. They cannot be hurried, nor can they be postponed to satisfy people's wishes. The statement here tells us that God's judgment, to resurrect people or to inflict His punishment on those who deserve it, has been made. It will come to pass at the time God has determined. There will be no hurrying and no delay.

The decisive nature of this statement is especially effective, even on those who try to wear a careless face. Moreover, it expresses the truth. Whatever God wills is bound to take place. The fact that He has made a judgment means that it is carried out, and that it becomes part of reality. Therefore, there is neither an overstatement of facts nor a deviation from them.

Their beliefs, associating partners with God, and all the false concepts that they formulate on that basis, are far removed from God's true nature: *Approached the command of God? Seek not to hasten it. Glory be to Him and exalted is He above partners they ascribe with God.* (16:1) Beliefs that ascribe divinity to anyone other than God all lack foundation. They are the result of degenerate and disgraceful thinking.

God, who does not abandon humanity to their erring beliefs and baseless concepts, sends down from on high what gives them life and saves them: *He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command on whom He wills of His servants to warn that there is no god but I, so be God-conscious of Me.* (16:2) This is God's greatest favor and blessing. He not only sends down water from the sky to make the earth quicken and to give physical life, but He also sends down the angels with His divine inspiration. The Arabic expression uses the word *ruh*, which also means 'spirit', for inspiration. This adds connotations of life within people's souls, consciences and feelings, and within society so as to preserve them all from corruption. This is the first thing that God sends down to people from on high, and it is His most important blessing and bounty. God's purest creation, the angels, are sent down to His chosen servants, the prophets, giving

them a message that is summed up in these words: (16:2)

The emphasis here is on God's Oneness, which is the central point of the Quranic faith. It breathes life into people's souls. It is also the parting point between the way which gives life and the way which destroys it. A soul that does not believe in God's Oneness is lost, confused, pulled in all directions by diverse and contradictory concepts and beliefs. It cannot move with its whole being towards a definite goal. Use of the term *ruh* in reference to God's message implies all these. Indeed it provides a fitting reference to them at the beginning of this chapter which speaks of the great variety of God's favors. It is the top of all these blessings, without which all others lose their value. Indeed, we do not make a proper use or derive proper benefit from anything on earth unless our soul comes alive with the great blessing of faith.

The warning is given a special mention so as to appear to be the central point of the message, because the larger part of the chapter speaks about the ungrateful who deny God's blessing, prohibit what God has made lawful, violate their covenant with

God and reject faith altogether. This makes the warning more appropriate at the outset, coupled with a call to fear God and avoid incurring His displeasure.

The chapter then begins to outline the aspects of creation that emphasize the Oneness of the Creator, and the aspects of blessing that confirm that it is God alone who bestows them all. These are revealed in groups that follow one another sequentially, starting with the creation of the heavens and the earth, and moving to the creation of man: *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. Exalted is He above partners they ascribe. He created the human being from seminal fluid. That is when he is a clear adversary.* (16:3-16:4)

The truth is at the core of their creation and their existence. Indeed the truth is an essential element in managing their affairs and the affairs of all creation. Nothing is created in vain or idle play. Everything derives its existence on the basis of the truth, and leads eventually to the truth. *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. Exalted is He above partners they ascribe.* (16:3) He is exalted above their pagan beliefs and above any creatures they associate with Him. He is indeed the One who has created the heavens and the earth and all beings that live in them. No creature is worthy of being His partner. Indeed He has no partners.

The gulf is so huge between the origin and the end, between the worthless sperm and the person in open contention. *He created the human being from seminal fluid. That is when he is a clear adversary.*

(16:4) He disputes with his Lord and denies Him. He argues about His existence or His Oneness. Yet the way the sign runs leaves no gap between the point of origin, the drop of sperm, and the grown up man engaged in dispute and contention. This shows the contrast to be complete and the gulf too wide. Such brevity is intended for enhanced effect.

Against the expanse of the heavens and the earth we stand out. Therefore, the chapter mentions some of the creation God has made subservient to us, beginning with flocks: *And He created the flocks, for you in which there is warmth and profits and of them you eat and in them is a beauty for you when you give them rest and when you drive forth flocks to pasture. And they carry your lading to a land, being that which reaches you not but under adverse circumstances to yourselves. Truly, your Lord is Gentle, Compassionate. And He creates horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and as an adornment. And He creates what you know not.* (16:5-16:8)

A proper Quranic conscience is always ready to accept any new remarkable addition to God's creation or to scientific discovery. Over the years many new means of riding and carrying loads have been added, as well as many objects of beauty. None of these were known to people when the Quran was revealed. There will be many more which are unknown to us. The Quran prepares us to accept these without difficulty by stating that God creates things of which you have no knowledge. *And He creates horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and as an adornment. And He creates what you know not.* (16:8)

Within the context of carriage, riding and traveling to reach certain destinations on earth, the chapter adds other objectives which we can reach by travelling along mental ways. Such is the road to faith, which is a straight way that has no turnings. It does not go beyond the defined goal. There are other ways that do not lead to the same destination. Now God has undertaken to make the way leading to Him clear and well defined. He points it out through the signs He has placed in the universe and through His Messengers: *And with God is showing of the way yet some of them are ones who swerve. If He willed, He would have guided you one and all.* (16:9)

The right path is the straight one which does not bend here or there. It goes directly to its destination, allowing for no deviation. A swerving path may lead away from the destination, or may go beyond it, without stopping at it.

But it has been His will that He creates us with the dual propensity to follow His guidance or to go astray, and to let us choose to

follow either way. Therefore, some people follow the right path and some follow swerving ways. Neither type goes beyond God's will which has determined to allow us free choice.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

Lesson 70(2). Critical Thinking Moral Trait Empathetic Altruism (*ihsan*)

What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl)
Signs 16:10-16:21

Makkah: *It is He Who caused water*
to descend from heaven
for you to drink from it and from it,
trees wherein you pasture your herds. (16:10)
He caused crops to develop for you with it,
and the olives and the date palms
and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits.
Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect. (16:11)
And He caused to be subservient to you
the nighttime and the daytime

and the sun and the moon, and the stars,
ones caused to be subservient by His command.
Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable. (16:12)
And whatever He made numerous for you in
and on the earth of hues, ones that are at variance,
truly, in that is a sign for a folk who recollect. (16:13)
And He it is Who caused the sea to be subservient to you
so that you eat from it succulent flesh
and pull out of it glitter to wear
and you see the boats, ones that plow through the waves,
that you be looking for His grace
and so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:14)
And He cast on to the earth firm mountains
so that it not vibrate with you and rivers
and roads so that perhaps you will be truly guided (16:15)
and landmarks.
And they are truly guided by the stars. (16:16)
Is, then, He Who creates as he who creates not?
Will you not, then, recollect? (16:17)
And if you try to number the divine blessing of God,
you will not be able to count it.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (16:18)
And God knows what you keep secret
and what you speak openly. (16:19)
And those whom you call to other than God,
they created not anything but they are themselves created. (16:20)
They are lifeless, not living.
And they are not aware when they will be raised up. (16:21)

COMMENTARY°

The second group of great signs in God's creation and His unlimited blessings then follow: Water pours down from the sky in accordance with laws that God has placed in nature and set into operation. It is these laws that control the running of such water and bring about its outcome in accordance with God's will. Indeed He initiates every movement and determines every result by a special act of will. The water is mentioned here as an aspect of God's grace. So it has the quality of being suitable for drinking. Its other quality follows: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds.* (16:10) This reference fits in well with the earlier mention of cattle. It provides harmony between the pasture and cattle. A reference is

also made to plants which serve as food for man, including olives, dates and grapes, and many other types of fruit.

There is certainly a sign: *He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* (16:11) in the way God has designed the universe and set its laws so that they fit human life. Man would not have been able to survive on this planet had the laws of nature been unsuitable for his nature and life needs. That we are placed on the surface of the earth has not come about by blind coincidence. Nor is it a matter of coincidence that proportions and relativity between our planet and other planets and stars are as they are, or that climatic conditions are so suitable to support human life and satisfy man's needs and desires.

A third group of signs are then added: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (16:12)

Another aspect of the perfect design of creation and the blessings bestowed on humanity at the same time is the creation of the night, day, sun, moon and stars.

Yet another group of blessings that God bestows on humanity is also mentioned: *And whatever He made numerous for you in and on the earth of hues, ones that are at variance, truly, in that is a sign for a folk who recollect.* (16:13)

We are then alerted to another group of God's creation which is the sea and its animal life. Its water is salty and cannot be used for drinking or irrigation. Yet it includes a fantastic range of blessings that God bestows on humans: *And He it is Who caused the sea to be subservient to you so that you eat from it succulent flesh and pull out of it glitter to wear and you see the boats, ones that plow through the waves, that you be looking for His grace and so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:14)

The last group of God's numerous blessings mentioned in this passage refers to different aspects of God's creation: *And He cast on to the earth firm mountains so that it not vibrate with you and rivers and roads so that perhaps you will be truly guided and landmarks. And they are truly guided by the stars.*(16: 15-16:16)

Now that the aspects of creation, blessings and great design have been completed in this first passage of the chapter, a comment follows to emphasize the point at issue, namely the Oneness of God who is sublimely exalted above all those beings people associate as partners with Him:

Is He, then, who creates like one that cannot create? Will you not, then, think? Should you try to count God's blessings, you will never be able to compute them. God is indeed Forgiving, Merciful. God knows all that you keep secret and all that you bring into the open. Those beings that some people invoke beside God cannot create anything; they themselves are created. They are dead, not living, and they do not know when they will be raised back to life. *Is, then, He Who creates as he who creates not? Will you not, then, recollect? And if you try to number the divine blessing of God, you will not be able to count it. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. And God knows what you keep secret and what you speak openly. And those whom you call to other than God, they created not anything but they are themselves created. They are lifeless, not living. And they are not aware when they will be raised up.* (16:17-16:21)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 70(3). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *B staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones wh are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poo.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

HISTORY

The elders of the Quraysh met for consultation. Some of them said: Muhammad is a person of fine argument. If he speaks to a person, he soon gets hold of him. Therefore, select some of your most honorable people, whose lines of ancestry are well known. Let them take their positions at every route into Makkah, at one or two day's distance, so that they turn away anyone who comes to meet Muhammad. People did just that. If any of them met a person sent by his people to find out about Muhammad, he would introduce himself to him, telling him his position among his people. He would then offer to tell him about the Prophet, saying: He is a liar who has been followed only by slaves and ignorant people, and those who are good for nothing. All wise men among his people have taken a clear stand against him. This would be enough to turn many people away. It is to this that God refers in the sign stating: *And when it is said to them: What is that your Lord caused to descend, they would say: Fables of the ancient ones!* (16:24)

On the other hand, if the person sent to find out about the Prophet is one to whom God has given insight, he would say: I am certainly a bad intelligence gatherer if, having reached so close, I am to return now without meeting this man and listening to what he says in order to give my people a true picture of him. He would insist on going into Makkah, where he would meet the believers and where they would tell him that all that Muhammad says is good and fine.

This was a well orchestrated propaganda campaign mounted by the Quraysh against the Quranic message. A similar campaign is organized in every generation by arrogant people who do not wish to submit to the truth despite all the evidence supporting it. Indeed the arrogant among the Quraysh were not the first to deny the truth or to scheme against it. The chapter draws for them a picture of the fate suffered by schemers before them, and their destiny in the hereafter. It shows them what they endure from the moment their souls part with their bodies until they receive their punishment in the life to come. All this is depicted in vivid images, following the inimitable style of the Quran.[7]

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:22-16:25

Makkah: *Your God is One God.*
But for those who believe not in the world to come,
their hearts are ones that know not
and they are ones who grow arrogant. (16:22)

Without a doubt God knows
what they keep secret and what they speak openly.
Truly, He loves not the ones who grow arrogant. (16:23)
And when it is said to them:
What is that your Lord caused to descend,
they would say: Fables of the ancient ones! (16:24)
They will carry their own heavy loads, that which is complete,
on the Day of Resurrection, and of the heavy loads of whomever
they cause to go astray without knowledge.
How evil is what they will bear! (16:25)

COMMENTARY°

The first passage of this chapter outlined a great many aspects of God's marvellous creation and His blessings which He bestows on His servants, and His knowledge of what is open and what is secret. The other beings which the ungrateful allege to have a share of divinity do not create anything; indeed they themselves are created. They are devoid of knowledge, dead and unlikely ever to come to life. They do not know when their servants are resurrected in order to face the reckoning. This clearly shows that they cannot be deities worthy of worship. Indeed it shows that all beliefs based on a multiplicity of deities are false. This was the first issue raised by the chapter in connection with the question of God's Oneness, with an added reference to the question of resurrection.

The present passage picks up where the last one left off, starting a new round which begins with a clear statement of God's Oneness. It makes clear that those who do not believe in the Day of Judgement have hearts that are hardened in their denial of the truth. Blindness has become an essential characteristic that prevents them from admitting the truth to which signs clearly testify. Their arrogance stops them from acknowledging what they feel to be the truth and accepting its message. The passage concludes with a touching scene in which we see all shadows prostrating themselves, together with every living thing in the heavens and earth, as well as the angels, to God. These are free of arrogance. They fear God and obey His command without dissent. This scene of complete obedience contrasts with that of the hardened ungrateful arrogantly denying the truth at the beginning of the passage.

In between these two scenes, the chapter reports what the arrogant ungrateful say about revelations and about the Quran. They allege that all this is merely fables of the ancients. It also reports their claims about the reasons for their associating partners with God, their

prohibition of what God has made lawful, alleging that God wants them to do what is evil and that He accepts it from them. It quotes their assertions about resurrection and judgment, as they emphatically swear that God does not bring back to life anyone who has died. It answers all their claims, portraying them as they face their death, and as they are brought back to life disclaiming their false assertions.

The chapter also paints scenes of the fate of earlier communities which denied the truth like the ungrateful do. It warns them against being seized by God at any moment of the day or night, when they are totally unaware, either moving around on earth, or feeling apprehensive, expecting God's punishment to overwhelm them. In this passage the chapter also reports what the believers say, and what they expect when they are gathered to God, and what awaits them of goodly reward on the Day of Judgement. The passage concludes with a scene of total serenity and complete obedience demonstrated by all, including shadows, living creatures and angels, in heaven and on earth. *Your God is One God. But for those who believe not in the world to come, their hearts are ones that know not and they are ones who grow arrogant. Without a doubt God knows what they keep secret and what they speak openly. Truly, He loves not the ones who grow arrogant.* (16:22-16:23)

The chapter provides a clear link between believing in God's Oneness and believing in the Day of Judgment. Indeed it makes the one evidence for the other, as worshipping God alone is closely associated with belief in resurrection and reward. It is in the hereafter that God's wisdom and justice are clearly and fully manifested.

All that the chapter has outlined of great signs of creation and blessing, and also of the signs of His perfect knowledge, lead to this clear truth. A truth with manifest effects seen in the harmony and complementarity of the laws of nature governing the universe.

Those who reject this great truth, and do not believe in the hereafter, are not short of proof and evidence. The fault lies rather with them and their own hardened natures. Their hearts persistently deny the very signs they see. They are arrogant, unwilling to accept clear evidence, submit to God, and believe in His Messenger.

God who has created them knows this. Indeed He knows what they keep secret and what they do and say in the open, and He does not like what He knows of them. They are full of arrogance. *Without a doubt God knows what they keep secret and what they speak openly. Truly, He loves not the ones who grow arrogant.* (16:23) An arrogant nature is unlikely to be convinced or to submit to the truth. It is their arrogance that makes them unloved by God.

Those arrogant people with hardened, unresponsive hearts are asked, What has your Lord bestowed from on high? *And when it is said to them: What is that your Lord caused to descend, they would say: Fables of the ancient ones!* (16:24) But they do not give the direct and normal answer, quoting some signs from the Quran or stating their import without distortion to prove their honest reporting even though they may not believe in it. They give instead a dishonest answer, saying: *Fables of the ancient ones*! (16:24) A fable is defined as a story not founded on fact, a legend or myth. Thus do they describe the Quran which addresses minds and souls, deals with life situations, human behavior, social interactions as well as people's conditions, past, present and future. They only describe it as such because it relates some parts of the history of earlier communities. Their denial of the truth thus leads them to bear the burden of their own sins, as well as a portion of the burdens of those whom they lead astray, preventing them from believing in God and the Quran, keeping them unaware of its truth and nature. The Quran describes these sins as heavy burdens. Indeed, they are foul burdens. They weigh heavily on people's souls like loads weigh heavily on their backs. They trouble hearts like burdens trouble the body. Indeed they are worse and even more troublesome than physical burdens, heavy as these may be. *They will carry their own heavy loads, that which is complete, on the Day of Resurrection, and of the heavy loads of whomever they cause to go astray without knowledge. How evil is what they will bear!* (16:25)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.

Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.

Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.

If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?

Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?

Or thought, what did he assume?

Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

Lesson 70(4). Critical Thinking Strategy
Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl)
Signs 16:26-16:34

Makkah: *Surely, those who were before them planned, then, God*
approached their structures
from the foundations
and the roof fell down upon them from above
and the punishment approached them
from where they are not aware. (16:26)
Again, on the Day of Resurrection He will cover them
with shame and will say: Where are My ascribed associates
with whom you had been making a breach with them?
Those who were given the knowledge will say:
Truly, degradation this Day
and evil upon the ones who are ungrateful. (16:27)
Those whom the angels call to themselves
while they are ones who are unjust to themselves.
Then, they will give a proposal of surrender:
We had not been doing any evil.
Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing. (16:28)
So enter the doors of hell—ones who will dwell in it forever;
and, certainly, it will be a miserable place of lodging.
It is for the ones who increase in pride! (16:29)
And when it was said to those who were God-conscious:
What is it that your Lord caused to descend?
They will say: Good or for those who did good in the present,

there is benevolence. And the abode of the world to come is better.
And how excellent will be the abode
of the ones who are God-conscious! (16:30)
Gardens of Eden which they will enter beneath which rivers run.
They have in them all that they will.
Thus, God gives recompense
to the ones who are God-conscious. (16:31)
Those whom the angels call to themselves
while they are ones who are good.
They say to them: Peace be unto you!
Enter the Garden because of what you had been doing. (16:32)
Look they not on but that the angels approach them
or the command of you Lord approach?
Thus, accomplished those before them.
And God did not wrong them.
Rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (16:33)
Then, their evil deeds lit on them for what their hands did.
And surrounded them is what they had been ridiculing. (16:34)

COMMENTARY°

Those who lived before them also schemed. But God struck their edifice at its foundation, and its roof fell in upon them from above, and suffering befell them from where they did not perceive. *Surely, those who were before them planned, then, God approached their structures from the foundations and the roof fell down upon them from above and the punishment approached them from where they are not aware. Again, on the Day of Resurrection He will cover them with shame and will say: Where are My ascribed associates with whom you had been making a breach with them? Those who were given the knowledge will say: Truly, degradation this Day and evil upon the ones who are ungrateful. Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are unjust to themselves. Then, they will give a proposal of surrender: We had not been doing any evil. Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing. So enter the doors of hell—ones who will dwell in it forever; and, certainly, it will be a miserable place of lodging. It is for the ones who increase in pride!* (16:26-16:29)

The chapter paints their scheming as though it was a building with foundations, corners, ceiling and roof, which implies that it was a massive and well designed plot. But nothing can stand up to God's might: *Surely, those who were before them planned, then, God approached their structures from the foundations.* (16:26) This paints

a picture of total destruction, overtaking them from beneath their feet and above their heads. The foundations supporting the building collapse, and the roof falls down burying them. *And the roof fell down upon them from above and the punishment approached them from where they are not aware.* (16:26) Thus the building they very carefully constructed to provide them with shelter becomes their burial ground as they are overwhelmed from every direction. Little did they think that what they built for shelter would become the instrument of their own destruction.

The image we have here is one of complete destruction. This is the perfect irony directed at those who scheme and plot against God's message, believing that their scheming is too strong and elaborate to ever be foiled. But God's own scheming is far too weighty for them to oppose. This scene is often repeated. The Quraysh were not the first to take this stand, nor would they be the last. On the other hand, God's message goes on along its clear way, no matter what the plotters devise. People turn around from time to time, and they see that highly effective scene portrayed by the Quran: *Surely, those who were before them planned, then, God approached their structures from the foundations and the roof fell down upon them from above and the punishment approached them from where they are not aware.* (16:26)

All this takes place in the present life on earth. But there is something else beyond: *Again, on the Day of Resurrection He will cover them with shame and will say: Where are My ascribed associates with whom you had been making a breach with them?* (16:27) This is now a scene of the hereafter, where we see the plotters stand up in shame, and when their arrogance and scheming is no longer of any use to them. They stand in front of the One to whom all creation and all authority belong. He will rebuke them, asking: You were keen to dispute with My Messenger and his followers who acknowledged My Oneness, claiming that your false deities were My partners. Where are they now?

In their shame and humiliation, they will remain silent. On the other hand, those endowed with knowledge, angels, Messengers and true believers, whom God permits to speak, will say plainly and forcefully: *Those who were given the knowledge will say: Truly, degradation this Day and evil upon the ones who are ungrateful.* (16:27)

Now they are taken a step backwards, and described at the moment they face death. *Those who were given the knowledge will say: Truly, degradation this Day and evil upon the ones who are ungrate-*

ful. Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are unjust to themselves. Then, they will give a proposal of surrender: We had not been doing any evil. Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing. (16:27-16:28) The angels are gathering their souls which they themselves have wronged by depriving themselves of the light and reassurance of faith. By their own actions they have brought about their own ruin, and now they have to suffer punishment in hell.

The chapter paints their position at the moment of their death, when they are still close to earth and to all the falsehood they asserted here, and all their evil scheming: *Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are unjust to themselves. Then, they will give a proposal of surrender: We had not been doing any evil. Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing.* (16:28) Those who used to revel in their arrogance are now submissive, unable to contend. They offer complete submission! But at the same time they lie. This may be an aspect of their plotting in this life.

Yet the answer comes to them straightaway from God who knows their true reality: *Then, they will give a proposal of surrender: We had not been doing any evil. Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing.* (16:28) There is no room now for lies or deception. They have to suffer the fate of all arrogant peoples who deny the truth: *So enter the doors of hell—ones who will dwell in it forever; and, certainly, it will be a miserable place of lodging. It is for the ones who increase in pride* (16:29)

On the other side stand the God-conscious. Their picture contrasts fully with that of the arrogant ungrateful, in origin and destiny: *And when it was said to those who were God-conscious: What is it that your Lord caused to descend? They will say: Good or for those who did good in the present, there is benevolence. And the abode of the world to come is better. And how excellent will be the abode of the ones who are God-conscious! Gardens of Eden which they will enter beneath which rivers run. They have in them all that they will. Thus, God gives recompense to the ones who are God-conscious. Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are good. They say to them: Peace be unto you! Enter the Garden because of what you had been doing.* (16:30-16:32)

The God-conscious realize that the very essence of the divine message and all that God has revealed of directives, commandments and laws is good and perfect. Therefore, when they are questioned about what God has revealed from on high, they sum it up in a word: *And when it was said to those who were God-conscious: What is it*

that your Lord caused to descend? (16:30) They enjoy a good life and have a good position. It is certainly better than all there is in this present life. *They will say: Good or for those who did good in the present, there is benevolence. And the abode of the world to come is better. And how excellent will be the abode of the ones who are God-conscious!* (16:30) More details are now given about this abode of the hereafter, which is shown to be a goodly one indeed: (16: 31) In such a place and with such resources they have comforts and luxuries in abundance. *Gardens of Eden which they will enter beneath which rivers run.* (16:31) They will want for nothing. Every good thing is provided without any limit on what God grants them. *They have in them all that they will. Thus, God gives recompense to the ones who are God-conscious.* (16:31)

Again the chapter takes a step backwards to show the God-fearing believers as they are about to die. It is an easy scene, as they are comforted by the angels: *Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are good.* (16:32) They are in a comfortable, pure condition, looking forward to meeting God, having nothing to fear. The angels greet them: *They say to them: Peace be unto you! Enter the Garden because of what you had been doing.*(16:32)

At the end of this scene with its two aspects of death and resurrection, the chapter queries what the idolaters of the Quraysh are waiting for? Are they waiting for the angels to gather their souls, or for God's command to resurrect them? For this is what happens to them on death and then on the day when resurrection takes place by God's command. Yet they have a clear lesson in what happened to earlier communities. They have been shown two images delineating what happens to both parties:

Are they [who disbelieve] awaiting anything but for the angels to appear before them, or for your Lord's command to come? Those before them did the same. It was not God who wronged them, but it was they who wronged themselves. The evil consequences of their misdeeds overtook them, and they were overwhelmed by the very thing they used to deride. *Look they not on but that the angels approach them or the command of your Lord approach? Thus, accomplished those before them. And God did not wrong them. Rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. Then, their evil deeds lit on them for what their hands did. And surrounded them is what they had been ridiculing.* (16:33-16:34)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What is the difference between important and trivial?
What are his people like? What kinds of people are there?
What is the difference between right and wrong?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:
I followed the following guidelines:

Arrive on time for class.
Teachers do not take lateness lightly.
Position yourself in the classroom to focus on the subject matter; consider the best location for:

listening
asking questions
seeing visual materials
discussing—not only with the teacher but also your classmates

LESSON 70(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their an-

swers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[8]

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:35-16:40

Makkah: *And those who ascribed partners*

with God said:
If God willed neither
would we have worshiped other than Him anything,
we nor our fathers,
nor would we have held sacred anything
other than what He forbade.
Thus, accomplished those who were before them.
Then, what is upon the Messengers,
but the delivering of the clear message? (16:35)
And, certainly, We raised up in every community a Messenger
saying that: Worship God and avoid false deities.
Then, of them were some whom God guided
and of them were some upon whom their fallacy was realized.
So journey through the earth;
then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who deny. (16:36)
If you be eager for their guidance,
then, truly, God will not guide whom He causes to go astray.
And they will have no ones who help. (16:37)
And they swore by God their most earnest oaths:
God will not raise up him who dies.
Yea! It is a promised obligation upon Him
—except most of humanity knows not— (16:38)
in order to make manifest for them
about what they are at variance in it
and so that those who were ungrateful know
that they had been ones who lie. (16:39)
Our saying to a thing when We wanted it
is that We say to it: Be! Then, it is! (16:40)

COMMENTARY°

Now the chapter reports yet another argument advanced by the ungrateful, to explain the reasons for their disbelief. *And those who ascribed partners with God said: If God willed neither would we have worshiped other than Him anything, we nor our fathers, nor would we have held sacred anything other than what He forbade. Thus, accomplished those who were before them. Then, what is upon the Messengers, but the delivering of the clear message? And, certainly, We raised up in every community a Messenger saying that: Worship God and avoid false deities. Then, of them were some whom God guided and of them were some upon whom their fallacy was realized. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the*

Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (16:35-16:36)

God's will is never directed so as to make His servants associate partners with Him. Nor is He ever pleased when they prohibit what He has made lawful. This is clearly stated in His law contained in His messages to humanity. The Messengers were only assigned the task of delivering His message, and they were up to the task, exerting their best efforts to fulfil it: *And, certainly, We raised up in every community a Messenger saying that: Worship God and avoid false deities.* (16:36) This is the command He issued, outlining what He wishes His servants to do. God Almighty does not order His servants to do something which He knows them to be, by nature, unable to do, or to do what He has compelled them to avoid. The clear evidence proving His displeasure with those who disobey His orders is the punishment which He inflicted in former times on those who denied His messages and Messengers. Therefore, He draws attention here to the fate of those disobedient communities: *So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (16:36)

Some people respond positively to God's message:*Then, of them Aware some whom God guided* (16:36) Another group chose error: *and of them were some upon whom their fallacy was realized.* (16:36) Neither party has broken away from God's will for He did not compel them to follow one way or the other. Each chose the way for himself after having been given sufficient guidance to distinguish between truth and error. Such guidance is placed within us and is also made available everywhere in the universe around us.

This statement also refutes the false argument advanced by the idolaters and repeated by many of those who commit every kind of disobedience of God. The Quranic message is very clear on this point. God orders His servants to do only what is right and good, and He forbids them only what is evil. He may sometimes choose to inflict clear punishments which plainly reflect His displeasure. But this does not mean that He intervenes to compel them to go astray and then punishes them for something over which they claim to have no choice. This is absolutely false. They are completely free to follow the way they choose, and that freedom is given them by God's will. Whatever good or evil they do, then, takes place by God's will in this sense only.

This explains the comment given in the form of an address to the Prophet outlining the law determining what people may follow of guidance or error: *If you be eager for their guidance, then, truly, God will not guide whom He causes to go astray. And they will have*

no ones who help. (16:37) People's acceptance of divine guidance is not the result of the Prophet's deliberations and efforts. This is not his task. His mission is only to deliver the message God gave him. Guidance and error are subject to God's law which never fails, bringing the same results every time. Whoever deserves to remain in error according to God's law shall not receive His guidance. That is because of the operation of the laws God has set in nature. This is His will which is always done. Therefore, "they shall have none to support them." Besides, who can support them against God?

The ungrateful make yet another argument to justify their rejection of the divine message. *And they swore by God their most earnest oaths: God will not raise up him who dies. Yea! It is a promised obligation upon Him—except most of humanity knows not—in order to make manifest for them about what they are at variance in it and so that those who were ungrateful know that they had been ones who lie. Our saying to a thing when We wanted it is that We say to it: Be! Then, it is!* (16:38-16:40)

The question of resurrection has been the main point of contention among many communities ever since God sent His Messengers to humanity, commanding them to do what is good and forbidding them what is evil, warning them always that they are accountable for their deeds before God on the Day of Judgment.

Yet these people from the Quraysh were ready to solemnly swear that God will not raise anyone to life after death. In other words, they acknowledge God's existence but deny that the dead will be brought back to life by Him. They consider such resurrection to be impossible after bodies have decomposed, organs separated and molecules are scattered everywhere. They overlook the miraculous nature of life in the first place. They are oblivious to the nature of God's power and the fact that it cannot be compared with that of human beings or their abilities. They do not realize that to bring anything into existence does not trouble God in any way, and does not place any burden whatsoever on His power. It is sufficient for Him to decide to bring something into existence for that thing to exist.

Human beings are also oblivious of God's purpose behind resurrection. The fact is that nothing reaches its fullness in this life. People differ on truth and falsehood, right and error, good and evil, etc. Their differences and disputes cannot be settled or reach the right conclusion in this life on earth. It is a matter of God's will that some of them live long, and that they are not held to account for their deeds during this life. Thus, reward and punishment are administered in the hereafter when everything reaches its fullness.

The chapter replies to the ungrateful' assertion that the dead will not be resurrected. It dispels people's doubts with an emphatic assertion: *And they swore by God their most earnest oaths: God will not raise up him who dies.* (16:38) When God makes a promise, then that promise is fulfilled without fail. *Yea! It is a promised obligation upon Him—except most of humanity knows not.* (16:38) People are rarely aware of the true nature of a promise made by God.

The whole thing has a definite purpose: *In order to make manifest for them about what they are at variance in it and so that those who were ungrateful know that they had been ones who lie.* (16:39) They lie when they allege that their methods are based on true guidance, when they accuse God's Messengers of lying, and when they deny the life to come and entertain concepts and beliefs that are false and lack basis. Besides, resurrection is so easy: *Our saying to a thing when We wanted it is that We say to it: Be! Then, it is!* (16:40)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

INTERLUDE 2: DEATHS OF KHADIJA AND ABU TALIB

THE DEATH OF KHADIJA

In a few months he was visited by trials more severe than any that had yet befallen him. The tenth year (third before the migration) had just begun when Khadija died; and five weeks later he lost his protector Abu Talib.[9] The death of his wife was a grievous affliction. For twenty-five years she had been his counselor and support. Now his heart and home were desolate. His family, however, no longer needed maternal care. The daughters had all left him for their husbands' homes, excepting the youngest, Fatima, who was approaching womanhood.

Although the custom of the country allowed polygamy, yet Muhammad was during her lifetime restrained from other marriages by affection and gratitude. His grief at her death at first was inconsolable, liable as he was to violent and deep emotion.

THE LOSS OF ABU TALIB

When the patriarch felt that life was ebbing, he summoned his brothers, the sons of Abd al-Muttalib, around his bed; commended his nephew to their protection; and, relieved of the trust, died in peace, and was buried near Khadija's grave. Muhammad wept as he followed the bier, and not without reason. For forty years Abu Talib had been his faithful friend, the prop of his childhood, the guardian of his youth, and in later life, a very tower of defence. So long as he lived, Muhammad needed not to fear violence or attach. But there was no strong hand now to protect him from his foes.

ABU LAHAB PROTECTS MUHAMMAD FOR A LITTLE

Grieved and dispirited by these bereavements following so closely one upon the other, and dreading the now unchecked insolence of the Quraysh, Muhammad seldom left Makkah. The dying behest of Abu Talib had now an expected effect; for Abu Lahab, heretofore the avowed enemy of Muhammad, was softened by his despondency and distress, and spontaneously became his guardian.

Do, he said, as you did when Abu Talib was yet alive. By Al-Lat! no one will hurt you while I live.

But the pledge was not long observed, for Abu Lahab was soon gained back again by the ungrateful Quraysh, and became his enemy more determined than before. At first, indeed, he was rather praised by the Quraysh for his attempt to bind up family differences. But, asked by Abu Jahl to ask where Abd al-Muttalib now was, and on the Prophet confessing that he was in the place of the lost, Abu Lahab left him in indignation saying: I will not cease to be your enemy forever. So he did not remain.[10] The embittered relations between Abu Lahab and his nephew, nothwithstanding that two of his his sons

had promised to marry daughters of Muhammad, but this possible relationship was dissolved with the revelation of Chapter 111.

The indignities the Prophet suffered at this time evince the hostile attitude of the city. On one occasion the populace cast dirt upon his head. (It is uncertain when this incident occurred.[1] Returning home in this plight, his daughter, Fatima, rose to wipe it off, and as she did so, wept. Muhammad seeing it, comforted her and said: My daughter, weep not! for verily the Lord will be your father's helper. It is added that he suffered no such indignity as that while Abu Talib lived.

His position indeed was now becoming critical. He must either gain the ascendancy at Makkah, abandon his prophetical claims, or else perish in the struggle. Islam must destroy idolatry, or idolatry destroy Islam. Things could not remain as they were. His followers, though devotedly attached, and numbering some once influential citizens, were but a handful against a host besides, the greater part of them were now in Abyssinia. Open hostilities, notwithstanding every endeavor to prevent them, might any day precipitate the struggle, and irretrievably ruin his cause. The new faith had not recently been gaining ground at Makkah. There had been no conversions, none at least of any note, since those of Umar and Hamza three or four years before. A few more years of similar discouragement, and his chance of success was gone.

HISTORY

Ibn Ishaq's version:

Khadija and Abu Talib both died in this year (3 BH/619CE). With Khadija's death troubles followed fast on each other's heels, for she had been a faithful support to him in Islam, and he used to tell her of his troubles.

With the death of Abu Talib he lost a strength and stay in his personal life and a defense and protection against his tribe. After the death of Abu Talib, the ungrateful Quraysh began to treat him in an offensive way which they would not have dared to follow in his uncle's lifetime. In a few months he was visited by trials more severe than any that had yet befallen him.A young lout actually threw dust on his head.

Hisham on the authority of his father, Urwa, told me that when this happened, the Messenger went into his house with the dust still on his head and his daughter, Fatima, got up to wash it away, weeping as she did so. He said: Don't weep, my little girl for God will protect your father.

Meanwhile he was thinking: The Quraysh never treated me thus while Abu Talib was alive.

When Abu Talib fell ill and Quraysh learned of his grave condi-

tion they reminded one another that now that Hamza and Umar had accepted Islam and Muhammad's reputation was known among all the Quraysh clans, they had better go to Abu Talib and come to some compromise lest they be robbed of their authority altogether.

Al-Abbas ibn Abd Allah ibn Mabad ibn Abbas, from one of his family from Ibn Abbas, told me that Utba and Shayba, sons of Rabia, and Abu Jahl and Umayya ibn Khalaf and Abu Sufyan with sundry other notables went to Abu Talib and said: You know your rank with us and now that you are at the point of death we are deeply concerned on your account. You know the trouble that exists between us and your nephew, so call him and let us make an agreement that he will leave us alone and we will leave him alone; let him have his religion and we will have ours.

When the Prophet came, Abu Talib said: Nephew, these notables have come to you that they may give you something and to take something from you.

He answered: Yes, you may give me one word by which you can rule the Arabs and subject the Persians to you.

Abu Jahl said: Yea, and ten words.

He said: You must say There is no god but God and you must repudiate what you worship beside Him.

They clapped their hands and said: Do you want to make all the gods into one God, Muhammad? That would be an extraordinary thing.

Then they said one to another: This fellow is not going to give you anything you want, so go and continue with the religion of your fathers until God judge between us.

So saying they departed.

Abu Talib said: Nephew, I don't think that you asked them anything extraordinary.

On hearing this the Messenger had hopes that he would accept Islam, and he said at once: You say it, uncle, and then I shall be able to intercede for you on Resurrection Day.

Seeing the Messenger's eagerness he replied: Were it not that I fear that you and your father's sons would be abused after my death and that Quraysh would think that I had only said it in fear of death, I would say it. I should only say it to give you pleasure.

As his death was near, al-Abbas looked at him as he was moving his lips and put his ear close to him and said: Nephew, by God, my brother has spoken the word you gave him to say.

God revealed concerning the people who came to him with their proposals: *Saad. By the Quran, possessor of the Remembrance. Nay!*

Those who were ungrateful are in vainglory and breach. (38:1-38:2) *Has he made all gods One God? Truly this is an astounding thing!* (38:5).[12]

Their chiefs went off saying: Go and remain true to your gods. This is a thing designed. We have not heard of this in the last religion (meaning Christians because they say: Verily God is the third of three.) This is nothing but an invention.

Then Abu Talib died. It was a short time after the sanctions had ended. Fatima bint Asad was without her beloved husband. She now had to face the loneliness of widowhood and the person she raised in her home, the Messenger of God, had lost his main support. She and her husband, Abu Talib, had taken the orphan Muhammad into his home and had made up for the missing kindness of his father, mother, and grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib. She and Abu Talib had looked after the young man, Muhammad, and cared for him. Abu Talib found him work in the service of Khadija. Finally, it was her husband who acted as the father at the marriage of Khadija and Muhammad.

Abu Talib had used all of his influence, personality, and social credit to protect the Prophet. He even bore the more than thirty months in confinement with the difficulties and hunger, and remained loyal to his nephew. Now, she had lost Abu Talib, the clan's only protector against the anger, danger, and hatred of the city.[13]

Fatima bint Asad had, previous to the death of her husband, borne the loss of Khadija, the Prophet's wife, who died a short time before Fatima's beloved husband. Khadija had lived through ten years of the Messenger's mission, more than thirty months of which had been ones of economic and social sanctions. Fatima had seen and had had her own sense of patience reinforced by her friendship with Khadija who had also suffered hunger and thirst.

Lesson 70(6). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Definitive (to be precise)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl)

Signs 16:41-16:50

Makkah: *As for those who emigrated for God after they were wronged,*
We will, certainly, have a place of settlement for them
with benevolence in the present.
And the compensation of the world to come
will be greater,
if they had been knowing. (16:41)
Those who endured patiently
they put their trust in their Lord. (16:42)
And We sent not before you
but men to whom We reveal revelation.
So ask the People of Remembrance
if you had not been knowing. (16:43)
With the clear portents and the ancient scrolls,
We caused to descend the Remembrance to thee
*that **you** will make manifest to humanity*
what was sent down to them
and so that perhaps they will reflect. (16:44)
Were those who planned evil deeds safe that God
will not cause the earth to swallow them
or that the punishment will not approach them
from where they are not aware? (16:45)
Or that He take them in their going to and fro
where they will not be ones who frustrate Him? (16:46)
Or that He take them, destroying them little by little?
*Truly, **your** Lord is Gentle, Compassionate.* (16:47)
Consider they not that whatever things
God created casts its shadow to the right and to the left,

ones who prostrate themselves to God.
And they are ones in a state of lowliness? (16:48)
And to God prostrates whatever is in the heavens
and all that is in and on the earth
of moving creatures and the angels
and they grow not arrogant. (16:49)
They fear their Lord above them
and accomplish what they are commanded. (16:50)

COMMENTARY°

In contrast to those who persist in denying the truth, the section provides a glimpse of the true believers who are prepared to abandon their homes and migrate in order to lend support to God's cause. Their only motivation is their faith in God and in the hereafter. *As for those who emigrated for God after they were wronged, We will, certainly, have a place of settlement for them with benevolence in the present. And the compensation of the world to come will be greater, if they had been knowing. Those who endured patiently, they put their trust in their Lord.* (16:41-16:42)

These are the people who migrate, leaving their homes, abandoning all property and belongings, sacrificing an easy life with their own peoples and communities. They seek only God's reward. When they experience tyranny and injustice, they leave their homeland in order to live a life of obedience to God. Therefore, God promises them in return for the loss of their homes something that they will like: *As for those who emigrated for God after they were wronged, We will, certainly, have a place of settlement for them with benevolence in the present.* (16:41) They will be well compensated for their loss: *Those who endured patiently, they put their trust in their Lord.* (16:42) They associate no partner with Him in belief, reliance and trust.

The chapter reiterates the task of God's Messengers. This comes in the context of highlighting the mission of the last Messenger and the revelations bestowed on him from on high. This forms a prelude to warnings threatening the ungrateful with severe punishment. *And We sent not before **you** but men to whom We reveal revelation. So ask the People of Remembrance if you had not been knowing. With the clear portents and the ancient scrolls, We caused to descend the Remembrance to **you** that **you** will make manifest to humanity what was sent down to them and so that perhaps they will reflect.* (16:43-16:44)

Those Messengers We sent in former times were men too. We

did not send angels or any other type of creation. They were men chosen for a task: "whom We inspired," just like We inspire you. Their task, like yours, was simply to deliver their message. *With the clear portents and the ancient scrolls, We caused to descend the Remembrance to you that you will make manifest to humanity what was sent down to them and so that perhaps they will reflect.* (16:44) This applies to those who received earlier revelations but who then differed among themselves concerning the messages contained in their divine books. The Quran provides a clear judgment in their disputes. This also applies to the Prophet's contemporaries, the first community to be addressed by the Quran. The Prophet was there to explain it to them and to provide practical guidance on how it should be implemented in their lives. And that they may take thought on the signs God has placed in the universe confirming the message of truth, and reflect on the Quranic revelations. Indeed the Quran always calls on people to reflect and use their reason.

The present passage started with a reference to those who plot and scheme. It now concludes with two highly charged emotional touches. The first warns that against God's scheme no one is safe at any time of the night or day. The other invites people to join the whole universe in extolling God's praises and worshipping Him. Only we can refuse to submit to God, while everything around us glorifies and praises God:

Do those who devise evil schemes feel secure that God will not cause the earth to swallow them, or that suffering will not befall them whence they do not perceive? — Or that He will not suddenly take them to task in the midst of their comings and goings; for they can never frustrate His design? — Or that He will seize them when they are alert and apprehensive? Surely your Lord is Most Compassionate, Most merciful. Do people not see how every object God has created casts its shadow right and left, prostrating itself before God in complete submission? For, before God prostrates itself every living thing in the heavens and the earth, as do the angels. They do not behave in arrogant defiance. They fear their Lord, who is high above them, and do as they are bidden. *Were those who planned evil deeds safe that God will not cause the earth to swallow them or that the punishment will not approach them from where they are not aware? Or that He take them in their going to and fro where they will not be ones who frustrate Him? Or that He take them, destroying them little by little? Truly, your Lord is Gentle, Compassionate. Consider they not that whatever things God created casts its shadow to the right and to the left, ones who prostrate themselves to God. And they are ones in a*

state of lowliness? And to God prostrates whatever is in the heavens and all that is in and on the earth of moving creatures and the angels and they grow not arrogant. They fear their Lord above them and accomplish what they are commanded. (16:45-16:50)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

Lesson 70(7). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl) Signs 16:51-16:60

Makkah: *And God said:*
Take not two gods to yourselves.
Truly, He is One God. Then, have reverence for Me. (16:51)
And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth
and His is the way of life, that which is forever.
Are you God-conscious of other than God? (16:52)
And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.
After that when harm afflicted you,
you make entreaties to Him. (16:53)
Again, when He removed the harm from you,
that is when a group of people among you
ascribe partners with their Lord. (16:54)
They are ungrateful for what We gave them.
So let them take joy. They will know. (16:55)
And they assign to what they know not a share
from what We provided them.
By God! You will, certainly, be asked
about what you had been devising. (16:56)
And they assign daughters to God! Glory be to Him!
And for themselves, that for which they lust. (16:57)
And when any of them was given good tidings of a female,
his face stayed one that is clouded over
and he chokes. (16:58)
He is secluded from the folk
because of the dire tidings he was given.
Will he hold it back with humiliation
or will he trample it in the earth dust?
Truly, how evil is the judgment they give! (16:59)
For those who believe not in the world to come
there is the reprehensible evil description

while the loftiest description belongs to God. And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (16:60)

COMMENTARY°

This third passage of the chapter is again devoted to the major issue of God's Oneness. The first three signs make it clear that God is one without partners, and that to Him alone the entire universe and all that it contains belong, and that He is the One who bestows all bounty and grace. The passage concludes with two comparisons between a master who owns and provides, and a slave who is able to do nothing of his own accord. Can these two be equal? How is it, then, that God, the Master of all and the Provider for all, is assigned equals who have no power and provide nothing? How can it be said that He is God and they are gods like Him?

In this passage a picture is painted of people suffering affliction and turning to God alone for help. When their affliction is removed, they associate partners with Him.

The passage also portrays some aspects of the superstitious nature of pagan beliefs, in that their followers attribute some of what God has provided for them to their false deities, while they themselves do not share with their slaves anything they own. They attribute females to God as His daughters while they hate to have daughters born to themselves: *And when any of them was given good tidings of a female, his face stayed one that is clouded over and he chokes.* (16:58) Yet at the same time they boast that they will have all the good things, and that they will be rewarded handsomely for their deeds. All these misconceptions they have inherited from earlier communities that held idolatrous beliefs.

God has said: Do not take [for worship] two deities, for He is but one God. Therefore, of Me alone stand in awe. His is all that is in the heavens and the earth, and to Him alone submission is always due. Will you then fear anyone but God? Whatever blessing you have comes from God; and whenever harm befalls you, it is to Him that you cry out for help. Yet no sooner does He remove the harm from you than some among you associate partners with their Lord, [as if] to show their ingratitude for what We have given them. Enjoy, then, your life [as you may]; before long you will come to know [the truth]. *And God said: Take not two gods to yourselves. Truly, He is One God. Then, have reverence for Me. And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth and His is the way of life, that which is forever. Are you God-conscious of other than God? And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God. After that when harm af-*

flicted you, you make entreaties to Him. Again, when He removed the harm from you, that is when a group of people among you ascribe partners with their Lord. They are ungrateful for what We gave them. So let them take joy. They will know. (16:51-16:55)

God, the only deity, is also the One to whom everything belongs: *And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.* (16:52) All true faith also belongs to Him: *And His is the way of life, that which is forever. Are you God-conscious of other than God?* (16:52) It is a continuous process, ever since there was a faith and people to believe in it. Such belief means submission, and no faith is true unless it is based on submission to Him. He alone gives blessings and bestows grace: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) It is also ingrained in human nature that whenever people experience hardship and difficulty, they turn to God, seeking His help. At such times, there is no room for the superstitions of idolatry or pagan beliefs. To Him alone people turn with their appeals to remove their hardship: *After that when harm afflicted you, you make entreaties to Him.*(16:53)

Thus we see that God and dominion in the universe belong to God alone. All submission is addressed to Him, and all grace is bestowed by Him, and to Him alone everyone should turn in all situations. Human nature is a witness to this. When it experiences affliction, harm or hardship, it returns to its purity and turns to God alone. Yet despite all this, no sooner does God save people from some type of harm that could destroy them than some of them associate partners with Him. This leads them to disbelief in God's guidance and to denying His grace. Such people should think clearly about what will happen to them after their brief enjoyment: *They are ungrateful for what We gave them. So let them take joy. They will know.* (16:55)

The chapter portrays here a picture of a certain type of human being which is found across every generation. When harm and affliction strikes, people's hearts turn to God for help. By nature, they know that He is the only One to protect them when no one else can. In times of comfort and pleasure, they are preoccupied with enjoyment, weakening their relationship with God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God. After that when harm afflicted you, you make entreaties to Him. Again, when He removed the harm from you, that is when a group of people among you ascribe partners with their Lord.* (16:53-16:54) They deviate from His path, following diverse ways which may lead to outright idolatry, or may take the form of ascribing divinity to values and situations, even though they may

not describe these as deities.

Indeed deviation may be even more extreme so as to prevent people from turning to God in times of hardship. Instead they may turn to some other creature, appealing to them to save their skins. They may do so under the pretext that such creatures enjoy a special position with God, or they may have some other excuse. For example, when people appeal to 'saints' to cure their illnesses or remove their afflictions. Such people are thus even more deviant than the pagan Arabs. *And they assign to what they know not a share from what We provided them.* (16:56) They thus prohibit themselves some types of cattle, not allowing themselves to ride these or to eat their meat, or they allow these animals' use to men, forbidding them to women, as we saw in Chapter 6, Cattle. They do this in the name of their alleged deities of which they know nothing. They are simply false inventions which they inherited from earlier ignorant generations. It is God who gave them this bounty, the cattle which they ride and use. Yet they give a portion of these to things which are in reality unknown to them. Their false deities did not give them the cattle. The cattle were created by God who has made them available to them. He calls on people to believe in His Oneness, but they stubbornly associate partners with Him. The whole situation is full of irony which no human being of sound mind can accept.

This is stated emphatically, with an oath. *By God! You will, certainly, be asked about what you had been devising.* (16:56) It is an invention that destroys the very foundation of faith, because it flies in the face of the concept of God's Oneness. (16:57-16:59)

Deviation from the right faith is not limited to beliefs. Indeed when people deviate from the essence of faith, their deviation spreads into their social life and its traditions. Whether faith is given prominence or kept in the background in any society, it continues to be the prime influence on living conditions. The Arabs of the days of ignorance, or tribal honor, used to claim that God had daughters, i.e. the angels, yet they themselves hated that daughters should be born to them. Thus daughters can be assigned to God, while they give themselves the sons they love.

The chapter paints a grim picture of the practices of ignorance: *And when any of them was given good tidings of a female, his face stayed one that is clouded over and he chokes.* (16:58) He is sad and angry, trying to suppress his fury, as though the birth of a girl is a disaster when she is a gift from God, just like any boy. Man cannot fashion the foetus in the womb so as to determine the sex of his child. He cannot breathe life into it, or make the fertilized egg a human

being. It is sufficient to reflect how life grows, by God's will, from a sperm into a human being, to make the birth of a child, of either sex, a joyous occasion. It is a miracle of creation despite the fact that it takes place all the time. Why should a man who is given a daughter feel sad and gloomy when he himself has no say in any stage of the process of creation. It is all done by God, while he himself is only the means to accomplish God's will.

It is divine wisdom that has determined that life is started with a couple: a male and a female. This means that the woman is as essential to the continuation of life as the man, indeed more so, because it is inside the woman that the first stage of life is completed. How can a man thus feel sad when given the news of the birth of a daughter? Why does he hide away, feeling ashamed, when life cannot continue and prosper without both spouses? This is obviously then a case of deviant social concepts and traditions. Therefore, the chapter comments: (16:59)

Whenever human society deviates from the true faith, ignorant concepts begin to raise their ugly faces. In fact we see the same concepts that prevailed then creeping up again today. Many social classes do not welcome the birth of a girl. It is often the case that a woman is not treated on an equal footing with a man. She is not offered the same care or respect. This is an aspect of paganism the seeds of which were planted with the deviation from the true Quranic faith that has affected many communities.

It is amazing that some people criticize, even condemn, the Quranic message and its laws, particularly with regard to women, on the basis of what they see in societies that have deviated from the Quranic message. They do not trouble themselves to look at the relevant Quranic concepts and the fundamental changes they have produced in social conditions as well as in people's minds and feelings. What they should realize when they look at the true Quranic viewpoint with regard to women is that this viewpoint has not been the product of any practical necessity, human theory or social or economic need. It is a viewpoint that is inherent in the Quranic faith which was revealed by God who has given humanity a position of honor. This honor applies both to man and woman. Both have equal status and both are honored by God.

By nature, the Quranic message differs with all other creeds and societies in concepts and outlook. The difference between the two is as wide as the difference between the ungrateful' characteristics and God's own attributes. For He is far above all comparison: (16:60)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

Lesson 70(8). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Appropriateness (to be relevant)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl)
Signs 16:61-16:65

Makkah: *And if God were to take humanity to task for their injustice,*
He would not leave on it a moving creature.
Rather, He postpones them for a term, that is determined.
And when their term drew near,
neither will they delay it an hour, nor press it forward. (16:61)
And they assign to God what they dislike.
Their tongues allege the lie that the fairer things will be theirs.
Without a doubt, for them is the fire,
and they will be ones made to hasten to it. (16:62)
By God! We, certainly, sent Messengers
to communities before you.
Satan made their actions appear pleasing to them.
So he is their protector on this Day
and theirs will be a painful punishment. (16:63)
And We caused the Book to descend to you,
but that you will make manifest to them
those things in which they were at variance in it
and as a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe. (16:64)

And God caused water to descend from heaven and from it
gave life to the earth after its death.
Truly, in this is a sign for a folk who hear. (16:65)

COMMENTARY°

At this point the question of associating partners with God is closely related to that of denying the life to come. Both stem from the same sort of deviation. They are interlinked in people's minds, leading to clear influences on the individual, human society and life altogether. While the ungrateful are evil, in thought, behavior, beliefs, concepts, and practices, God has the most supreme attributes. He cannot be compared with anyone, least of all those ungrateful. He is mighty, setting everything in its right place, wise, acting always on the basis of infinite wisdom.

He certainly can punish people for their wrongdoing. Had He chosen to do so, He would have brought everything down over their heads. But in His wisdom, He has decided to give them respite, for a definite term: *And if God were to take humanity to task for their injustice, He would not leave on it a moving creature. Rather, He postpones them for a term, that is determined. And when their term drew near, neither will they delay it an hour, nor press it forward.* (16:61)

God has created the human being and bestowed on him grace and blessings of all types. We are the only creature on earth that spreads corruption, commits injustice, denies our Creator, allows tyranny within our own social set up and inflicts harm on other species. Yet despite all this, God is merciful to us, gives us one chance after another, and never abandons us altogether. His wisdom goes hand in hand with His might; His grace with His justice. But human beings are short-sighted, deluded by the respite given them. They do not feel how graceful God is to them until His justice brings them to account at the end of the term He has appointed for them. *And if God were to take humanity to task for their injustice, He would not leave on it a moving creature. Rather, He postpones them for a term, that is determined. And when their term drew near, neither will they delay it an hour, nor press it forward.* (16:61)

What is even more amazing is that those who associate partners with God assign to Him what they dislike for themselves, whether daughters or other things. They then falsely claim that they will only have what is good in return for what they do and allege. The Quran states what they shall have, and this differs widely from what they claim: *And they assign to God what they dislike.* (16:62)

The translation of this sign here is the nearest one possible. But the original Arabic expression describes their tongues as though they are the lie itself, or a reflection of it giving its exact likeness, as we say of a woman walking gracefully, 'she is grace itself.' Literally, the sign states, 'their lie of a tongue asserts.' They have been lying for such a very long time that they themselves represent a symbol indicating falsehood.

Their claim that they shall have the supreme reward when they assign to God what they hate for themselves is the lie their tongues reflect. Before the sign is completed however, the Quran places them face to face with the truth, namely, that their reward is undoubtedly the Fire. They deserve this because of what they have done in their lives: *Their tongues allege the lie that the fairer things will be theirs.* (16:62) They will be sent directly to it: *Without a doubt, for them is the fire, and they will be ones made to hasten to it.* (16:62)

Those Arabs were not the first community to deviate from the path of the truth, nor were they the first to attribute to God what they did not accept for themselves. Other communities before them traversed the same deviation and false claims against God. Satan made their concepts and actions seem fair to them and they accepted his bidding. Thus he became their master. God, then, sent His Messenger to save them, show them the truth and judge between them in their disputes over their faith. He provided guidance to the believers and delivered a message that is an act of grace bestowed on them: *By God! We, certainly, sent Messengers to communities before you. Satan made their actions appear pleasing to them. So he is their protector on this Day and theirs will be a painful punishment. And We caused the Book to descend to you, but that you will make manifest to them those things in which they were at variance in it and as a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe.* (16:63-16:64)

This means that the purpose of the last message is to judge in the disputes that arise between the different peoples who claim to believe in previous messages. The original message is based on God's Oneness. Yet doubts and confusion have crept into this central concept. All types of distortion of its clarity in any way or form are absolutely false. The Quran clarifies all this and serves as guidance and grace to those whose hearts are willing to receive it.

At this point, the chapter reviews some of the aspects pointing to God's Oneness in what God has created in the universe, and in the qualities and characteristics He has given man, as well as in the aspects of grace He has bestowed on him which none but God could have provided. In the sign we have just discussed He mentions His

book, the Quran, which is the best aspect of grace God has bestowed on us as it imparts life to souls. Now, this is followed by mentioning the water God sends down from the sky to give physical life to us and other creatures. *And God caused water to descend from heaven and from it gave life to the earth after its death. Truly, in this is a sign for a folk who hear.* (16:65) Water is indeed the source of life for every living thing. This sign makes it the source of life for the whole earth, implying that this includes all that exists on earth. The One who transforms death into life is indeed the One who deserves to be God and to whom worship is addressed: *Truly, in this is a sign for a folk who hear.* They should indeed reflect on what they hear and listen to its message. In fact the Quran repeatedly mentions the signs pointing to God and His authority, and how He brings life into what is dead. It draws people's attentions to this, because it provides irrefutable proof for anyone who reflects on what he sees and hears.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

LESSON 70(9). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD WORTHINESS (FOCUSSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT THE TRIVIAL)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL) SIGNS 16:66-16:70

Makkah: *And, truly, for you in the flocks is a lesson.*
We satiate you from what is in their bellies—
between waste and blood—exclusively milk,
that which is delicious to the ones who drink. (16:66)
From fruits of the date palm trees and grapevines
you take to yourselves of it what obscures
the mind and fairer provisions.
Truly, in it is a sign for a folk who be reasonable. (16:67)
And your Lord revealed to you the bee:
Take to yourself houses from the mountains
and in the trees and in what they construct. (16:68)
Again, eat of all the fruits and insert yourself submissively
into the ways of your Lord.
Drink goes forth from their bellies in hues,
ones that are at variance, wherein is healing for humanity.
Truly, in this is, certainly,
a sign for a folk who reflect. (16:69)
And God created you. Again, He calls you to Himself.
And of you there are some who are returned
to the most wretched of lifetimes
so that he knows nothing
after having knowledge of something.
Truly, God is Knowing, Powerful. (16:70)

COMMENTARY°

Another sign is derived from the creation of cattle and their lives: *And, truly, for you in the flocks is a lesson. We satiate you from what is in their bellies—between waste and blood—exclusively milk, that which is delicious to the ones who drink* (16:66) How is milk produced through the udders of cattle? It is made of what remains in the bellies of cattle after they have digested their food and the absorption of the excretions in the intestines to transform it into blood. The blood is then circulated to every cell in the body, but when it reaches the milk glands or the udder, it becomes milk through a fine

process set by God. This is indeed an aspect of His fine and inimitable creation.

Such pure scientific facts apart, the Quran carries within its own unique characteristics irrefutable proofs of its being revealed by God, provided we appreciate such characteristics as they truly are. However, one scientific fact like this, expressed with such accuracy, refutes all arguments advanced by those who are hardened in their rejection of the truth. *From fruits of the date palm trees and grapevines you take to yourselves of it what obscures the mind and fairer provisions.* (16:67) Such fruits come out of the life which is produced through the rain pouring down from the sky. From them people make wine and other intoxicating drinks, which were not forbidden at the time this chapter was revealed. People also derive from such fruits wholesome food. The way this sign is phrased implies that intoxicants are unwholesome, which serves as a preliminary indication of their forthcoming prohibition. The sign describes the situation as it was in practice. It does not imply that wines and intoxicants were permissible. On the contrary it hints that they will soon be forbidden. *Truly, in it is a sign for a folk who be reasonable.* (16:67) People with reason are sure to realize that the provider of all these fruits and other provisions is God, the One who deserves to be worshipped.

Your Lord has inspired the bee: (16:68-16:69) The bees work on the prompting of their nature which God has given them. It is an inspiration that they follow. The work the bees do is so detailed, accurate and well planned that the rational mind finds it difficult to contemplate. This applies to the building of the hives, the division of the work between the tees, and to their production of pure honey.

The bees take up home, according to their nature, in hills and mountains, in trees and in structures people put up for their vines or other plants. God has smoothed things for the bees through what He has planted in their nature and through the nature of the world around them. The sign states that honey provides a cure for people. Although this has already been fully explained by some medical experts, it is also true for the simple reason that the Quran states it. This is what every Muslim should believe, based on the complete truth embodied in the Quran. This is what the Prophet expressed very clearly.

Once the Prophet recommended honey to someone who was suffering from diarrhea. The Prophet had complete trust in the face of the patient's seeming deterioration when given honey to drink. But the situation ended with a clear confirmation of the truth stated in the Quran. A Muslim should always have such complete trust in the

truth of what the Quran says, even though reality may appear to contradict it at times. In other words, what is stated in the Quran is more truthful than apparent reality, which could easily change, giving way to a new reality that will confirm the Quranic statement.

In the next passage we will see how the chapter mentions the hide, wool and hair of cattle, because the context then is one of dwellings, homes and places of refuge. Therefore, the aspects of cattle mentioned there are those that fit that scene. This is an essential element of the artistic harmony evident in the Quran.

The chapter moves on to touch on something much closer to human beings, because it relates to their very being, their life on earth, provisions, spouses, children and grandchildren. They are more likely to feel an affinity with this and to respond positively to the message it provides:

It is God who has created you; and in time will cause you to die. Some of you are left to the most feeble stage of life, so that they no longer know what they had previously known. God is indeed All-Knowing, infinite in His power. To some of you God has given more than He has given to others. Those who are so favored are unwilling to share their provisions with those whom their right hands possess, so that they are all equal in this respect. Will they, then, deny God's favors? (16:70)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Stage 1

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

Stage 2

- Define your destination, what you want to learn

- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point,
by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!
Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

Stage 3
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

Summary of Critical Thinking:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 70(10). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan, wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:71-16:76

Makkah: *God gave advantage to some of you*
over some others in provision.
But those who were given advantage
are not ones who give over their provision
to what their right hands possessed
so that they are equal in it.
Why negate they the divine blessing of God? (16:71)
And God assigned to you spouses (f) of your own kind
and has assigned you from your spouses (f),
children and grandchildren
and provided you with what is good.
Believe they, then, in falsehood and are ungrateful
for the divine blessing of God? (16:72)
They worship other than God what has no sway,
no power to provide for them anything
from the heavens and the earth,
nor are they able to do so. (16:73)
So propound not parables for God.
Truly, God Knows and you know not. (16:74)

God propounded a parable of a chattel servant
who has no power over anything
and one to whom We provided from Us a fairer provision.
And he spends from it secretly and openly publishing it.
Are they on the same level?
The Praise belongs to God. Nay! Most of them know not! (16:75)
And God propounded a parable of two men,
one of them unwilling to speak.
He has no power over anything
and he is a heavy burden to his defender.
Whichever way he turns his face, he brings no good.
Is he on the same level as the one who commands justice
and he who is on a straight path? (16:76)

COMMENTARY°

That people have different means is a well-known phenomenon. This is more pronounced in communities where there is much inequity. The chapter refers to this phenomenon which was clearly apparent in Arabian society, and makes use of it in order to dispel those myths that had their roots in the pagan beliefs of the Arabs. These have been referred to in an earlier chapter. One such myth was their practice of allocating to false gods a share of the provisions of agricultural produce God gave them. Here the chapter identifies that they do not give such provisions to their slaves to establish equity. How come, then, they give a portion of what God has granted them to false gods? *God gave advantage to some of you over some others in provision. But those who were given advantage are not ones who give over their provision to what their right hands possessed so that they are equal in it. Why negate they the divine blessing of God?* (16:71) Instead of expressing their thanks and gratitude to God who has given them these provisions, they associate partners with Him.

The third aspect looks at people, their spouses, children and grandchildren. It begins with a statement of the relationship between the two sexes: *And God assigned to you spouses (f) of your own kind and has assigned you from your spouses (f), children and grandchildren and provided you with what is good.* (16:72) All belong to the same human race, and the female is not an inferior species to be ashamed of when a daughter is born. *And God assigned to you spouses (f) of your own kind and has assigned you from your spouses (f), children and grandchildren and provided you with what is good.* (16:72) Humans are mortal, and so they feel that their lives continue through their children and grandchildren. Touching upon this aspect

is very significant. To this blessing is added the provision of sustenance, because of the similarity between the two types of blessing: *And God assigned to you spouses (f) of your own kind and has assigned you from your spouses (f), children and grandchildren and provided you with what is good.* (16:72) The comment at the end of the sign takes the form of a rhetorical question: *Believe they, then, in falsehood and are ungrateful for the divine blessing of God?* (16:72) Do they associate false partners with Him, in flagrant disobedience of His orders, when He has given them all these blessings? He is the Lord of all the world and His Lordship has practical manifestations in their lives at all times.

Everything other than God in respect -Co beliefs is false. Thus, all their deities and myths are false, having no truth in them. They deny God's grace and blessings, when these are true, having practical effects in their own lives.

Instead of God, they worship something that can provide them with no sustenance from the heavens or the earth. Never can they have such power. *They worship other than God what has no sway, no power to provide for them anything from the heavens and the earth, nor are they able to do so.* (16:73)

It is indeed amazing that human nature can become so twisted as to allow the worship of things that can provide people with nothing. They prefer such things to God, the Creator who provides them with all they have and all the blessings they enjoy. Yet they go even further, attributing to them similarities with God. Therefore, the commandment: *So propound not parables for God. Truly, God Knows and you know not.* (16:74) God has no peers, so people must never claim that there is anyone equal or similar to Him.

The chapter then gives two examples of a master who can give and provide and a disabled slave who earns nothing. These examples are given to bring the eternal truth they had overlooked closer to their understanding. That truth is that God has no peers and that they must never equate God with anyone in their worship. Everyone and everything other than God is created by Him, and all are His servants.

God makes this comparison between a person enslaved, unable to do anything of his own accord, and a [free] man on whom We have bestowed goodly favors, and he gives of it both in private and in public. Can these two be equal? All praise is to God alone, but most people have no knowledge. And God makes another comparison between two men, one of whom is dumb and can do nothing of his own accord. He is a sheer burden to his master: wherever he sends him, he accomplishes no good. Can he be considered equal to one

who enjoins justice and follows a straight path? (16:75-16:76)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

LESSON 70(11). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL) SIGNS 16:77-16:83

Makkah: *And to God belongs*
the unseen of the heavens and the earth.
And the command of the Hour is not but the twinkling of an eye
to one's sight or it is nearer.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (16:77)
And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers
and you know nothing.
And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight
and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78)
Consider you not the birds,
the ones caused to be subservient
in the firmament of the heavens?
None holds them back but God.
Truly, in this are the signs for a folk who believe. (16:79)
And God assigned for you your houses as places of comfort
and rest and assigned for you the hides of flocks
for your houses which you find light on the day of your departure
and the day of your halting and of their wool and furs and hair
—furnishing and enjoyment for awhile. (16:80)
And God made for you shade out of what He created
and made for you the mountains as a refuges in the time of need
and has made for you tunics to protect you from
the heat and tunics to protect you from your violenc
Thus, He fulfills His divine blessing to yo
so that perhaps you will submit to God. (16:81)
Then, if they turned away, for you is only
the delivering of the clear message. (16:82)
They recognize the divine blessing of God. Again, they reject it
and most of them are the ones who are ungrateful. (16:83)

COMMENTARY°

In this passage the chapter continues its discussion of the aspects confirming the truth of God's Oneness, such as the great variety of creation, the perfection of God's blessings and His absolute knowledge of all things. However, in this passage, prominence is given to the question of resurrection. The Last Hours which is a Quranic expression denoting the gathering and reckoning on the Day of Judgement, is one of the secrets which God keeps to Himself. The passage refers to the different hidden secrets of God's creation in the heavens and the earth, in human beings and across the wide universe. One of

these relates to the Last Hour, whose timing is known to God alone. He controls it with ease: *And to God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And the command of the Hour is not but the twinkling of an eye to one's sight or it is nearer. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (16:77) Another secret relates to what is created in the wombs of females. It is God alone who lets the foetus come out of the womb, with no knowledge whatsoever of the world it comes into. It is He also who gives human beings the blessings of hearing, seeing and thinking. These are favors which deserve gratitude. The chapter also refers to the birds and how they are given the ability to fly. Needless to say, they are held aloft in mid-air by none other than God.

This is followed by a reference to some material blessings given to humanity. These are relevant to the aforementioned secrets. They include the blessings of abode, rest, shade and shelter in built up homes and temporary dwellings made of animal skin. The latter have the advantage of being easy to carry and re-erect when people are on the move. Reference is also made to furniture and other articles made of animal wool, fur and hair, and to places of shelter and garments that protect people from the heat of the sun and the might of the enemy. God reminds people of His blessings and how He has perfected them, so that they may fulfil their duty: *And God made for you shade out of what He created and made for you the mountains as a refuges in the time of need and has made for you tunics to protect you from the heat and tunics to protect you from your violence. Thus, He fulfills His divine blessing to you so that perhaps you will submit to God.* (16:81)

This is followed by details relating to resurrection, juxtaposed against pagans and the idols they worship. God's Messengers bear witness against such ungrateful, while the Prophet Muhammad is witness against his own people.

It is close at hand, but according to a calculation different from that of human beings. To bring it on, in full preparation, does not take much time. It is merely the twinkling of an eye and it is there, ready for all humanity: *And to God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And the command of the Hour is not but the twinkling of an eye to one's sight or it is nearer. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (16:77) To resurrect such countless numbers of God's creation, gather them all together, reckon their deeds, assign the reward for each of them, is all easy for God whose will is accomplished in no time. Whenever He wills something, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is instantly accomplished. If this seems difficult, it only looks

so to the eyes of those who see, measure and count by human standards and criteria. Therefore, they are grossly mistaken.

To make things easier for people to understand, the Quran gives a simple example from human life. People can in no way accomplish it themselves, and they cannot formulate a clear idea of how it happens. Yet it takes place at every moment of the day and night: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78)

This is something close to us, yet it is so far away. We may see the different stages a foetus goes through, but we do not know how these are accomplished, because it is part of the secret of life which is known to God alone. The knowledge of our claims and boasts of, and which we want to use in order to test the reality of the Last Hour and the secrets of God's hidden knowledge, is something acquired: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78) Even the most advanced scientist is born devoid of knowledge. Whatever he subsequently learns is given to him as a blessing from God, within the limits He has set for humanity, and contingent upon what is needed for life on this planet: *And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind.* (16:78) It should be mentioned here that the Arabic word rendered in the translation as 'minds', originally denotes, 'hearts'. The Quran, however, uses it in reference to all human faculties of perception, which are generally referred to as constituting the human mind and intellect. The Arabic term also includes the power of inspiration, the nature and working of which are unknown to us. The Quran reminds us here that God has given people all these faculties, *so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) When we appreciate the value of these blessings God has given us and His other blessings, we will certainly be grateful to Him. The first step in showing our gratitude is to believe in God, the Sovereign, the Supreme, who alone deserves to be worshipped.

Among the wonders that testify to God's limitless power and His control of everything in the universe is one that we see every day without giving it much thought. This is the ability of birds to fly: *Consider you not the birds, the ones caused to be subservient in the firmament of the heavens?* (16:79) Because it is so familiar to us to see birds flying in mid- air, we do not pay attention to the fascinating wonder their flying involves. Our minds do not give it much thought unless we are fully alerted to it, contemplating it with the eye of a talented poet seeking to capture every detail and nuance. The sign

makes it clear that as the birds fly, none but God holds them aloft. He does so through His laws of nature, which make the birds able to fly and make the atmosphere around us amenable for their flight. It is His laws that keep the birds in mid-air, floating safely, without fear that they may fall: *None holds them back but God. Truly, in this are the signs for a folk who believe.* (16:79)

A believer's heart is one which appreciates the wonders of creation, looks at them with awe and expresses his feelings with worship and glorification of God, the Creator of all things. Believers who are talented in expressing their thoughts and feelings write masterpieces of every type in describing the wonders of God's creation. They also describe their own feelings and how they are touched when they look at different creatures. No poet can rival their work if his heart is not kindled by the light of faith.

The chapter takes us another step in reviewing some manifestations of God's power and His blessings which He bestows on man. It takes us now into the dwellings of the Arabs at the time, looking at their home comforts and furnishings:

And God has made your homes as places of rest, and has given you dwellings out of the skins of animals, which are easy for you to handle when you travel and when you camp. Out of their wool, fur and hair, He has given you furnishings and articles of convenience for temporary use. And God has made for you, out of the many things He has created, shelter and shade, and has given you places of refuge in the mountains and has furnished you with garments to protect you from the heat and other garments to protect you from your [mutual] violence. Thus does He perfect His favors to you, so that you may submit to Him. (16:80-16:81)

The ease, comfort and reassurance one has at home are certainly a blessing from God but it is something best appreciated only by those who are homeless. They are mentioned here shortly after speaking about what the Quran describes as ghayb, or what lies beyond the reach of human perception. In fact, the connotations of home comforts are not far removed from those of ghayb, because in both we sense that there is a reality that is kept hidden. Therefore, a reminder of the comforts we find in our own homes should alert us to the value of this great blessing.

We may add a word here about the Quranic view of the home in the light of its description in the Quran as a 'place of rest'. This is an expression that is inferior in its connotations to the Arabic term used in the Quran, namely *sakan*. Yet it gives us an idea that the Quranic message wants one's habitat to be a place of rest, comfort and reas-

surance. In the home one should feel at ease, safe and secure in one's environment and with those who share it. It is certainly not a place for contention, quarrel and conflict.

The Quranic message guarantees the safety and sanctity of the home in order to ensure the security and peace of those who live in it. None is allowed to enter a home unless he first seeks, and obtains, permission to do so. No one forces his way in, without justification, armed with the force of authority. No one watches those living inside, or spies on them, for any reason, to disturb their peace and undermine their security. To do so constitutes a breach of the sanctity which the Quranic message assigns to the home.

As the atmosphere in this passage is one of homes, shelter and garments, the chapter refers to some fitting aspects of the creation of animals, thereby providing harmony between the two constituents of the scene. *And God assigned for you your houses as places of comfort and rest and assigned for you the hides of flocks for your houses which you find light on the day of your departure and the day of your halting and of their wool and furs and hair— furnishing and enjoyment for awhile.* (16:80) We see how the sign highlights what is taken from animals to satisfy human needs. With furnishings, the chapter mentions, 'articles of convenience,' which in Arabic usage denotes cushions, mattresses and blankets. All these are meant to add to people's comfort and enjoyment.

In this atmosphere of peace and security the language used in the following sign flows easily to speak about shade, places of shelter in the mountains, and the garments people use to protect themselves against climatic conditions as also against opponents in war. *And God made for you shade out of what He created and made for you the mountains as a refuges in the time of need and has made for you tunics to protect you from the heat and tunics to protect you from your violence.* (16:81) When we have proper shelter, we feel safe, and when we seek security in the mountains, we are also able to relax. Again the garments mentioned in the chapter, providing two types of protection, give us a feeling of comfort and protection. All these feelings are akin to that of the comfort of one's own home. Therefore, the comment that follows at the end of the sign reminds people of their need to submit to God, their Lord: *Thus, He fulfills His divine blessing to you so that perhaps you will submit to God.* (16:81) Such submission gives us a greater feeling of safety and security.

God reminds people of all this making it clear to them that they should submit to their Lord who has created all these. However, peo-

ple turn away and take no heed. They should know that God's Messenger is responsible only for delivering God's message to them and he certainly fulfilled his mission. It is up to them whether they deny the truth which stares them in the face: *Then, if they turned away, for **you** is only the delivering of the clear message. They recognize the divine blessing of God. Again, they reject it and most of them are the ones who are ungrateful.* (16:82-16:83) They are certainly aware of God's favors, but they nevertheless refuse to acknowledge them. Most of them are ungrateful.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the obstacles to being a critical thinker to my classmate.

LESSON 70(12). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD RIGHT JUDGMENT

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL) SIGNS 16:84-16:89

Makkah: *On the Day We will raise up*
from every community a witness again,
no permission will be given to those who are ungrateful
nor will they ask to be favored. (16:84)
And when those who did wrong consider the punishment,
then, it will not be lightened for them
nor will they be given respite. (16:85)
And when those who ascribed partners
saw their ascribed associates with God,
they will say: Our Lord, these are our ascribed associates
whom we had been calling to other than Thee.
Then, they will cast their saying back to them:
Truly, you are ones who lie! (16:86)
They will give a proposal to God on that day of surrender.
Gone astray from them will be
what they had been devising. (16:87)
Those who were ungrateful and barred from the way of God,
We increased them in punishment above their punishment
because they had been making corruption. (16:88)
On the Day We raise up in every community
a witness against them from among themselves
and We will bring ***you*** *about as a witness against these.*
And We sent down to ***you*** *the Book*
as an exposition that makes everything clear
and as a guidance and as a mercy
and as good tidings for the ones who submit to God. (16:89)

COMMENTARY°

As the Last Hour when the Day of Judgement arrives is mentioned at the beginning of this passage, we are given here an idea of what awaits the ungrateful when it comes. (16:84-16:88)

The scene begins with the prophets being called as witnesses, giving their accounts of the treatment they received from their peo-

ples when they conveyed God's messages to them. The ungrateful will be standing there, not permitted to speak or make any plea or argument. They will not be allowed to make amends in order to satisfy their Lord, for it is too late to do so. It is a time for reckoning and the determination of fates. (16:85)

Their silence however is broken when they see gathered with them those so-called 'partners' which they used to allege to have a share in God's divinity, and to worship them instead of God or alongside Him. They point to them, crying out: (Verse 86) Their statement begins with an acknowledgement of God's position. They address Him as "Our Lord!" What is more is that they no longer describe the false deities they used to worship as God's partners. They refer to them as 'our partners'. Those very partners are frightened by such a description for it constitutes a serious accusation. Therefore, they refute it, asserting most emphatically that those who worshipped them are liars. (16:86) They turn to God in full submission. (16:87) Thus the ungrateful will discover that none of their inventions will be of any avail to them in their very difficult situation: (16:87)

The scene concludes with an emphatic statement asserting that those who tried their best to turn others from the path of faith will have their punishment increased: (16:88) Disbelief in God is corruption, and turning others from God's path is also corruption. These people are guilty of both offenses. Therefore, it is only right that their punishment should be increased.

This applies to all people and communities. The chapter then singles out a special situation involving the Prophet with his own people: (16:89) What a gloomy and fraught scene is chosen as the background: that of a pagan people looking on when the false deities they used to worship declare that they are liars, and those very deities declare their own submission to God, totally disowning their former worshippers.

Against this background, the Prophet's position is clearly stated. He will be the witness against his own people. This timely piece of detail adds power to the whole scene: *On the Day We raise up in every community a witness against them from among themselves and We will bring **you** about as a witness against these.* (16:89) The sign mentions then that the revelations given to the Prophet*: We sent down to **you** the Book as an exposition that makes everything clear and as a guidance and as a mercy and as good tidings for the ones who submit to God,* leaving no excuse for anyone to justify turning away from them. (16:89) This shows clearly that whoever wishes to follow right guidance and receive God's mercy should declare his submis-

sion to God before the arrival of that awesome and fearful day. For when it comes, no one will be given leave to justify his position or to make amends for past deeds. Thus we see that the scenes of the Day of Judgement given in the Quran serve a definite purpose endorsing the message given in the section where they occur.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea).

Lesson 70(13). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl) Signs 16:90-16:100

Makkah: *Truly, God commands justice*
and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship
and He prohibits depravity
and ones who are unlawful and insolent.
He admonishes you
so that perhaps you will recollect. (16:90)
And live up to the compact of God
when you have made a contract.
And break not the oaths after ratification.
And, surely, you made God surety over you.
Truly, God knows what you accomplish. (16:91)
And be not like she who would break what she spun
after firming its fibers by taking to yourselves
your oaths in mutual deceit among yourselves
so that one community be
one that is swelling more than another community.
God tries you but by this.
And He will make manifest to you
on the Day of Resurrection
about what you had been at variance in it. (16:92)
If God willed, He would have made you one community,
but He causes to go astray whom He wills
and guides whom He wills.
And, certainly, you will be asked about
what you had been doing. (16:93)

Take not your oaths to yourselves in mutual deceit
among yourselves, that your footing should not backslide
after standing firm and you experience
the evil of having barred from the way of God.
And for you will be a serious punishment. (16:94)
And exchange not the compact for a little price.
Truly, what is with God is better for you
if you had been knowing. (16:95)
Whatever is with you will come to an end.
And whatever is with God is that which endures.
And We will, certainly, give recompense
to those who endured patiently their fairer compensation
for what they had been doing. (16:96)
Whoever does as one in accord with morality,
whether male or female, while being one who believes,
We will give life—this good life.
And We will give recompense to them
—their compensation—for the fairer
for what they had been doing. (16:97)
So when you recited the Quran,
seek refuge with God from the accursed Satan. (16:98)
Truly, he is not an authority over those who believed
and in their Lord they put their trust. (16:99)
His authority is only over those who turn away to him
and they, those are ones who are polytheists. (16:100)

COMMENTARY°

The new passage begins with a clarification giving some glimpses of what the Quran contains of clear guidance, grace and the good news it brings. The passage also includes orders to maintain justice and to act with kindness, particularly to relatives, and to steer away from indecency, evil and transgression, and to remain true to one's pledges and promises. It forbids going back on oaths once they have been made. All these are essential practices that we must maintain, as the Quran impresses upon us.

The passage also states that those who violate pledges or swear solemn oaths to deceive others will endure tremendous suffering. It also brings good news for those who persevere in the face of adversity. These will certainly be rewarded in accordance with their best actions.

It outlines some of the good manners which must be maintained when reading the Quran, such as seeking refuge with God against

Satan, so that he does not come near the place where the Quran is being read. It mentions some of the fabrications the pagans used to repeat about the Quran. Some plainly accused the Prophet of inventing it, while others claimed that a foreigner taught it to the Prophet. The passage concludes by stating the punishment for those who disbelieve after having accepted the faith, and the position of those who are compelled to declare their rejection of the faith while their hearts are full of the certainty of its truth. It tells us about the reward of those who are subjected to oppression on account of their faith, and who strive and fight hard, always remaining patient in adversity. All this serves as clarification, guidance, mercy and good news, as the last sign of the previous passage mentions.

It requires that justice should be established and maintained, because justice ensures a solid and constant basis for all transactions and deals between individuals and communities; a basis subject to no prejudice, preference or favoritism; a basis influenced by no family relationship, wealth or strength; a basis that ensures equal treatment for all and subjects all to the same standards and laws.

Along with justice, the Quran urges kindness, which relaxes the strictness of absolute justice. It lays the door open for anyone who wishes to win the heart of an opponent to forgo part of what is rightfully his. This means that the chance is available to all to go beyond strict justice, which is both a right and a duty, to show kindness in order to allow wounds to heal or to win favor.

Kindness has an even broader sense. Every good action is a kindness. The command enjoining kindness includes every type of action and transaction. It thus covers every aspect of life, including a person's relationship with his Lord, family, community and with the rest of humanity.

Perhaps we should add here that some commentators on the Quran say that 'justice' is the obligatory part, while 'kindness' is voluntary, but highly encouraged, particularly in so far as matters of worship are concerned. They say that this sign is part of the revelations received by the Prophet in Makkah, when the legal provisions had not as yet been outlined. But the way the sign is phrased uses both justice and kindness in their broadest sense. Moreover, from a purely ethical point of view, both are generally applicable principles, not mere legal provisions.

One aspect of kindness is 'generosity to one's kindred', but it is specially highlighted here in order to emphasize its importance. From the Quranic point of view, this is not based on narrow family loyalty, but on the Quranic principle of common solidarity which moves from

the smaller, local circle to the larger, social context. The principle is central to the implementation of the Quranic social system.

The sign proceeds to outline three prohibitions in contrast to the three orders with which it begins: *Truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent.* (16:90) Under shameful conduct everything that goes beyond the limits of propriety is included, but the term is often used to denote dishonorable assault and indecency. Thus it combines both aggression and transgression. Therefore, it has become synonymous with shamefulness.

'Depravity' refers to any action of which pure, undistorted human nature disapproves. The Quranic message also disapproves of any such conduct because it is the religion of pure human nature. Human nature can however become distorted, but the Quranic message remains constant, pointing to what human nature is like before distortion creeps in.

Aggression' in this context denotes injustice as well as any excess that goes beyond what is right and fair. No community can survive when it is based on the spread of shameful, reprehensible conduct and aggression. No community can hope to flourish if it does not stamp out shameful conduct, reprehensible actions and aggression. Therefore, human nature is bound to rebel against these whenever they are allowed to spread in society.

Human nature will not allow such destructive forces to remain in full play without staging a rebellion. This is inevitable even though such forces may be exceedingly powerful, functioning under the protection of tyrant rulers. In fact the history of humanity is full of such rebellions aiming to purge humanity of such parasites, in the same way that the human body mobilizes its defenses to expel any alien organism. The very fact that human nature rebels against them proves that they are alien to proper human life. While God enjoins justice and kindness, He forbids shameful, reprehensible conduct and aggression. This is in perfect accord with what pure human nature desires. It strengthens human nature and supports its resistance to such alien forces. *He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90) The admonition serves to awaken human conscience and support an undistorted human nature.

Fulfil your covenant with God whenever you make a pledge. Do not break your oaths after you have confirmed them, and have made God your surety. God certainly knows all that you do. *And live up to the compact of God when you have made a contract. And break not*

the oaths after ratification. (16:91)

Fulfilment of God's covenant includes the pledge Muslims give to the Prophet when they accept the Quranic message, as well as every pledge or promise that involves something permissible or encouraged. The fulfilment of promises and pledges ensures that trust is maintained in human transactions. Without such trust human society, and humanity generally, cannot have a solid foundation. The sign makes sure that those who make a pledge or a covenant are ashamed to break their oaths after having confirmed them, making God the surety for their fulfilment, and appealing to Him as their witness. This is followed by an implicit warning: *And, surely, you made God surety over you. Truly, God knows what you accomplish.* (16:91)

The Quranic message takes a very strict view on the question of fulfilling covenants, allowing no breach or violation under any circumstances. This is important because it constitutes the basis of trust in any community. Without strict fulfilment of covenants, the whole structure of the community collapses. The treatment of this point in the chapter does not stop at merely stating an order to fulfil all covenants and pledges and a prohibition of their violation. It goes further than that, showing the violation of covenants in a very bad light. It also dismisses every excuse people make to justify their going back on covenants: *And be not like she who would break what she spun after firming its fibers by taking to yourselves your oaths in mutual deceit among yourselves so that one community be one that is swelling more than another community.* (16:92)

A person who goes back on his pledges is shown like a stupid, imbecile woman who has no resolve. She spins her yarn and then breaks it leaving it in loose thread. Every little detail given in the example suggests shame and ignominy. The whole picture is meant to give a completely repulsive impression. No honorable person would compromise himself to look so idiotic as the woman who spends her life doing what is of no use and no value whatsoever.

Some people tried to justify going back on the covenants they had made with the Prophet Muhammad by saying that he and his companions were but a weak group, while the Quraysh enjoyed strength of numbers and position. The chapter makes it clear that this is no justification for making their oaths a means of deception, showing themselves ready to go back on them whenever it suited them: This is a clear order not to contemplate breaking pledges in order to gain favor with a community that may appear to be more powerful.

God wishes to test our resolve to honor our covenants so that we may prove our unwillingness to break a covenant when we have

made God their witness to it. *God tries you but by this.* (16:92) As for differences that may exist between nations and communities, these are left to God to resolve on the appointed day:*And He will make manifest to you on the Day of Resurrection about what you had been at variance in it.* (16:92) This statement serves to reassure the Muslim community as it resolves to honor its pledges to, and treaties with, communities that do not share its faith. *If God willed, He would have made you one community, but He causes to go astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And, certainly, you will be asked about what you had been doing.* (16:93)

The chapter places even greater emphasis on the fulfilment of pledges and the prohibition of resorting to oaths in order to deceive others, lulling them into a false sense of security in order to make transitory gain. It warns that the only result of such deception is to weaken the basis of social life and undermine bonds, commitments and beliefs. It warns against God's severe punishment in the hereafter. At the same time, it holds the promise of a much better reward which more than compensates for any trivial gain they may have had to sacrifice in honoring their pledges. It reminds them that what they have in this life is transitory, certain to come to an end, while that which God holds is inexhaustible, everlasting. (16:94-16:96)

When oaths are sworn only to deceive other people, the result is the weakening of faith in one's own conscience and giving to others a distorted image of it. Someone who swears in order to deceive others cannot have firm belief, and cannot walk firmly along its path. At the same time, he presents a bad image of his professed faith to those who trust him only to find themselves deceived. In this way, he sets a very bad example of believers, in effect turning others away from God's faith.

The Quran was able to make such a distinctly strong impression on Muslims through repeated warnings against violation of covenants, promises of reward for honoring them, and by making the covenant a bond with God. It shows the benefit that may result from such violation of commitment to be paltry, while God rewards generously those who are true to their word: *And exchange not the compact for a little price. Truly, what is with God is better for you if you had been knowing.* (16:95) The sign reminds us that what human beings may have is transitory, even though it may be all the property of one person. On the other hand, what is with God remains for ever: *Whatever is with you will come to an end. And whatever is with God is that which endures.* (16:96) Thus their determination to fulfil their commitments, even though they may be burdensome, is immensely

strengthened. Those who persevere in the face of difficulty are promised generous reward: *And We will, certainly, give recompense to those who endured patiently their fairer compensation for what they had been doing.* (16:96) The promise implies that their failings are overlooked, so that their reward takes into account only the best of their actions.

The next sign lays down a general rule about action and reward: *Whoever does as one in accord with morality, whether male or female, while being one who believes, We will give life—this good life.* (16:97) The first item in this rule is that the two sexes, male and female, are equal with regard to their actions and the reward they receive for them. They enjoy the same relationship with God and the same standing in His regard. Therefore, He rewards them equally, applying one measure to both of them. Although the term, 'whoever', with which the sign opens, includes both men and women, the Quranic statement emphasizes this by stating it very clearly: *And We will give recompense to them—their compensation—for the fairer for what they had been doing.* This equality is stressed emphatically in the same chapter that gives us an image of how Arab society based in tribal honor looked upon women.

It tells us how society looked down upon women, and the extent of the depression a father felt when he was given the news of the birth of a girl, leading him to hide away from his friends and acquaintances, because of the shame he felt.

Another aspect of this general rule is that good action must have a strong foundation, which must be faith. Without it, good action cannot be cemented into a well built structure. It remains haphazard, and it soon becomes like ashes blown in every direction by a strong wind. Faith provides the axis around which all bonds turn. It gives good action a motive and an aim. Thus it gives goodness a strong foundation so that it is not swayed by fleeting desires.

This general rule also makes clear that a goodly life in this world will not reduce in any way one's good reward in the life to come. Indeed the reward is based on the best actions believers do in this world. This implies, as we have stated earlier, that God will forgive them their sins. This is indeed the best reward to which human beings may aspire.

The chapter then speaks about the Quran and the values to be observed when reciting it. It also mentions some of the false assertions the ungrateful used to make about it. *So when you had recited the Quran, seek refuge with God from the accursed Satan. Truly, he is not an authority over those who believed and in their Lord they*

put their trust. His authority is only over those who turn away to him and they, those are ones who are polytheists. (16:98-16:100) Seeking God's refuge against Satan prepares the atmosphere such that it is more congenial for the recitation of God's book. It gives a sense of purity that strengthens the reader's bond with God, so that he is free from any other preoccupation, that is with any aspect of the world of evil that Satan represents.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi dent you have learned.

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

LESSON 70(14). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD FAIRNESS (RIGHT-MINDED)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

HISTORY

This was yet another falsehood the ungrateful tried to assert. (16:103) They claimed that the Quran was taught to the Prophet by a man whom they named. We have different reports about the particular person they mentioned. One report points to a foreign servant attached to one clan or another of the Quraysh who used to sell goods near al-Safa. The Prophet might have sat with him and spoke to him at times. But the man spoke a foreign language. His knowledge of Arabic was sufficient only to conduct necessary business transactions.

A report by Ibn Ishaq in his biography of the Prophet suggests that the Prophet used to sit at al-Marwah with a Christian servant named Sabiah, although some people called him Jabr. He was a slave owned by a man from al-Hadrami clan. Ibn Kathir, the historian, and other scholars like Ikrimah and Qatadah mention that the man's name was Yaish.

Another scholar and historian, al-Tabari reports on the authority

of Ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin, that the Prophet used to teach a slave called Balam who spoke a foreign language. The ungrateful used to see the Prophet leaving his place. So they came up with their ridiculous fabrication, saying that Balam taught the Prophet.

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:101-16:110

Makkah: *And when We substituted a sign*
in place of another sign
—and God is greater in knowledge of what He sends down—
*they said: **You** are only one who devises!*
But most of them know not. (16:101)
*Say: The hallowed Spirit sent it down from **your** Lord*
with The Truth to make firm those who believed
and as a guidance and good tidings
to the ones who submit to God. (16:102)
And, certainly, We know that they say:
It is only a mortal who teaches him.
The tongue of him whom they hint at is non-Arab,
while this is in a clear Arabic tongue. (16:103)
Truly, those who believe not in the signs of God,
God will not guide them
and for them is a painful punishment. (16:104
Devising falsity is only by those who believe no.
in the signs of God.
And those, they are the ones who lie. (16:105)
Whoever disbelieved in God after his belief—
other than whoever was compelled to do it against his will
while his heart is one that is at peace in belief—
but whoever's breast is expanded to disbelief,
on them is the anger of God
and for them is a serious punishment. (16:106)
That is because they embraced this present life
instead of the world to come.
And God guides not the folk,
the ones who disbelieve, (16:107)
those are those who God set a seal upon their hearts
and upon their ability to hear and their sight.
And those, they are the ones who are heedless. (16:108)
Without a doubt they will be in the world to come,
the ones who are losers. (16:109)
*Again, truly, **your** Lord, for those who emigrated*

after they were persecuted and, again, struggled
and endured patiently.
*Truly, after that, **your** Lord*
is Forgiving, Compassionate. (16:110)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter also mentions some of the falsehoods the ungrateful circulated about the Quran: (16:101-16:105) The ungrateful do not understand the role of God's book and the fact that it has been revealed to establish a global human society and create a community to lead it along its way. They do not realize that it is the final message to come from on high to humanity. They are oblivious of the essential truth that God, who has created us, knows best which concepts, principles and legislation are best suited for humanity. When He abrogates a sign that has completed its purpose, He puts another in its place which is more suitable for the stage the new community has reached, and better suited for the long future, the duration of which is known only to Him. This is certainly His prerogative. The signs of this book may be likened to a medicine which is given in small doses to a patient until he is cured. Then he is advised to resume a normal diet which helps to protect his health.

But the ungrateful understand nothing of all this. Therefore, it is not surprising that they did not appreciate the purpose behind the abrogation of one sign by another and accused the Prophet of being a fabricator when he was indeed the most honest and truthful person they had ever known. Therefore, the sign comments: *And when We substituted a sign in place of another sign—and God is greater in knowledge of what He sends down—they said: **You** are only one who devises! But most of them know not.* (16:101)

The chapter then states the truth of the revelation of the Quran: *Say: The hallowed Spirit sent it down from **your** Lord with The Truth to make firm those who believed and as a guidance and good tidings to the ones who submit to God.* (16:102) It could not be a fabrication when it was brought down by the Holy Spirit, the Angel Gabriel (peace be upon him). He has brought it 'from your Lord', not from you, and this is done in truth', which means that no falsehood can ever be attached to it. The purpose of its revelation is 'to strengthen the believers,' who maintain the bond between God and their hearts. These realize that it has come from God to spell out the truth and make it clear for all humanity. It has another purpose as well, which is to provide guidance and good news to those who surrender themselves to God. *Say: The hallowed Spirit sent it down from **your** Lord with The Truth to make firm those who believed and as a guidance*

and good tidings to the ones who submit to God. (16:102) They are strengthened by the fact that they are guided along the right path, as also given the happy news of achieving victory and establishing their power.

We know full well that they say: It is but a man that teaches him [all] this. But the man to whom they so maliciously allude speaks a foreign tongue, while this is Arabic speech, pure and clear. *And, certainly, We know that they say: It is only a mortal who teaches him.* (16:103)

God answers all these fabrications with a simple, clear statement that ends all argument: *The tongue of him whom they hint at is non-Arab, while this is in a clear Arabic tongue.* (16:103) It is difficult to imagine that they were serious when they made such ludicrous claims. It was all most likely a part of their evil scheming which they knew to be absolutely false. They were fully aware of the merits of the Quran and its literary excellence. How could they claim that a man speaking a foreign tongue could have taught it to Muhammad. If such a man could have produced such a masterpiece, why would he not claim it for himself, without teaching it to another?

The Quran states the reason behind such false assertions: *Truly, those who believe not in the signs of God, God will not guide them and for them is a painful punishment.* (16:104) Those who refuse to believe in the signs given by God will not be guided to the truth concerning this divine revelation. Indeed God does not guide them t the truth concerning anything. This is the natural consequence c their unbelief and deliberate rejection of the message God's signs impart to them.

The chapter then makes it clear that false claims against God could not be made by Muhammad, whose honesty was exemplary. Such falsehood could only be asserted by people like them refusing to believe in God: *Devising falsity is only by those who believe not in the signs of God. And those, they are the ones who lie.* (16:105) Lying is a cardinal sin which no believer perpetrates. The Prophet himself made it clear that a true believer could at times commit some sinful action, but a true believer would never deliberately tell a lie.

The chapter outlines here the rulings concerning anyone who disavows faith after having accepted it: (16:106-16:109)

The early Muslims in Makkah were subjected to such brutal oppression as could only be endured by those who had made up their minds to sacrifice their lives in pursuit of a higher destiny in the life to come. Such people endure all the atrocities the ungrateful perpetrate against them, rather than revert to pagan faith.

The chapter paints in ghastly colors the crime of the person who reverts to unbelief after having known the true faith, declared his acceptance of it and experienced its blessings. Such a person only reverts to unbelief because he prefers the comforts and pleasures of this world to the happiness of the life to come. Therefore, such people are threatened with God's wrath and tremendous suffering, in addition to being deprived of God's guidance. They are described as heedless, as having sealed their hearts, ears and eyes, and as being certain losers in the life to come. The important point here is that faith must never be subject to bargaining or to a balance of profit and loss. When a person's heart and mind submit to faith, they do not admit any worldly influence. This world has its values and considerations, while faith has its own. The two sets cannot overlap or have anything in common. Faith must not be treated in a trifling way. It is not a bargain that you make one day and reverse the next. It is far more precious. Therefore, the crime is painted in such ghastly colors and the punishment is seen to be extremely stern.

The only exception from such condemnation is the one who professes, under utter duress, to have rejected the faith only to save himself from certain death, while his heart remains full of faith, certain that it is the truth. It is reported that this ruling was revealed in connection with Ammar ibn Yasir. Al-Tabari reports on the authority of Muhammad, Ammar's son, that the ungrateful in Makkah tortured his father, Ammar ibn Yasir, continuously until he gave in to some of their demands.

He then reported this to the Prophet who asked him: How do you feel deep at heart?

He said: My heart is full of faith, entertaining no doubt whatsoever.

The Prophet said to him: If they try again, do likewise.

This was a concession, and it applies to anyone in similar circumstances.

Yet many believers refused to satisfy their torturers, preferring to die rather than give in, even only verbally, to their demands. This was the stance taken by Ammar's own parents. His mother, Sumayyah, was so resolute in her resistance that she was stabbed with a spear in her vagina and died a martyr. His father also was tortured to death without giving in. Similarly did Bilal who was singled out for a special treatment. The ungrateful laid him down on the burning sands in the summer heat of Arabia and put on his chest a large rock and dragged him along, ordering him to reject his faith, but he refused and declared: He is only One God. He then said to them: Had

I known anything that would give you more displeasure, I would have said it.

But then, your Lord [grants forgiveness] to those who forsake their homes after enduring trials and persecution, and strive hard [in God's cause] and remain patient in adversity. After all this, your Lord is certainly Much-Forgiving, Most Merciful. One day every soul will come pleading for itself. Every soul will be repaid in full for all its actions, and none shall be wronged. *Again, truly, your Lord, for those who emigrated after they were persecuted and, again, struggled and endured patiently.* (16:110)

The reference here is to some believers who were among the weaker elements of Arabian society. They were subjected to great pressure and had to renounce their faith. However, they subsequently migrated and joined the believers when they had a chance to do so. They strove hard for the cause of the Quranic message, enduring much hardship along the way. The sign gives them the good news of God's forgiveness and an abundance of His grace: *Truly, after that, your Lord is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (16:110)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that

don't "fit?"

- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

Summary of critical thinking:

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

INTERLUDE 3: THE PROPHET VISITS TAIF AT THE END OF SHAWWAL 3 BH/619 CE OR FIRST OF DHU AL-QADA 3 BH/619 CE, RETURNS TO MAKKAH UNDER THE PROTECTION OF MUTIM AL-ADYY, DHU AL-QADA 3 BH/619 CE, MARRIES SAWDA BINT ZAMA AND IS BETHROTHED TO AYISHA

The Prophet began to look around him. Makkah would no longer be a safe place for him with the death of his protector. It was perhaps the will of God that help should come from some other people. Taif, almost sixty miles to the east of Makkah, was the nearest city of importance. It might be that God would turn the hearts of its inhabitants, the idolatrous Thaqifites, descendants from a common ancestor with the Quraysh, and use them as his instruments to chastise the Makkans, and establish his religion on the earth. To them, accordingly, he resolved to deliver his message.

Abu Talib had been buried hardly a fortnight when the Prophet, followed only by the faithful Zayd,[14] set out for Taif at the end of Shawwal or the beginning of Dhu al-Qada, 619 CE. His road (as far as Arafat it was the pilgrim's route) lay over dismal rocks and through barren denies for about forty miles, when it emerged on the crowning heights of Jabal Qura, with its rich gardens. Thence, descending through fertile valleys, the smiling fruits and flowers of which suggested perhaps the bright picture of the conversion of the Thaqifites, he advanced to their city.

Though connected by frequent intermarriage, the inhabitants of Taif were jealous of the Quraysh. They had a Lat, or chief idol, of their own. It might be possible, by appealing to their national pride, as well as to their conscience, to enlist them on the side of Islam against the people of Makkah.

The Prophet proceeded to the three principal men of the city, who were brothers and, having explained his mission, invited them to claim the honor of sustaining the new faith, and supporting him in the face of his hostile tribe. But he failed in producing conviction. They cast in his teeth the common objection of his own people, and advised that he should seek protection in some other quarter.

He remained in Taif for about ten days but, though many of the influential men came at his call, no hopeful impression was made upon them. Thus repulsed, he solicited one favor only, that they would not divulge the object of his visit, for he feared on his return the taunts and aggravated hostility of the Quraysh. But this, even if it had been possible, the men of Taif were little likely to concede.

For the first few days, perhaps, the common people regarded with awe the Prophet who had turned Makkah upside down, and whose preaching probably many had heard at the pilgrimage or, fairs. But the treatment he was receiving at the hands of their Chiefs, and the disproportion to the outward eye between the magnitude of his claims and his solitary helpless condition, turned

fear into contempt.

They were stirred up to hasten the departure of the unwelcome visitor. They hooted him in the streets; they pelted him with stones; and at last they obliged him to flee out of their city, pursued by a relentless rabble. Blood flowed from wounds in both his legs; and Zayd, endeavoring to shield him, received a severe injury in his head. The mob did not desist until they had chased him two or three miles across the sandy plain to the foot of the hills that surround the city. There, wearied and mortified, he took refuge in one of the numerous orchards, and rested under a vine.

THE PROPHET RESTS IN A GARDEN ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TAIF

Nearby was a vineyard belonging to two of the Quraysh, Utba and Shayba; for the wealthy citizens of Makkah had gardens in the vale of Taif. They watched the flight of Muhammad; and, moved with compassion, sent Addas, their servant, with a tray of grapes for his refreshment. The servant, a Christian slave from Nineveh, marveled at the pious invocation with which the fruit was received by the weary traveller.

When the Messenger reached out for the grapes, he said: In the Name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate and then ate. The Christian servant looked into the Messenger's face and becomes full of awe because he had never heard anyone in Taif say this. He broke the silence, and said: I have never heard the Name of God mentioned by anyone in this region.

The Messenger asked: Where are you from and what is your faith?

He said: I am from Nineveh and I am a Christian.

The Messenger said: You came from the same town as the God-conscious man, Jonah.

The young Christian was amazed. He said: How is it you have heard of Jonah?

The Messenger said: He is my brother. He had been a Prophet and I am also a Prophet.

At that, the young man embraced Islam.

O Lord ! I make my complaint unto thee of my helplessness and frailty, and my insignificance before humanity. But **You** are the Lord of the poor and feeble, and **You** are my Lord. Into whose hands will **You** abandon me? Into the hands of strangers that beset me round about? or of the enemy **You** have given at home the mastery over me? If **Your** wrath be not upon me, I have no concern, but rather **Your** favor is the more wide unto me. I seek for refuge in the light of **Your** countenance. It is **Yours** to chase away the darkness, and to give peace both for this world and the next. Let not **your** wrath light upon me, nor **Your** indignation. It is thine to show anger until **You** are pleased; and there is none other power nor any resource but in **You.**[3]

The owners of the garden watched what was happening from a distance.

They wondered about Addas and said to one another: Muhammad has changed Addas' beliefs.

When the youth returned to them, they both asked why he had embraced the faith of the man who had sought refuge with them. He said: There is no man greater upon the earth than he. He spoke of things that only a messenger of God could know.

They tried to convince him that he should keep his faith, but he had firmly embraced Islam.

THE JINN AT NAKHLA

Re-invigorated by the pause, he set forth on his journey homewards. About half way, loth to return to Makkah, he halted in the valley of Nakhla where was an idol-temple, a grove, and a garden.[16]

Notwithstanding the crowds of jinn here alluded to, Hisham states that they were seven jinn belonging to Nisibin, who happened to pass that way, and stopped on hearing Muhammad at his devotions reciting the Quran.[17]

Continuing this report, Ibn Ishaq says: When the Prophet despaired of receiving any good response in Taif, he returned to Makkah. When he was at Nakhlah, he stood up praying in the middle of the night. It was at this time that a group of the jinn—seven in number from the town of Nasibin in northern Syria—passed by and listened to him reciting the Quran. When he finished his prayer, they left hurriedly to tell their people. They believed in the Qurani message and God had revealed to the Prophet what had happened: *And whe We turned away from you groups of men or jinn who listen to the Quran, when they found themselves in its presence, they said: Pay heed. And when it was finished, they turned to their folk, ones who warn. They said: O our folk! Truly, We heard a Book was caused to descend after Moses, that which establishes as true what was in advance of it. It guides to The Truth and to a straight road. O our folk! Answer one who calls to God and believe in Him. He will forgive you your impieties and will grant protection to you from a painful punishment.* (46:29-46:31)

He also recited Chapter 72, The Jinn: *Say: It was revealed to me that a group of jinn listened to me. They said: Truly, we heard a wondrous Recitation. It guides to the right judgment, so we believed in it. And we will never ascribe partners with our Lord anyone. Truly, He, exalted be the grandeur of our Lord. He took no companion (f) to Himself, nor a son, and yet a foolish one among us had been saying an outrageous lie about God!*

But we, truly, thought that the humankind, nor the jinn would ever say a lie about God and that there had been men of humankind who would take refuge with the masculine of the jinn, but they increased them in vileness. And they thought as you thought, that God will never raise up anyone.

And we stretched towards the heaven. Then, we found it was filled with

stern guards and burning flames. And we had been sitting in positions having the ability to hear. But whoever listens now will find a burning flame and watchers for him. And we were not informed whether the worst was intended for those who are on earth or whether their Lord intended for them right mindedness. There are among us, the ones in accord with morality. And there are among us other than that. We had been of ways differing from one another.

And we, truly, thought that we will never be able to weaken God on the earth and we will never weaken Him by flight. So, truly, when we heard the guidance, we believed in it. And whoever believes in his Lord, he will fear neither meagerness nor vileness. And, truly, we are the ones who submit to God. Among us there are the ones who swerve from justice. And whoever submitted to God, then, those sought right mindedness.

As for the ones who swerve from justice, they had been as firewood for hell. If they went straight on the way, We would have satiated them with copious water so that We try them in it. But whoever turns aside from the Remembrance of his Lord, He will dispatch him to a rigorous punishment. Truly, the places of prostration belong to God so call not to anyone with God. And, truly, when the servant of God stood up, calling to Him, they be about to swarm upon him.

Say: Truly, I call only to my Lord, and I ascribe not as partners with Him anyone. Say: Truly, I possess not the power to hurt nor to bring right mindedness for you. Say: Truly, none would grant me protection from God—not anyone! And I will never find other than Him that which is a haven unless I be delivering messages from God, His messages. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger, then, for him is the fire of hell, ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally.

Until when they saw what they are promised, then, they will know who is weaker of ones who help and fewer in number. Say: I am not informed if what you are promised is near, or if my Lord will assign for it a space of time. He is The One Who Knows of the unseen! And He discloses not the unseen to anyone, but a Messenger with whom He was content. Then, truly, He dispatches in advance of him and from behind him, watchers that He know that they expressed the messages of their Lord. He enclosed whatever is with them and He counted everything with numbers.

THE PROPHET'S RETURN TO MAKKAH

Near Makkah, he meets with three people, among whom is Mutim ibn Adiyy. Muhammad requested them to act as his protector against the hostile Quraysh. Without such a protector, it was not safe for him to enter Makkah. Among the three, only Mutim accepted Islam, gladly agreeing to the Messenger's request.

The Messenger had gone to Taif to seek tribal protection. It was not God's

plan that he should succeed here as His plan for the Messenger to migrate to Madinah will not take place for a few more months. However, God did not leave him without any success. The young Christian gardner, became a Muslim along with Mutim ibn Adiyy.

Mutim called his sons and told them to them buckle on their armor and take their stand by the Kabah. Muhammad and Zayd then entered Makkah; and, when they had reached the Kabah, Mutim stood upright on his camel and called aloud: O Quraysh! Verily I have given the pledge of protection unto Muhammad; wherefore let not any one amongst you molest him. Then Muhammad went forward, kissed the Black Stone, and returned to his house guarded by Mutim and his party.

There is something lofty and heroic in this journey of Muhammad to Taif; a solitary man going boldly forth in the Name of God—like Jonah to Nineveh—and summoning an idolatrous city to repentance and to the support of his mission. It sheds a strong light on the intensity of his own belief in the divine origin of his calling.

MARRIAGE TO SAWDA BINT ZAMA AND BETROTHAL TO AYISHA

Muhammad sought for solace in the midst of family Muhammad bereavement and public indignities, from a double matrimonial alliance. Sakran with his wife Sawda, both of Qurayshite blood, but of a stock remote from Muhammad, early became converts to Islam, and emigrated to Abyssinia. They had lately returned to Makkah, where Sakan died. Muhammad now made suit to Sawda, and the marriage was celebrated within two months from the death of Khadija.[18]

About the same time he contracted a second marriage with Ayisha, the younger daughter of Abu Bakr—a connection mainly designed to cement the attachment with his bosom-friend. There may have been something more than ordinarily interesting and precocious about the child, for the real marriage with her took place more than three years afterwards.

There is no information as to the terms on which Muhammad continued with the family of his deceased wife, Khadija; and whether he retained any part of the property that belonged to her. During the late few troublous years, and especially under the ban, it is probable that her wealth had much diminished. Perhaps it was shared with the poorer brethren. It is certain that during his remaining stay at Makkah the Prophet had not much property at his disposal. He appears still to have continued to live, at least occasionally, in the quarter, if not in the house, of Abu Talib where Abu Talib's daughter, Umm Hani, lived.

Repulsed from Taif, and utterly hopeless of farther success at Makkah, the fortunes of Muhammad were darkness, enveloped in thick gloom, when hope suddenly dawned from an unexpected quarter.

LESSON 70(15). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

POINT OF VIEW (FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE)

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

HOW IS POINT OF VIEW (FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE) DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)

SIGNS 16:111-16:119

Makkah: *On a Day every soul will approach,*
disputing for itself and for every soul,
its account will be paid in full
for what it did they will not be wronged. (16:111)
And God propounded a parable of a town
—that which had been safe, one that is at peace,
its provision approaches it freely from every place.
Then, it was ungrateful for the divine blessings of God

and so God caused it to experience extreme hunger and fear
because of what they had been crafting. (16:112)
And, certainly, drew near them a Messenger from among them,
but they denied him, so the punishment took them
while they are ones who are unjust. (16:113)
So eat of what God provided you as lawful, what is good
and give thanks for the divine blessing of God if it had been
Him that you worship. (16:114)
He only forbade to you carrion
and blood and flesh of swine
and what was hallowed to other than God.
But if one was compelled,
without being one who is willfully disobedient,
nor one who turns away,
then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (16:115)
And say not to what your lying tongues allege:
This is lawful and this is unlawful
so as to devise lies against God.
Truly, those who devise against God
lies will not prosper, (16:116)
but a little enjoyment and for them
is a painful punishment. (16:117)
We forbade those who became Jews
what We related to you before
and We did not wrong them,
except they had been doing wrong to themselves. (16:118)
Again, truly, your Lord—to those who did evil in ignorance,
again, repented after that and made things right—
truly, your Lord after that is Forgiving, Compassionate. (16:119)

COMMENTARY°

Earlier in the chapter God gave two examples to drive home to people an important principle of faith. Now He gives another to portray the situation of Makkah and its pagan people who denied the blessings God had bestowed on them. The example serves to make clear what destiny awaits them if they persist in their attitude. The example highlights the blessings of abundant provisions, peace and security given to the city before mentioning the good and wholesome things they prohibit themselves on the basis of their pagan myths. In fact God has made these lawful to humanity. He has clearly outlined what He has forbidden, and it does not include the matters they prohibit themselves. This is an act of ingratitude to God, giving no

thanks to Him for His blessings. By adopting this attitude they lay themselves open to God's severe punishment.

As it outlines the foul things God has forbidden to Muslims, the chapter mentions the wholesome things God had forbidden to the Jews because of their wrongdoing. These were not forbidden to their forefathers at the time of Abraham who was a devout servant of God. These were indeed permissible to him and his offspring. Some were later forbidden to the Jews as a sort of punishment for their subsequent disobedience. Those who then mended their ways could receive God's forgiveness and mercy.

Then God revealed a new message to Muhammad as the final version of His faith. Thus all wholesome things were made lawful again. The same applies to the restrictions of the Sabbath, the day on which the Jews are forbidden fishing and hunting. The Sabbath applies to its own people who disagreed over it. Some of them obeyed the orders and refrained from doing what God had forbidden, while others transgressed and incurred God's punishment. They were sent to a depth far below that of human beings.

At this point the chapter comes to its close with an order given to God's Messenger to call on people to follow God's guidance. He should make his call with wisdom and goodly admonition, and with argument that is kindly. He is also told to maintain the laws of justice, replying to any aggression with similar measure, knowing that patience and forbearance are even better. The final outcome is indeed in favor of the God-fearing because God is with them, showing them the way to success, supporting and taking good care of them.

God cites the case of a town living in security and ease. Its sustenance comes to it in abundance from all quarters. Yet it was ungrateful for God's favors. Therefore, God caused it to experience the misery of hunger and fear for what its people used to do. There had come to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they denied him. Therefore suffering overwhelmed them as they were wrongdoers. (16:112-16:113)

This case is very similar to that of Makkah where God's sacred house was built. It was made a consecrated city where everyone could feel secure. No one was threatened, even though he might be guilty of murder. All enjoyed the security of being in the neighborhood of God's Inviolable House. People all around were threatened by all manner of dangers, while the people of Makkah enjoyed peace and security. Their provisions came to them easily from all over the world, carried by pilgrims or trade caravans which travelled in peace. Yet they lived in a barren valley with no cultivation or vegetation. Nevertheless, ever since the days of Abraham, they enjoyed a life of prosperity in addition to their security.

Then a Messenger came to them: A man from among them whom they knew to always tell the truth and to be exemplary in his honesty. They could find nothing wrong with his character. It was God who sent him as His Messenger, bringing mercy to them and to all humanity, preaching the same faith as that of Abraham, who built the Inviolable House of worship which ensured their security and prosperity. But they were quick to reject his message, levelling at him all sorts of false accusations, and subjecting him and his followers to persecution.

The example cited here by God is practically identical with their own situation: *And God propounded a parable of a town—that which had been safe, one that is at peace, its provision approaches it freely from every place.* (16:112) The result of these people's attitude is placed before their very eyes. They denied the Messenger God sent them: *Then, it was ungrateful for the divine blessings of God and so God caused it to experience extreme hunger and fear because of what they had been crafting.* (16:112) The inevitable result was: *And, certainly, drew near them a Messenger from among them, but they denied him, so the punishment took them while they are ones who are unjust.* (16:113)

The Arabic text brings this image to life by enhancing the effects of the hunger and fear, making them a garment to be worn, but then they are also made to 'taste' or 'experience' these to generate a more profound effect than that of the image of contact between skin and garment. The text highlights the response of different senses to enhance the effect of experiencing hunger and fear and how this affects the ungrateful. The chapter does this so that they may take heed and endeavour to spare themselves the same destiny which is inevitable if they persist in their wrongdoing.

In virtue of this example which highlights the blessings and the provisions given to them, and by contrast, the risks of restriction and deprivation, they are ordered to eat of the good things God has made lawful to them and to show their gratitude to Him. This is how to maintain the path of true faith, submitting totally to God alone and associating no partners with Him. It is when partners are associated with God that wholesome things are made forbidden in the name of such false deities: *So eat of what God provided you as lawful, what is good and give thanks for the divine blessing of God if it had been Him that you worship.* (16:114)

Now the chapter defines what is forbidden, listing the prohibitions in detail. The list does not include what the Arabs forbade themselves, giving these special names.

We note the exclusivity in the way the prohibitions are listed: *He only forbade to you carrion and blood and flesh of swine and what was hallowed to other than God.* (16:115) These are forbidden either because they are physically harmful, as in the case of dead animals, blood and pig meat, or because they are outrageous to faith or to mental well-being as when invoking a creature's name at the time of slaughter. *But if one was compelled, without being one who is willfully disobedient, nor one who turns away, then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (16:115) This Quranic message is made easy, involving no affliction. If someone fears to die or becomes ill as a result of hunger and thirst, he may eat something of these forbidden items. We mentioned earlier the differences among scholars as to how much one may eat in such cases. The important thing is that one must neither transgress the principle of prohibition, nor exceed the limits of necessity that override the prohibition in order to permit what is normally restricted.

These are the limits of what God has prohibited or left lawful in relation to food. These limits must not be trespassed on the basis of pagan myths. No one can make a false claim describing as prohibited what God has permitted. Permissibility and prohibition are made by order from God, because they are part of legislation, which is the prerogative of God alone. Anyone who claims legislative authority for himself, on any basis other than God's orders, is an inventor of untruth. Those who invent anything without God's authority will never prosper:

Do not say — for any false thing you may utter with your tongues—that 'This is lawful and this is forbidden', so as to attribute your lying inventions to God. Indeed those who attribute their lying inventions to God will never be successful. Brief is their enjoyment [of this life], and grievous suffering awaits them [in the life to come]. *And say not to what your lying tongues allege: This is lawful and this is unlawful so as to devise lies against God. Truly, those who devise against God lies will not prosper, but a little enjoyment and for them is a painful punishment.* (16:116-16:117)

This is an express order that they must not describe anything as lawful or unlawful without appropriate warrant. When they say that something is lawful and another prohibited, without a reliable statement in support, they are stating a naked lie, which they falsely attribute to God. The chapter makes it clear that those who invent falsehood and attribute it to God will have nothing but brief enjoyment in this life. Beyond this, they will be made to experience grievous suffering.

Yet some people have the audacity to enact legislation of their own, relying on no valid text to serve as the basis of what they leg-

islate. What is most amazing is that they still expect to prosper in this life and in the life to come as well.

Beyond this, God has made certain prohibitions applicable to the Jews. But this was a punishment to the Jews in particular. It does not apply to Muslims. Now this chapter states: *We forbade those who became Jews what We related to you before and We did not wrong them, except they had been doing wrong to themselves. Again, truly, your Lord—to those who did evil in ignorance, again, repented after that and made things right—truly, your Lord after that is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (16:118-16:119)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What do you believe? How do you see things?
What reasons seem most persuasive to them?
What theory do you think best explains what their teachers are trying to explain?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

LESSON 70(16). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign: *There is no compulsion in religion. Surely right judgment has become clear from error...* (2:256) that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to what-

ever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:120-16:128

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (16:120)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (16:121)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (16:122)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (16:123)
Truly, the Sabbath was made
for those who are at variance about it.
*Truly, **your** Lord will give judgment between them*
on the Day of Resurrection about
what they had been at variance in it. (16:124)
*Call **you** to the way of **your** Lord with wisdom*
and fairer admonishment.
And dispute with them in a way that is fairer.
*Truly, **your** Lord is He Who is greater in knowledge*
of whoever went astray from His way.
And He is greater in knowledge
of the ones who are truly guided. (16:125)
Madinah (16:126)
Madinah (16:127)
Madinah (16:128)

COMMENTARY°

The restrictions of the Sabbath apply to the Jews only, who differ

on its details. It was neither a part of the faith of Abraham nor sanctioned in the faith of Muhammad who followed Abraham's footsteps. *Truly, the Sabbath was made for those who are at variance about it.* (16:124) Their case is left to God who knows the truth about all matters: *Truly, **your** Lord will give judgment between them on the Day of Resurrection about what they had been at variance in it.* (16:124)

The chapter has thus clarified what similarities may appear between the faith based on believing in God's Oneness as outlined by Abraham and perfected by the Quranic message, God's final message to humanity, and the deviant beliefs to which the Jews or the pagan Arabs adhered. All this is part of what the Quran has been revealed to set right. The Prophet is told to continue his efforts, calling on people to follow the divine faith, but utilizing wisdom and good exhortation, and delivering his argument in a kindly manner. If his opponents go on the offensive and act aggressively, the penalty should be of the same type as the aggression, or the Prophet may choose the better way of forgiveness and patience in adversity, despite being able to exact punishment. This is sure to bring him a better outcome. He need not grieve however over those who reject God's guidance, nor should he be afflicted by their scheming against him and his followers. *Call **you** to the way of **your** Lord with wisdom and fairer admonishment. And dispute with them in a way that is fairer. Truly, **your** Lord is He Who is greater in knowledge of whoever went astray from His way. And He is greater in knowledge of the ones who are truly guided.* (16:125)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across

in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: NOAH (NUH)
SIGNS 71:1-71:20

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:1)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:2)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:3)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:4)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:5)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:6)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:7)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:8)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:9)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:10)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:15)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:16)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:18)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:19)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:20)

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: NOAH (NUH)
SIGNS 71:21-71:28

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:21)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:22)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:23)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:26)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:27)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:28)

EPILOGUE
THE PROPHET MEETS A GROUP OF SIX MEN FROM MADINAH AT THE UKAZ FAIR, DHU AL-HIJJA 3 BH/619 CE

HISTORY

The time of the Ukaz Fair, Dhu al-Hijja 3 BH/619 CE, arrived. When God wished to display His religion openly and to glorify His prophet and to fulfil His promise to him, the time came when he met a number of the Helpers at one of the fairs.[19]

Asim ibn Umar ibn Qatada told me on the authority of some of the shaykhs of his tribe that they said that when the Messenger met them, he learned by inquiry that they were of the Khazraj and allies of the Jews. He invited them to sit with him and expounded to them Islam and recited the Quran to them.

Now God had prepared the way for Islam in that they lived side by side with the Jews who were people of the scriptures and knowledge, while they themselves were idolaters. They had often raided them in their district and whenever bad feelings arose, the Jews used to say to them: A Prophet will be sent soon. His day is at hand. We shall follow him and kill you by his help as Aad and Iram perished.

So when they heard the Messenger's message they said one to another: This is the very Prophet of whom the Jews warned us.

Thereupon they accepted his teaching and became Muslims saying: We have left our people, for no tribe is so divided by hatred ar rancor as they. Perhaps God will unite them through you. So let go to them and invite them to this religion of yours; and if God unit them in it, then no man will be mightier than you. Thus saying they returned to Madinah as believers.

There were six of these men from the Khazraj so I have been told. When they arrived back in Madinah, they told their people about the Messenger and invited them to accept Islam until it became so well known among them that there was no home belonging to the Helpers but Islam and the Messenger had been mentioned therein.[20]

The city of Yathrib (Madinah) had been long torn by internal war. The bloody conflict of Buath between the Madinah tribes of Khazraj and Aws a few years before, had weakened and humiliated the Khazraj tribe, without materially strengthening the Aws tribe. Assassination had succeeded to open fighting. There was no one bold or commanding enough to seize the reins of government; and the citizens, both Arab and Jews, lived in uncertainty and suspense. Little apprehension was felt from the advent of a stranger; even although he was likely to gain permission to assume the vacant authority.

Deadly jealousy at home, had extinguished the jealousy of influence from abroad.

Such was the position of Madinah. A tribe addicted to the superstition of Makkah, yet well Muhammad, acquainted with a purer faith, was in the best state of preparation to join itself to the Prophet. Idolatrous Arabs impressed with the indefinite anticipation of a Prophet, would readily recognize Muhammad as their Prophet. A city wearied with faction and strife, would cheerfully admit him to their hospitality as a refugee, if not welcome him to their counsels as a Chief.

Looking now to their acquaintance with the new faith, it may be remarked that the politics of Makkah, and the history of the Prophet, could not be unknown at Madinah. The Syrian caravans of the Quraysh not unfrequently halted there. Occasional intermarriages took place between the inhabitants of the two cities. Muhammad himself was descended from a distinguished woman of Khazraj birth, espoused by Hashim and a favorable interest, among that tribe at least, was thus secured.

Abu Qays, a famous poet of Madinah, had some time before addressed the Quraysh in verses intended to dissuade them from interference with Muhammad and his followers. The Jews were already acquainted with the Prophet as a zealous supporter of their Scriptures. Parties from Madinah went up yearly to the solemnities of the pilgrimage. A few had thus come under the direct influence of his preaching, and all were familiar with the general nature of his claims. To this was now superadded the advocacy of actual converts.!

This was to Muhammad a year of anxiety and expectation. Would the handful of Madinah converts remain steady to his cause? Would they.be able to extend that cause among their fellow-citizens?

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.2lstcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT, INTERLUDES AND EPILOGUE

1. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*

2. Ibid.

3. Abu Bakr al-Harithi informed us> Abu al-Shaykh al-Hafiz> Abu Yahya al-Razi> Sahl ibn Uthman> Abu Malik> Juwaybir> al-Dahhak> Ibn Abbas who said regarding 18:58.

4. The judge Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn al- Hasan al-Hiri related to us by dictation in Dar al-Sunnah on Friday after prayer, in the months of the year 410 AH> Abu al-Hasan ibn Isa Ibn Abdawayh al-Hiri> Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Bushanji> al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Musarrih al-Harrani> Sulayman ibn Ata' al-Harrani> Maslamah ibn Abdullah al-Juhani> his uncle Ibn Mashjaah ibn Rubi al-Juhani> Salman al-Farsi said.

5. See Waqidi from Said Ibn Abbas.

6. See Mujahid.

7. See Ibn Abi Hatim.

8. See Mohammad Hashim Kamali Introduction to this book.

9. Ibn Hisham, p. 276; Tabari, i, 1199.

10. Ibn Saad, p. 141.

11. Ibn Hisham, p. 233; Tabari, i, 1170.

12. See *Book Year 3* for Chapter 38.

13. The tenth year of his mission (3BH) had not yet passed when Khadija died; and five weeks later he lost his protector Abu Talib also. Note: The authorities regarding these dates are contradictory. The *Kitab al Waqidi*, p 23 says that Khadija died after Abu Talib a month and five days: Ibn Qurtabi also, that she died after him three days. The authorities, however, give Ramadan 3 BH/619 CE as the date of Khadija's death, and Shawwal 3 BH/619 CE for that of Abu Talib.

The middle of Shawwal is the date generally agreed upon for Abu Talib's death (*Kitab al Waqidi*, p. 23); and the end of the same month of Shawwal, or about a fortnight later, as the period when Muhammad, downcast and distressed by the two bereavements, set out for Taif.

The interval between the two deaths is generally represented as thirty-five days. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, pp. 23, 40. In this view, it seems more natural to adopt the alternative that she died in the first half of Ramadan; that Abu Talib died in the middle of Shawwal: and that Muhammad, overcome by despondency at these successive bereavements, and by the renewed opposition of the Quraysh, set out for Taif the end of Shawwal.

14. Hishami, p 136 and Tabari, p 149 both say that he went alone, but Waqidi, p. 40 says that Zayd accompanied him.

15. Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, Vol. 11. pp. 60-63. Also, Ibn Sayyid al-Nas, *Uyun al-Athar*, pp. 231-233. Also. Adil Salahi (2002). *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, pp. 179-180.

16. Nakhla was a valley about half-way between Makkah and Taif. Its position is farther marked by the engagement of Nakhla in the sacrilegious war during the Messenger's youth. The Hawazin pursued the Quraysh from the Ukaz fair to this spot which was within the sacred limits around Makkah or at least close upon them.

17. Others say they were nine in number and came from Yemen, or from Nineveh. And it is added that they professed the Jewish religion. This, of course, arose from the reference made by them in the Quran to Moses.

18, If Khadija died in the middle of Ramadan, 619, he married Sawda in Dhu al-Qada upon his return from Taif.

19. Ibn Hisham p. 286; Tabari i, 1209.

20. See Ibn Ishaq.

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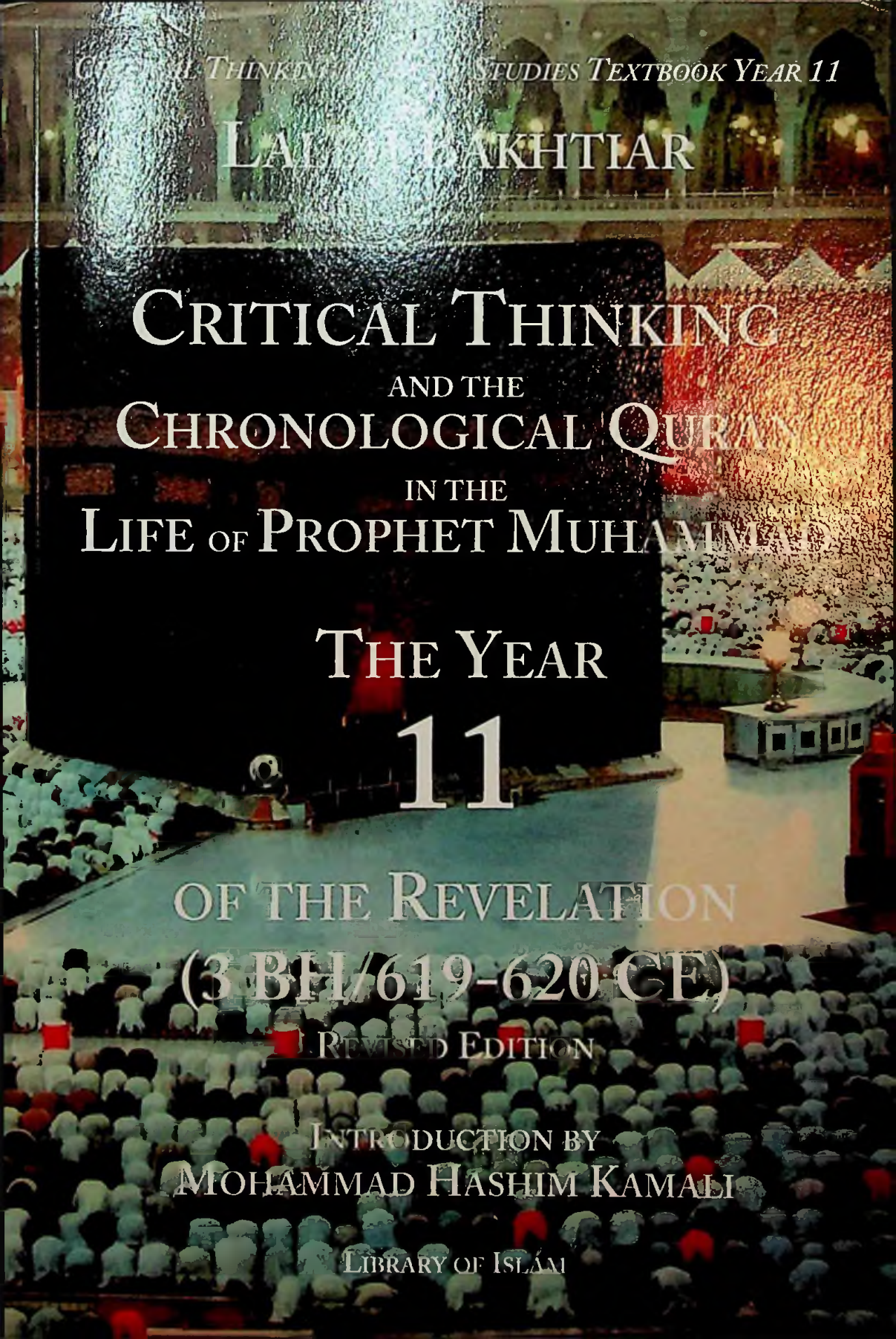
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 11, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 2 BH/August 18, 619 CE-August 5, 620 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for

God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of

view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)

5. Worthiness (Focusing on the important, not trivial, to be significant: ahl)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: 'dhara'a)
7. Right Judgment (rushd)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**
   - Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to

NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?
7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?
8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION

READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING

BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads o action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 11*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 11* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 11*, we begin with Lesson 72, that is, Quran Chapter 14 which is the 72nd Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 21 and, finally, Lesson 75 with Quranic Chapter 32, the 75th Chapter revealed.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 72(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO- AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists (Salafists) as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists (Salafists) today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to

radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior

to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)

Makkah: *Alif Lam Ra.*
This is a Book We caused to descend to thee
so that you bring humanity out
from the shadows into the light

with the permission of their Lord to the path of
The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise. (14:1)
God! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth,
and woe to the ones who are ungrateful.
For them is the severe punishment, (14:2)
those who embrace this present life
instead of the world to come
and bar from the way of God,
and desire in it crookedness.
Those are wandering far astray. (14:3)
We sent not any Messenger but with the tongue of his folk
in order that he make it manifest for them.
Then, God causes to go astray whom He wills
and guides whom He wills.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (14:4)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (14:5)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (14:6)

COMMENTARY°

This book which consists of words made up of letters like these is one which you certainly have not authored. It has been revealed to you for a definite purpose: *Alif Lam Ra. This is a Book We caused to descend to **you** so that **you** have brought humanity out from the shadows into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1) Your role is to take humanity out of the depths of darkness into which they have sunk, the darkness of superstition, conflicting systems and traditions; the darkness of believing in alleged deities, and false concepts, values and standards. You are to bring them, i.e. all of humanity, into the real light which removes all darkness. Not only does this light dispel all darkness from people's consciences and minds, it also affects their lives generally, setting for them new values and traditions.

His might is highlighted here as a threat to the ungrateful, while the fact that He is worthy of praise is mentioned as a reminder to those who express gratitude to Him.

Then follow some of God's attributes. He is notably mentioned as the One to whom everything in the heavens and on earth belong, who is in need of no one, and who controls the universe and all creatures therein: *God! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.* (14:2) Whoever, then, comes out of darkness into light and follows guidance does well. The chapter does not mention anything about such a person here. Instead, it goes on

to warn the ungrateful against woeful suffering. This is inflicted on them as a result of their rejection of the greatest blessing God has bestowed on humanity, that is, sending them a Messenger whose task is to bring them out of darkness into light. That is an act of God's grace for which we cannot show enough gratitude. Yet some people reject it outright. *And woe to the ones who are ungrateful. For them is the severe punishment.* (14:2)

The chapter then mentions a quality that tells us the reason for their rejection of the blessing God bestows on humanity through His noble Messenger: *Those who embrace this present life instead of the world to come and bar from the way of God, and desire in it crookedness. Those are wandering far astray.* (14:3) Giving preference to the life of this world puts a person in a position of conflict with the requirements of faith, and on a collision course with the '*way of God*'. The situation is reversed when preference is given to the life to come. For then, this life is set on the right course. People enjoy it with moderation, always keen to earn God's pleasure. Hence there is no conflict between their preference for the life to come and their enjoyment of this life and the pleasures it offers.

The way of life advocated by faith protects human life against the selfishness and greed of those who are preoccupied with the life of this world in preference to the life to come. Under this way of life no one person or group can monopolize the earth's wealth and resources.

This is a blessing: *We sent not any Messenger but with the tongue of his folk in order that he make it manifest for them. Then, God causes to go astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (14:4) God grants to people with every message He sends to them. For a Messenger to be able to bring people out of darkness into light, by their Lord's leave, he must be given his message in his own people's language. This is how he is then able to explain God's message to them. It is how the objectives of the message are fulfilled.

Although the Prophet Muhammad is a Messenger to all humanity, he is given his message in his own people's language, so that he can explain matters to them. They are the ones who would be the first to convey his message to the rest of humanity. His own life is, after all, limited. Therefore, he is commanded to call first on his own people so that the Arabian Peninsula becomes purely Muslim. It will then fulfil its role as the place from which the final divine message is carried to the rest of the world.

What God determined for him, which fits with the limited duration of human life, is that Muhammad delivered his message to his

own people in their own language. Then the task was completed by those who carried his message to other communities all over the world. Hence, there is no contradiction between his message being addressed to all humanity, and its being expressed in Arabic, the language of his own people. (14:4) A messenger's task is completed when he has made the truth clear to people. What comes out of it in the form of people following guidance or going astray is not in his power, and does not follow his desire. It is entirely up to God who has subjected human beings to a law of His own making, in keeping with His free-will. Whoever follows the way of error is left to go astray, and whoever follows the way of divine guidance reaches his destination. Both are subject to God's will.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN

Outline: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Prove: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

Relate: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

Review: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

State: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

Summarize: When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

Trace: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way?
Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•
Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.
Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.
Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•
Why was she willing to do this? Was she scared?
What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?
Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

LESSON 72(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior.

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)
SIGNS 14:7-14:12

Makkah: *And mention when your Lord*
caused to be proclaimed:
If you gave thanks, I will increase your blessings.
And if you were ungrateful, truly,
My punishment will be severe. (14:7)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (14:8)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah and his People; Hud and the People of Aad; Salih and the People of Thamud (14:9)

Their Messengers said: Is there any uncertainty about God,
One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth?
He calls you so that He would forgive you your impieties
and postpone for you a term, that which is determined.
They said: You are only mortal like us.
You want to bar us from what our fathers had been worshipping?
Then, bring us a clear authority. (14:10)
Their Messengers said to them: We are only mortals like you
except God shows His grace on whom He wills

of His servants.
And it had not been for us that we bring you an authority,
but by the permission of God.
And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.(14:11)
And why should we not put our trust in God while, surely,
He guided us to our ways? And we will endure patiently
however you maligned us.
And in God let the ones who trust, put their trust.(14:12)

COMMENTARY°

The section explains that taking humanity from darkness into light can only be accomplished 'by their Lord's leave'. Every Messenger makes the issues clear to his people, then: *We sent not any Messenger but with the tongue of his folk in order that he make it manifest for them. Then, God causes to go astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (14:4)

These are the main lines defining the nature of a Messenger sent by God, and the mission assigned to him. Nothing of the nature of God's Messengers or their qualities can be confused with God's nature and attributes. Thus God's Oneness is shown in its full light, with no hint of similarity to anyone or anything.

The first of the two major issues that run through the whole chapter is the unity of the divine message preached by all God's Messengers. This is presented here in a unique way. Other chapters demonstrated this through the fact that every Messenger made the same address to his people. Every one of them would state the same truth, complete his work and pass away, to be followed by other messengers, each of whom stated the same truth in the same words, receiving the same reply. The ungrateful who deny the truth suffer whatever they may suffer in this life, although some of them are given respite, so as to face their fate on the Day of Judgment. In those chapters every Messenger was shown in a separate scene, like we see a film playing back different events.

In this chapter, all the Prophets are grouped together on one side and their erring communities on the other. The battle goes on between them in this life, but does not come to an end here. On the contrary, we follow its progress until the Day of Judgment.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING YOUR FEELINGS

Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of your own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view

QUESTIONS

Whenever you discuss someone's feelings in a classroom setting, you can consider what the person might be thinking to have that feeling in that situation:

Why does the "one who turns away" feel this way?
How is he interpreting his situation?
What led him to that conclusion?
Would you have felt the same if you had been in his circumstances?
Why or why not?
What accounts for the difference?
What could he have thought instead?
Then how might he have felt?

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring your thoughts that underlie your feelings. You can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to myself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

LESSON 72(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and offers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)
SIGNS 14:13-14:21

Makkah: *And those who were ungrateful*
said to their Messengers:
Certainly, we will drive you out of our region
unless you revert to our creed.
So their Lord revealed to them:
Truly, We will cause to perish the ones who are unjust. (14:13)
Certainly, We will cause you to dwell in the region after them.
This is for whoever feared My station
and feared My threat. (14:14)
And the Messengers sought judgment
and frustrated was every haughty, stubborn one. (14:15)
And hell is ahead of him.
He will be given to drink of watery pus. (14:16)
He will gulp it and he will be about to swallow it easily
when death will approach him from every place,
yet he will not be dead.
And ahead of him will be a harsh punishment. (14:17)
A parable of those who were ungrateful to their Lord,
their actions are as ashes over which
the wind blew strongly on a tempestuous day.
They will have no power over anything they earned.
That is the wandering far away, astray. (14:18)
*Have **you** not considered that God*
created the heavens and the earth in Truth?
If He wills, He will cause you to be put away
and bring a new creation. (14:19)
And that is not a great matter for God. (14:20)
And they will depart to God altogether.
Then, the weak would say to those who grew arrogant:

Truly, we had been followers of yours.
Have you ones who avail us at all against the punishment of God?
They would say: If God would have guided us,
we would have guided you.
It is equal to us whether we were patientless
or endured patiently.
There is no asylum for us. (14:21)

COMMENTARY°

At this point tyranny reveals its intentions. It does not argue, think or take a rational approach. It feels that it has no power to face up to faith, and that it will inevitably be defeated. Hence, it threatens the use of brute force, which is the only means to which tyranny can resort: *And those who were ungrateful said to their Messengers: Certainly, we will drive you out of our region unless you revert to our creed. So their Lord revealed to them: Truly, We will cause to perish the ones who are unjust.* (14:13)

This shows clearly the nature of the battle between the Quranic message and ignorance, or tribal honor. The latter does not agree that the Quranic message should have its own entity, which is independent from it. It will not tolerate a separate existence for the Quranic message, and will not live in peace with the Quranic message, even if the Quranic message wants peace with it. That is because the Quranic message wants to be represented in a social set up with its own leadership and because it claims allegiance from its followers. But tribal honor cannot tolerate this. Therefore, the demand the ungrateful make of their Messengers is not merely to stop calling on people to believe. They further demand that they return to their own ways and be fully integrated in their own society. They must not have their separate entity. But divine faith will not accept this as it is contrary to its nature. Hence, the Messengers reject this demand. It is not for a person who submits to God to go back on that and return to tribal honor.

When brute force reveals its shameless face, there is no room for argument or a peaceful call to accept the faith. But God will not abandon His Messengers to face tribal honor on their own.

By its very nature, a society based on tribal honor does not allow anyone who submits to God to work from within its boundaries, unless the work of that believer and his efforts and potentials will support that society and contribute to its power. Those who imagine themselves able to serve their faith by penetrating un-Quranic society and working within its system do not actually understand the nature

of the organic structure of that society. It is a society that forces everyone to work for its beliefs and concepts. Hence, the noble messengers' refusal to revert to their people's old ways, after they had been saved from them by God.

At this point the Supreme Power levels its blow to which no resistance can be made by weak human beings, even though they may be ruthless despots: (14:14)

We must realize here that the Supreme Power does not intervene to settle the issue between the Messengers and their communities until the Messengers themselves declare their final split with their people.

Here: *And those who were ungrateful said to their Messengers: Certainly, we will drive you out of our region unless you revert to our creed. So their Lord revealed to them: Truly, We will cause to perish the ones who are unjust.* (14:13) we have an emphatic statement. Furthermore, it adds power through its use of inversion and the plural pronoun in reference to God. It asserts a promise to destroy the tyrants who threaten the believers and, by their threats, do wrong to themselves, the truth, God's Messengers and all people. *Certainly, We will cause you to dwell in the region after them. This is for whoever feared My station and feared My threat.* (14:14) This is not an act of favoritism, but the work of a fair law of nature that God has set in operation. This settlement in the land after the tyrants have gone is promised to those who fear God and do not act with arrogance or overbearing pride.

Such people fear what God has warned them against, so they take measures to avoid it. They do not engage in corruption or wrongdoing against other people. Hence they deserve to be given their chance and be established on earth.

This sets the scene for a confrontation between the feeble power of wrongdoing despots and the great power of God, the Supreme Being who controls the whole universe. The messengers' task has been completed with the clear delivery of the message and the declaration of a split between themselves and the ungrateful. The tyrants marshal all their feeble power and stand to one side, and the messengers, who in all humility call people to faith, stand opposite, but they are supported by God, the Almighty. Both parties pray for victory, and the result is as expected: *And the Messengers sought judgment and frustrated was every haughty, stubborn one. And hell is ahead of him. He will be given to drink of watery pus. He will gulp it and he will be about to swallow it easily when death will approach him from every place, yet he will not be dead. And ahead of him will be a harsh punishment.* (14:15-14:17)

The image of ashes being blown about on a stormy day: *A parable of those who were ungrateful to their Lord, their actions are as ashes over which the wind blew strongly on a tempestuous day.* (14:18) adds action to the concept that the ungrateful' works will come to nothing. People cannot hold on to any part of their actions, or make use of them. This image gives a far more profound effect than any expression of the same meaning of total loss in intellectual terms.

The following verses then speak of the fate of the ungrateful of olden times in order to demonstrate the fate of the unbelieving Arabs of the Quraysh. These verses threaten them with God's ability to replace them with a new creation: *Have you not considered that God created the heavens and the earth in Truth? If He wills, He will cause you to be put away and bring a new creation. And that is not a great matter for God.* (14:19-14:20)

This switch from a discussion about faith and disbelief, and the dispute between God's Messengers and the ungrateful in un-Quranic societies, to a picture of the heavens and the earth is very natural in the Quran. It is also natural in human feelings and perceptions. This is a further indication of the divine source of the Quran. There is a secret but intelligible discourse between us and the universe. Human nature responds instinctively to this secret communication once it tunes in to it and receives its signals.

In light of the fate suffered by despots who stubbornly took the wrong side in the battle between truth and falsehood, a strong warning is issued: *If He wills, He will cause you to be put away and bring a new creation.* (14:19) He who is able to create the heavens and the earth can easily replace the human race with a different one, or bring about a new community of humans in place of the present one. Again the connotations of taking a community away to replace it with another fits properly with the image of ashes blown far away.

The creation of the heavens and the earth testify that it is indeed easy for God. *And that is not a great matter for God.* (14:20) The fate of earlier unbelieving communities also testifies to it, and so do the ashes scattered hither and thither. It is indeed a remarkable feature of the Quranic style that imagery and connotations slot together in perfect harmony.

At this point in the chapter we note an even higher level of the inimitable style of the Quran, and its power of imagery, expression and harmony between scenes and ideas. A short while ago we saw obstinate tyrants coming to grief, with an image of hell looming large behind them as they are made to suffer their greatest disappointment in this life. Now we see them on the Day of Judgment. It is at once

an extraordinary and powerful scene, full of movement, reaction and dialogue between the weak and the powerful, and between both and Satan.

The weak are those who forfeited the most essential quality of the human being honored by God when they forfeited their rights to freedom of thought, belief and choice, making themselves no more than the servants of arrogant despots: *And they will depart to God altogether. Then, the weak would say to those who grew arrogant: Truly, we had been followers of yours. Have you ones who avail us at all against the punishment of God?* (14:21) They submitted themselves like servants to such despots like themselves in preference to submission to God alone. Such weakness is no excuse; indeed it is their crime.

God does not like that anyone should feel weak. Indeed he calls on all people to seek His protection, and find strength in His support. He does not like that anyone should abandon, willingly or unwillingly, his or her share of freedom, which is a privilege for which they deserve honor. No material force, great as it may be, can force into submission a human being who wants to remain free and hold on to his human dignity. The maximum that brute force can achieve is to have power over the body, imprisoning and tormenting it. As for the mind, conscience and spirit, these cannot be imprisoned by anyone unless the victim so agrees to hand them over.

Here we see those weak and humble 'followers' as they come on the stage of the hereafter. Addressing arrogant tyrants, they say: *And they will depart to God altogether. Then, the weak would say to those who grew arrogant: Truly, we had been followers of yours. Have you ones who avail us at all against the punishment of God?* (14:21) We have followed you and, as a result, we are now facing this painful destiny. Or maybe it is that after seeing the punishment that awaits them they try to reproach the tyrants for having led them to this end. The chapter quotes what they say, which carries overtones of humility.

The arrogant tyrants reply to their question, saying: *They would say: If God would have guided us, we would have guided you. It is equal to us whether we were patientless or endured patiently.* (14:21) Why should you blame us when we are facing the same destiny as you? We have not followed guidance ourselves and left you to go astray. Had God given us guidance we would have led you to it, just as we led you to error when we went astray. They attribute both their guidance and error to God, now acknowledging His great power, when once they had denied these. They exercised their tyranny, subjugating the weak to their power, in a manner which took no account

of God's power. They now try to absolve themselves by attributing their error and role in leading other people astray to God. But God does not command anyone to go astray.

They go on to implicitly reproach the weak, telling them that there is no use in panic or patient endurance. God's punishment is due and it cannot be averted. The time has passed when panic could have helped those who went astray to return to God in repentance. Similarly, patience in adversity used to be of benefit, because God would bestow His mercy on those who were patient. But now this is all over. *There is no asylum for us.* (14:21)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in understanding intellectual curiosity.

What is it to look at things Quranically?
You seem to be approaching this issue from x perspective.
Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I sometimes waste time. That is, I sometimes fail to use all of my time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences.
Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 72(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is to encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM) SIGNS 14:22-14:27

Makkah: *Satan would say*
when the command would be decided:
Truly, God promised you a promise of the Truth.
And I promised you, but I broke it.
And I had been no authority over you,
but that I called to you and you responded to me.
So blame me not, but blame yourselves.
I am not one who assists you nor are you one who assists me.
Truly, I was ungrateful for your ascribing me
as partner with God before.
Truly, the ones who are unjust,
for them is a painful punishment. (14:22)
And will be caused to enter those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
into Gardens beneath which rivers run.
They, ones who will dwell in them forever
with the permission of their Lord.
And their greeting in it will be: Peace! (14:23)
Have you not considered how God propounded a parable?
What is like a good word is what is like a good tree.
Its root is one that is firm and its branches are in heaven. (14:24)
It gives all its produce for awhile with the permission of its Lord.
And God propounds parables for humanity
so that perhaps they will recollect. (14:25)
And the parable of a bad word is that of a bad tree,
that was uprooted from above the earth,
so it has no stability. (14:26)
God makes firm those who believed with the saying,

one that is firm in this present life and in the world to come.
And God will cause to go astray the ones who are unjust.
And God accomplishes what He wills. (14:27)

COMMENTARY°

We have now moved from this world's stage to that of the next where everyone appears before God: *And will be caused to enter those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality into Gardens beneath which rivers run.* (14:23) They all come forward: the arrogant tyrants who reject His message and their weak subordinates, joined by Satan, and also those who believed in the Messengers and did God-conscious deeds. In fact they have always been exposed before God, but now they know and feel that there is no screen to give them cover or protection. They all appear in front of Him, and now the dialogue starts:

Matters have been settled and there can be no room for discussion or argument. Everyone has been shown their place in the life to come. But at this point we see a remarkable portrait: it is Satan, the one who did everything in his power to divert people away from the truth and turn them towards error and falsehood, who reproaches both the weak and the tyrants. His words may sound to them worse than the torture they will soon face: *Satan would say when the command would be decided: Truly, God promised you a promise of the Truth. And I promised you, but I broke it. And I had been no authority over you, but that I called to you and you responded to me. So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I am not one who assists you nor are you one who assists me. Truly, I was ungrateful for your ascribing me as partner with God before. Truly, the ones who are unjust, for them is a painful punishment.* (14:22)

What an amazing scene. Satan is truly devilish! His personality appears here in its most striking colors, just as we have seen the true character of the weak and the powerful. Satan who was the constant whisperer, presenting every type of temptation, turning people away from the voice of truth is now stabbing his followers in the back. Now that matters have been settled, they cannot make any counter attack. They cannot even reply to him. It is he who says now, after the issues have been decided: (14:22) He goes on to rub it in, reproaching them for responding to him when he had no power over them. It is they who gave themselves up to him, forgetting all the old enmity between themselves and Satan. They embraced his falsehood and abandoned the message of truth God had sent them.

He not only rebukes them, but calls on them to rebuke them-

selves for having obeyed him: *So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I am not one who assists you nor are you one who assists me.* (14:22) He then adds insult to injury, lets them down unashamedly, and declares that he wants nothing further to do with them. Yet it was he who had previously given them all sorts of rosy promises. He went on to tell them that no one could ever defeat them. Now he will not even try to give them any support should they appeal to him for it, nor will they help him when he cries out: *Truly, I was ungrateful for your ascribing me as partner with God before.* (14:22) There is no contact or relationship between us now. He then absolves himself of their associating him as a partner with God. *Truly, I was ungrateful for your ascribing me as partner with God before.* (14:22) He then finishes this Satanic speech with a devastating blow directed at those who followed him in every way: *Truly, the ones who are unjust, for them is a painful punishment.* (14:22)

This is what they receive from Satan, after they have followed him blindly into error. This is what they get from him for having abandoned God's Messengers who called on them to follow God's guidance.

Before the curtains are drawn, we see on the other side the believers who have won the battle against Satan, and who are now enjoying their success: *And will be caused to enter those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality into Gardens beneath which rivers run. They, ones who will dwell in them forever with the permission of their Lord. And their greeting in it will be: Peace!* (14:23) Thus the scene ends. This is the outcome of the whole story between the message and its advocates on the one side and powerful tyrants who deny God and His Messengers on the other.

The section provides several elements that contribute to the concept of stability associated with the good, firm tree. It is painted here as having firm roots, well entrenched in the earth, its branches stretching wide on the horizon, giving the clear impression of solidity, strength and firmness. As this great tree is compared to a good word, we are told that God will strengthen the believers through the true, unshakeable word in both this life and the life to come. *God makes firm those who believed with the saying, one that is firm in this present life and in the world to come. And God will cause to go astray the ones who are unjust.* (14:27) And just like the bad tree that is uprooted from the face of the earth, lacking stable existence, the wrongdoers God lets go astray. *And God accomplishes what He wills.*(14:27) Thus the modes of expression fit harmoniously with the connotations stressed in the chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

Accuracy (to be free from error)

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when students concern themselves with accuracy and truth. They should ask themselves:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand,?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

QUESTIONS

Are the Quranic words clear? Do we have to analyze any concepts?
Do we know when the key Quranic words and phrases apply and don't apply?
Do we clearly understand how they apply to this sign?
Does this question ask something about facts?
About the meanings of words?
Are we evaluating anything?
What? Why? What criteria should we use in the evaluation?
What facts are relevant?
How can we get the evidence we need?
How would the facts be gathered?
What would researchers have to do to conduct such a study?
What problems would they face?
How could those obstacles be surmounted?

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following:s

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?

LESSON 72(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM) SIGNS 14:28-14:34

Madinah (14:28)
Madinah (14:29)
Makkah: *And they made rivals*
with God, causing others
to go astray from His way.
Say: Take joy, but, truly, your homecoming is the fire! (14:30)
Say to My servants who believed
that they should perform the formal prayer
and spend from what We provided them secretly
and in public before a Day approaches in which
there is neither trading nor befriending. (14:31)
God is He Who created the heavens and the earth
and caused water to descend from heaven
and brought out thereby fruits as provision for you.
And He caused boats to be subservient to you
that they run through the sea by His command.
And He caused rivers to be subservient to you. (14:32)
And He caused the sun to be subservient to you and the moon,
both, ones that are constant in their work.
And He caused the nighttime
to be subservient to you and the daytime. (14:33)
And He gave you all that you asked of Him.
And if you were to number the divine blessing of God,
you would not count them,
truly, the human being is wrongdoing and an ingrate. (14:34)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter invites the Prophet, and every believer, to marvel at the curious behavior of such people, particularly since they have seen what happened to earlier communities. All this has been por-

trayed for their benefit in this chapter in a most vivid way, accounting for what took place between the ungrateful and the Messengers sent to them. It was all shown to them as if it were taking place before their very eyes. In fact, the Quran only portrays what is going to take place in the hereafter as if it is happening now, or just happened before our very eyes.

These people have exchanged God's blessing of a Messenger sent to them with disbelief. The Messenger called on them to believe in God alone and to associate no partners with Him, but they abandoned all this: *And they made rivals with God, causing others to go astray from His way. Say: Take joy, but, truly, your homecoming is the fire!* (14:30) They place their false deities in a position equal to that of God, and offer worship to them as they would offer it to Him. They submit to these false deities as they would submit to Him, and they attribute to them some of the attributes that belong only to God. They thus lead people astray from the only straight path leading to God, the only deity in the universe.

The Prophet is instructed to say to such people that they may enjoy themselves in this life as they please, but that this enjoyment will last only for the limit God has determined. The eventual outcome is well known: *And they made rivals with God, causing others to go astray from His way. Say: Take joy, but, truly, your homecoming is the fire!* (14:30)

The Prophet is further instructed to leave these people alone, not to trouble himself with them any more. Instead he should address God's servants who have accepted the faith. These are the people who will take heed when they are warned against evil. They accept God's blessings and appreciate them, and will never exchange them for disbelief. The Prophet is to address these people and teach them how to be grateful for God's blessings. They should express their gratitude through worship, obedience to God and kindness to His servants: *Say to My servants who believed that they should perform the formal prayer and spend from what We provided them secretly and in public before a Day approaches in which there is neither trading nor befriending.* (14:31)

The believers are told to spend on others now so that their balance which is preserved for them increases through gains they make by charitable spending. This they have to do before a day comes when there is no longer any possibility for wealth to grow, or friendship to bring any benefit. What is of benefit to people is only the good works they have already done, for their reward is stored: *Say to My servants who believed that they should perform the formal prayer and spend from what We provided them secretly and in public*

before a Day approaches in which there is neither trading nor befriending. (14:31)

At this point, the chapter opens the book of the universe where every page speaks of God's countless blessings. These extend beyond the furthest point our senses can reach, and go into the skies, the earth, the sun, the moon, the day and night, the water pouring down from the skies and the fruits of all plants on earth, the oceans and seas where ships and boats sail, and the rivers flowing with the different means of producing what sustains life. All these universal images are available for all to see, but people do not look, reflect or express gratitude. Man is truly unjust, ingrate, exchanging God's blessings for unbelief, and setting up deities which he claims to be equal to God, when it is God who creates, sustains and controls the universe and all creatures therein: *God is He Who created the heavens and the earth and caused water to descend from heaven and brought out thereby fruits as provision for you. And He caused boats to be subservient to you that they run through the sea by His command. And He caused rivers to be subservient to you. And He caused the sun to be subservient to you and the moon, both, ones that are constant in their work. And He caused the nighttime to be subservient to you and the daytime. And He gave you all that you asked of Him. And if you were to number the divine blessing of God, you would not count them, truly, the human being is wrongdoing and an ingrate.* (14:32-14:34)

The great scene of God's blessings that is presented here is painted with fascinating skill, drawing its lines in the same directions the different blessings take in relation to man. This is noticeable in the line of the heavens and the earth, followed by that of water pouring down from the skies and plants and fruits shooting up from the earth. We then have a line depicting the oceans with ships sailing on their surface and rivers flowing with much bounty. A new line takes us back to the skies to show us the sun and the moon, coupled with the line of the night and day, which is closely connected to the sun and moon but remains firm on earth. The final line is comprehensive, throwing its color and shade over the whole panoramic scene: *And if you were to number the divine blessing of God, you would not count them, truly, the human being is wrongdoing and an ingrate.* (14:34) Here we see a harmony that incorporates every touch, line, color and shade in a universal scene of God's blessings.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in understanding purpose, aim, goal, objective.

Is the purpose of these signs clear?
What would someone who disagreed with this do?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.
I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?
I feel I was an active learner?
I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)

SIGNS 14:35-14:41

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:35)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:26)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:37)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:38)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:39)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:40)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:41)

LESSON 72(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OR WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38: 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM) SIGNS 14:42-14:52

Makkah: *And assume not that God*
is One Who is Heedless of what
the ones who are unjust do.
He only postpones their reckoning to a Day
when their sight will be fixed in horror, (14:42)
ones who run forward with eyes fixed in horror,
ones who lift up their heads.
Their glance goes not back to them.
And their minds are void. (14:43)
And warn humanity of a Day
the punishment will approach them.
So those who did wrong will say:
Our Lord! Postpone for us a near term

so that we answer Thy call and follow the Messengers.
Yet swore you not an oath before that
there would be no ceasing for you? (14:44)
And you inhabited the dwellings
of those who did wrong to themselves.
And it became clear to you how
We accomplished against them
and We propounded for you parables. (14:45)
And, surely, they planned their plan and their plan was with God,
even if their plan had been to displace mountains. (14:46)
So assume not that God will be one
who breaks His promise to His Messengers.
Truly, God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital. (14:47)
On a Day when the earth will be substituted
for other than this earth and the heavens,
they will depart to God, The One, The Omniscient God, (14:48)
and you will consider the ones who sin that Day,
ones who are chained in bonds, (14:49)
their tunics are made of pitch
and the fire will overcome their faces (14:50)
so that God would give recompense
to every soul for what it earned.
Truly, God is Swift in reckoning. (14:51)
This is the delivering of the message to humanity
so that they be warned by it
and that they know that He is One God
so that those imbued with intuition recollect. (14:52)

COMMENTARY°

Here the chapter completes the picture, showing what God has prepared for those ungrateful who deny God's blessings, and tells when they will face their inevitable destiny. This comes in quick images of the Day of Judgement which fill our hearts with fear: (14:42-14:43)

It is to this day that God delays the wrongdoers' punishment. Now they stand in their position, overwhelmed by fear. In this scene they are like a small bird caught in the claws of a predator: *And assume not that God is One Who is Heedless of what the ones who are unjust do. He only postpones their reckoning to a Day when their sight will be fixed in horror, ones who run forward with eyes fixed in horror, ones who lift up their heads. Their glance goes not back to them. And their minds are void* .(14:42-43)

Warn them against the day when the suffering drawn earlier is bound to befall them. At this point, the wrongdoers turn to their Lord with an urgent appeal, saying: *Our Lord! Postpone for us a near term so that we answer Your call and follow the Messengers.* (14:44)

At this point the flow of the discourse is changed from the narrative form to that of an address, as though they are now at that point, staring fixedly in horror, making their passionate appeal. This whole world is rolled over and we seem to be already in the hereafter, and they are being reproached from on high, reminded of the wrongs they used to do in their first life: *Yet swore you not an oath before that there would be no ceasing for you?* (14:44) How do you see yourselves now? Have you suffered any decline? You asserted this when you had in front of your eyes the ruins of those who went before you, giving proof of what happened to them and their inevitable destiny .

It is amazing that you should see the dwellings of former wrongdoers, testifying to what happened to them, and you dwelling in their place, and yet you swear that you would not suffer a decline. With this hard reproach the scene is completed. *And you inhabited the dwellings of those who did wrong to themselves. And it became clear to you how We accomplished against them and We propounded for you parables.* (14:45) We understand what happens to them, and what takes place after their appeal and their disappointment.

The chapter then turns to their present situation, and their wicked scheming against God's Messenger, and their evil devices in every aspect of life. It gives the clear impression that they will face their inevitable destiny, no matter what powerful and elaborate schemes they devise: *And, surely, they planned their plan and their plan was with God, even if their plan had been to displace mountains.* (14:46)

God is certainly aware of their scheming, although it may be so strong and powerful that it causes mountains, the strongest and most solid and firm creation, to move. In fact, the last thing any human being would expect to move is a mountain. However, their scheming is in no way hidden from God, and never immune from God's power. It is in front of Him, and He can foil it and do with it what He likes.

The Prophet is told again: *So assume not that God will be one who breaks His promise to His Messengers.*(14:47) What the ungrateful devise is of no consequence. It cannot obstruct the fulfilment of God's promise to His Messengers to grant them victory and to inflict a mighty punishment on the ungrateful: *Truly, God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital.* (14:47) He does not let injustice escape punishment. Those who resort to scheming and devising foul plans will not be spared. The word "avenge" is especially suitable here as it gives the meaning that counters both injustice and wicked scheming.

A perpetrator of such injustice and wickedness deserves to suffer God's vengeance, which is, from God's point of view, the exercise of divine justice.

This is certainly inevitable: *On a Day when the earth will be substituted for other than this earth and the heavens, they will depart to God, The One, The Omniscient God.* (14:48) We do not know how this happens, nor are we aware of the nature of the new earth or the new heavens, or their respective positions. The statement only gives us an impression of God's might and His ability to change the earth and heavens. By contrast, the schemes the ungrateful devise are all too weak.

Suddenly, we see this as though it has happened:. They realize that they are exposed, without cover or screen to protect them. They are neither in their homes nor in their graves. They stand in the open, in front of the Almighty. The emphasis here is on God's power which cannot be resisted, not even by the scheming of the mighty tyrants which can almost make mountains move.

Then we are shown a scene of the humiliating suffering which stands in contrast to their scheming and tyranny: *And **you** will consider the ones who sin that Day, ones who are chained in bonds, their tunics are made of pitch and the fire will overcome their faces* (14:49-14:50) The evil-doers are thus chained, each two together, and they are made to pass in ranks. Their humiliation is again indicative of God's might. In addition to their being chained together, they wear dirty, black pitch garments that can easily catch fire. The connotations here are humiliation and combustion as they draw near to the fire. *So that God would give recompense to every soul for what it earned. Truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* (14:51) All they have earned is their scheming and injustice. Its reward is that they stand powerless, humiliated. The swiftness of God's reckoning contrasts with the scheming they thought would protect them, and ensure them victory. Hence, they are dealt with swiftly to add to their humiliation.

The chapter then ends with something similar to its opening, but it comes in the form of an open and loud declaration, intended to inform all humanity: *This is the delivering of the message to humanity so that they be warned by it and that they know that He is One God so that those imbued with intuition recollect.* (14:52) The essential purpose of this message and the warning it contains is that people should know that "He is the One and Only God." This is the basic concept of this religion on which its code of living is built.

What is required here is not that people should merely acquire such information. The purpose is that they should conduct their lives on the basis of this knowledge. It is that people should submit to God

alone, since *they know that He is One God.* (14:52) It is who deserves to be the Lord, i.e. the Sovereign, the Ruler and the Legislator.

As stated earlier, polytheism does not only take the form of believing in multiple deities and claiming that they are God's partners. It is instead the acknowledgement of other lords alongside Him. Idol worship is represented in adopting banners and slogans which are given the same sort of authority as belonged to idols of old. People everywhere then must examine their lives to determine whom they actually submit to. If they submit totally to God, obeying His orders and laws to the exclusion of any other, then they follow the divine faith. If not, then they have a religion based on idol worship. This is a terrible situation indeed. *This is the delivering of the message to humanity so that they be warned by it and that they know that He is One God so that those imbued with intuition recollect.* (14:52).

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

EXAMINE IN DEPTH

The sacred text should be examined in depth.

Why does the sacred text tell you about the importance of knowledge?
Why does the Quranic message think this (concept, skill, procedure, step) is worth knowing?
Why does the sacred text tell you to do this?
What would happen if you didn't?

8 STAGES OF WRITING

1. Diagram: For a question which specifies a diagram you should present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.

2. Discuss: The term discuss, which appears often in essay questions, directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations pro and con regarding the problems or items involved. This type of question calls for a complete and entailed answer.

3. Enumerate: The word enumerate specifies a list or outline form of reply. In such questions you should recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required.

4. Evaluate: In an evaluation question you are expected to present a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations.

5. Explain: In explanatory answers it is imperative that you clarify and interpret the material you present. In such an answer it is best to state the how or why, reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. The aim is to make plain the conditions which give rise to whatever you are examining.

6. Illustrate: A question which asks you to illustrate usually requires you to explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example.

7. Interpret: An interpretation question is similar to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate, exemplify, solve, or comment upon the subject and usually to give your judgment or reaction to the problem.

8. Justify: When you are instructed to justify your answer, you must prove or show grounds for decisions. In such an answer, evidence should be presented in convincing form.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 73(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[1]

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA)

SIGNS 21:1-21:10

Makkah: *The reckoning for humanity was near*
while they are ones who turn aside in heedlessness. (21:1)
Approaches them not a remembrance from their Lord,
that which is renewed, but they listened to it while they play (21:2)
being ones whose hearts are ones that are diverted,
and they kept secret, conspiring secretly those who did wrong?
Is this other than a mortal like you?
Then, will you approach sorcery while you perceive? (21:3)
He said: My Lord knows The Word of the heavens and the earth.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (21:4)
Nay! They said: Jumbled nightmares! Nay!
He but devised it! Nay!
He is but a poet!
Let him bring us a sign
as the ancient ones were sent! (21:5)
No town believed before them

of whom We caused to perish.
Will they, then, believe? (21:6)
And We sent not before you
but men to whom We reveal.
So ask the People of the Remembrance
if you had not been knowing. (21:7)
And We made them not lifeless bodies
that eat not food nor had they been
ones who will dwell forever. (21:8)
Again, We were sincere in the promise.
So We rescued them and whom We will.
We caused the ones who are excessive to perish. (21:9)
Surely, We caused a Book to descend to you
in which is your Remembrance.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (21:10)

COMMENTARY°

The flow of the sections also includes some scenes of the Day of Judgment in which we find the same meanings and concepts reflected again as part of the reality of that great day.

We see, then, how varying cadences employed in the chapter serve the same purpose of alerting the human mind so that it recognizes the truth of the faith preached by the last of God's messengers. For people cannot receive the message while indulging in play, turning away and paying little heed to it, as they are described in the opening signs: (21:1-21:3)

The section is distinguished by a very powerful opening that shakes the careless who are preoccupied with the petty concerns of this world while the reckoning draws ever closer to them. Signs and indicators are given to them while they continue to turn their backs on divine guidance. The situation is grave, yet they remain totally unaware of its seriousness. Whenever they receive a new Quranic warning, they respond with ridicule, persisting in their playful negligence. Their hearts can only attend to their own pleasure. It should be pointed out here that in Quranic usage, the term, 'heart', is synonymous with mind as it refers to the faculty of contemplation, reflection and thought. *The reckoning for humanity was near while they are ones who turn aside in heedlessness. Approaches them not a remembrance from their Lord, that which is renewed, but they listened to it while they play being ones whose hearts are ones that are diverted, and they kept secret, conspiring secretly those who did wrong? Is this other than a mortal like you? Then, will you approach*

sorcery while you perceive? (21:1-21:3)

It is the chapter that starts with: *The reckoning for humanity was near while they are ones who turn aside in heedlessness.* (21:1) This is the marked difference between a living heart which interacts with what it receives and a dead one which covers its lifelessness in a shroud of jest and play. The latter type does not respond to reminders because it is devoid of the elements of life. *Being ones whose hearts are ones that are diverted, and they kept secret, conspiring secretly those who did wrong? Is this other than a mortal like you? Then, will you approach sorcery while you perceive?*(21:3)

Dead as their hearts were, they could not but be shaken by the Quran. Hence they try to resist its influence with false excuses. They whisper to one another that Muhammad is a man, and wonder how they could believe a message preached by a human being like themselves. They allege that what he says is plain magic, and ask how they could surrender themselves to sorcery when they have eyes with which to look.

The Prophet is instructed to leave the whole matter between him and the ungrateful to God, making it clear that He knows what they secretly say among themselves. He also informs him of their scheming by which they tried to divert the effect of the Quran on themselves and on other people.

Whatever people may say in private is known to God, because He knows everything that takes place in heaven and earth. *He said: My Lord knows The Word of the heavens and the earth. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (21:4) When they conspire and scheme, He is fully aware of their scheming. Nothing escapes His knowledge. They were at a loss as to how they should describe the Quran in order to neutralize its appeal. Hence they variously alleged that it was sorcery, a series of confused dreams related by Muhammad, poetry, or mere fabrication. The Quran reported their claims as they uttered them. *Nay! They said: Jumbled nightmares! Nay! He but devised it!* (21:5) They could not agree on any one view or description to explain the magnetism the Quran had on people. None of their allegations or justifications had any value. Hence, they roamed from one claim to another, betraying their puzzlement. Feeling themselves at a terrible loss, they decided to get around the whole question by demanding a miracle similar to those given to some early prophets: *Nay! He is but a poet! Let him bring us a sign as the ancient ones were sent!* (21:5)

Miraculous signs and events were given in the past, but the communities to which they were shown did not believe as a result. Hence they were destroyed in accordance with God's law which seals the

fate of any community which continues to reject the truth after having been given a miraculous sign of it. *No town believed before them of whom We caused to perish. Will they, then, believe?* (21:6) When stubborn rejection of the truth reaches a point that it continues even after a tangible, physical, miraculous sign is given, then all excuses are invalid. People who continue with such rejection seal their own fate and they are destroyed as a result.

In His infinite wisdom, God chose His Messengers from among human beings. *No town believed before them of whom We caused to perish. Will they, then, believe? And We sent not before you but men to whom We reveal. So ask the People of the Remembrance if you had not been knowing.* (21:6-7) They received His revelations and called on people to believe in Him on the basis of such revelations. Those noble Messengers of God were men with human bodies. God did not make them of a special type, so as not to eat food. Food is a basic necessity for human survival, and God's messengers, who were human, were not immortal. Such is the law God has set, and if those Arabs were unaware of it, then they should ask the people who received earlier revelations, because they knew earlier Prophets.

Such has been God's law in selecting His messengers, and His law in saving them with their followers when He destroyed the wrongdoers who rejected the truth embodied in their messages: *Again, We were sincere in the promise. So We rescued them and whom We will. We caused the ones who are excessive to perish.* (21:9)

God reminds the pagan Arabs who oppressed the Prophet Muhammad, denying his message and persecuting him and his followers, that they are subject to His law for their transgression. He also makes it clear to them that it is an aspect of the grace He bestows on them that He has not sent them any physical miracle, because that would have spelt their doom if they continued to reject the truth as older communities did. Instead, He sent them a book which imparts honor to them, since it is in their own language. This book sets their life on the right footing and makes of them a community entitled to lead humanity and be respected by them. Moreover, this book invites thinking people to reflect on it and elevate themselves by implementing it: *Surely, We caused a Book to descend to you in which is your Remembrance. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (21:10)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Feel free to raise questions about passages you read.

What does one of the previous signs say?
What does it imply?
Assume? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way? Why or why not?
What might someone who disagreed with it say?
Does the text leave out relevant information?
Does it favor one perspective? Which?
Why do you suppose it was written this way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs I read.
I can discuss my interpretations of what I read.

Lesson 73(2). Critical Thinking Strategy Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

Quranic Chapter 21: The Prophets (al-Anbiya) Signs 21:11-21:29

Makkah: *How many a town We damaged*
that had been one that is unjust
and caused to grow after them another folk? (21:11)
Then, when they were conscious of Our might,
that is when they make haste from it! (21:12)
Make not haste, but return to what you were given
of ease in it and to your dwellings,
so that perhaps you will be asked. (21:13)
They said: O woe to us!
Truly, we had been ones who are unjust! (21:14)
Then, truly, they ceased not calling that out until
We made them as stubble, ones silent and stilled. (21:15)
And We created not the heavens and the earth
and what is between them as ones in play. (21:16)
If We wanted We would have taken some diversion.
We would take it to Ourselves from
that which proceeds from Our Presence
if We had been ones who do so. (21:17)
Nay! We hurl The Truth against falsehood so it prevails over it.
That is when falsehood is that which vanishes away.
And woe to you for what you allege. (21:18)

And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth.
And whoever is near Him, they grow not arrogant
to worship Him, nor they be weary. (21:19)
They glorify Him nighttime and daytime.
They never decrease. (21:20)
Or took they gods to themselves from the earth,
they, ones who revive the dead? (21:21)
If there had been gods in it—other than God— certainly,
both would have gone to ruin.
Then, glory be to God! Lord of the Throne!
High above what they allege. (21:22)
He will not be asked as to what He accomplishes,
but they will be asked. (21:23)
Or took they gods to themselves other than He?
Say: Prepare your proof.
This is a Remembrance for him who is with me
and a Remembrance of him before me.
Nay! Most of them know not The Truth,
so they are ones who turn aside. (21:24)
*And We sent not before **you** any Messenger,*
but We reveal to him that there is no god but I,
so worship Me. (21:25)
And they said: The Merciful took to Himself a son.
Glory be to Him! Nay! Honored servants! (21:26)
They precede Him not in saying
and they act by His command. (21:27)
He knows what is in advance of them
and what is behind them and they intercede
not but for him with whom He was content.
And they are dreading Him,
ones who are apprehensive. (21:28)
And whoever says of them:
Truly, I am a god other than He, then,
We will give recompense to him with hell.
Thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are unjust. (21:29)

COMMENTARY°

It was an act of divine grace that God revealed the Quran to them, rather than giving them the miracle they demanded. Had such a miracle been sent to them and had they continued to deny the truth, a calamity like those that destroyed earlier ungrateful would have

brought about their doom. At this point the chapter portrays a scene of total destruction and annihilation: (21:11-21:15)

The Arabic term rendered here as 'stubble', carries strong connotations of a strike that splits something into pieces. Moreover, its sound adds further connotations of complete destruction. Those communities persisted in their evil and met a sudden fate that left no trace of them. *How many a town We damaged that had been one that is unjust and caused to grow after them another folk?* (21:11) We note also that the Arabic text uses the word *qaryah* which means village or town with the verb denoting the breaking into fragments, but it uses *qawm*, or 'people', when it speaks of raising a new community, because it is such people who build a new civilization. In this way, the destruction is rendered more powerful, which is in line with the distinctive characteristics of the Quranic style.

Indeed, the words the Quran uses here add, by their very sound, strong connotations of an overwhelming strike that leaves everything lifeless. We look and see how those communities ran around frantically as God's power struck their land. They appear like trapped mice jumping here and there before they fall motionless: *Then, when they were conscious of Our might, that is when they make haste from it!* (21:12) They run so that they might leave a town which they felt was doomed. They run as though their very running will save them from God's power. It is not that they imagine that they are faster than God's strike; it is a thoughtless movement, like that of trapped mice.

They are then sarcastically told: *Make not haste, but return to what you were given of ease in it and to your dwellings, so that perhaps you will be asked.* (21:13) You do not need to run away from your homes. Go back to your luxuries and comforts. You may perchance be asked about all this luxury and how you have used it. But the time for questioning is already over, and the Quran delivers this final cataclysm as bitter sarcasm.

This brings their situation clearly before their eyes, for there is no means of escape. They cannot run away from or flee God's punishment. Hence, they change tactic and admit their faults: *They said: O woe to us! Truly, we had been ones who are unjust!* (21:14) But the time for all this is over. They can say what they like, but it is all to no avail. They are left to their devices until they are lifeless: *Then, truly, they ceased not calling that out until We made them as stubble, ones silent and stilled.* (21:15) But it is a field of humans, all of whom are motionless, lifeless; yet only a minute earlier, it was bustling, vibrant, full of life.

At this point the chapter establishes a link between the faith already mentioned, its essential laws under which the ungrateful are

punished and the fundamental truth and seriousness which form the pivot around which the whole universe turns.

Had God wanted to indulge in a pastime, He would have chosen something for Himself alone; it would have nothing to do with His mortal creatures. But this is merely a theoretical assumption: *If We wanted We would have taken some diversion.* (21:17) The mode of expression here indicates that both parts of the conditional are negated. God has not willed to indulge in a pastime, and none has taken place. Besides, it never will, because God has not willed it in the first place: *We would take it to Ourselves from that which proceeds from Our Presence if We had been ones who do so.* (21:17)

But the law that operates for all time is that there is no such thing as a pastime in respect of God. There are only seriousness and truth. Thus, intrinsic truth will triumph over incidental falsehood: *Nay! We hurl The Truth against falsehood so it prevails over it. That is when falsehood is that which vanishes away. And woe to you for what you allege.* (21:18)

The Arabic particle *bal*, rendered here as 'nay', signifies turning away from whatever is at hand. Here it indicates putting aside this point about having a pastime to turn to a more serious point about the real world and the laws operating in it which ensure that falsehood is vanquished and the truth triumphant. The Quranic verse paints this in a vivid picture, showing the truth as a missile hurled by God at falsehood, breaking its head and so utterly destroying it.

Those who believe in God entertain no doubt that His promise will come true, or that the truth enjoys prime position in the structure of the universe and its system. They are also certain that victory will eventually belong to the truth. Hence, if God tests them by allowing falsehood a temporary triumph, they realize that this is merely a test God puts them through so as to eradicate their weakness or give them what they lack. He wants them to be fit to receive the victorious truth, and to make them the tool by which He accomplishes His purpose. Thus, He lets them go through the test, to equip them properly for their role. If they hasten to remedy their weakness and redress their drawbacks, God will shorten their period of test and accomplish through them whatever He wishes. The ultimate result is a foregone conclusion: *That is when falsehood is that which vanishes away.* (21:18) God accomplishes what He wills.

Thus the Quran puts this fundamental fact before the ungrateful who are quick to hurl their false accusations at the Quran and the Prophet. They describe the Quran as sorcery, poetry or mere fabrication, when it is the truth that smashes their falsehood and causes it to wither away. This is followed by a warning against the eventual

outcome of their accusations: *And woe to you for what you allege.* (21:18)

The chapter goes on to show them a model of obedience to God and worshipping Him, contrasted with their rejection and turning away. The model shows creatures that are closer to God than them, yet they continue to worship Him, obeying His every order without fail: *And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And whoever is near Him, they grow not arrogant to worship Him, nor they be weary. They glorify Him nighttime and daytime. They never decrease.* (21:19-21:20)

'Those who are in the heavens and on earth' are known only to God who knows everything about them. Human knowledge is certain only of human existence, while believers are certain also of the existence of the angels and the jinn because both are mentioned in the Quran. But we know of them only what God, their Creator, has told us. There may be other intelligent creatures on other planets, with forms and natures that are suited to those planets. But the knowledge of all this rests only with God.

Thus, the chapter paints a picture of creatures glorifying God and extolling His praises at all times. At the same time, the ungrateful' claims about their multiple deities are strongly criticized. The chapter provides irrefutable evidence of God's Oneness by virtue of what we see in the constant system that permeates the universe, testifying that it is all run by the will of God, the One who manages and conducts all affairs. It also provides evidence from earlier scriptures given to other communities. (21:21-21:25)

As it receives a clear message of the system governing the whole universe, a straight, uncorrupted nature will instinctively testify to the unity of the system and the will that has initiated it. It will acknowledge the Oneness of the Creator who conducts all affairs in this consistent and harmonious universe, which suffers from no inherent defect in formation or from any impediment to its progress. *If there had been gods in it—other than God— certainly, both would have gone to ruin. Then, glory be to God! Lord of the Throne! High above what they allege.* (21:22)

They assign partners to Him when He is in control of all and in need of none. For, He is "Lord of the Throne". A throne is a symbol of kingdom, real authority and exaltation. What they claim is absolutely false, and the universe, its system and freedom from corruptive elements, testifies to this. *He will not be asked as to what He accomplishes, but they will be asked.* (21:23) Since when could the One who controls the whole universe be questioned, and who could question Him when He holds sway over all His servants? Indeed, His

will is free, unlimited, beyond restraint, even by the system His will has chosen to govern the universe. Questioning and accountability are subject to certain established criteria and defined limits. It is the free will that defines such limits and establishes such criteria, but such free will cannot be subject to these limits and criteria, while creatures are subject to them. Hence, they will undoubtedly be held to account.

Needless to say, we remain ignorant of the reasons, causes, effects and objectives that apply to the universe.

It is the One who knows, manages and controls all that operates His will, conducts all matters and controls all things. *He will not be asked as to what He accomplishes, but they will be asked.*(21: 23)

Having provided this irrefutable evidence based on the nature of the universe, the chapter asks them whether they can support their claims about multiple deities with any evidence derived from their scriptures: *Or took they gods to themselves other than He? Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* (21:24)

Here is the Quran which incorporates the message given to the Prophet's contemporaries, and there are the scriptures containing the messages delivered by earlier messengers. In none of these is there any mention of partners with God. All divine faiths are based on the true concept of God's Oneness. Where, then, did those who are ungrateful get this false concept of multiple deities when it cannot be supported by logical or religious argument? (21:24)

The chapter then states the nature of what was revealed to all Messengers sent to different communities before the Prophet Muhammad's time: *And We sent not before you any Messenger, but We reveal to him that there is no god but I, so worship Me.* (21:25) God's Oneness is indeed the basic essential element in divine faith, ever since God sent His first Messenger to humanity. Nothing has changed in that. God, the Creator who must be worshipped is One, without partners. The truth of God and Lordship over the universe is a single issue that cannot be separated. God has no partners, whether in the sphere of God or in that of worship. This fact ranks alongside the basic essential laws of the universe and is classified with them. Like them, its truth is unassailable.

The chapter then picks up the claims of the ungrateful alleging that God has a son. This is one of the absurdities of ignorance: (21:26-21:29)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

GUIDE TO LISTENING CRITICALLY

Listen carefully to what the Quranic signs are saying.
Take them seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence among them.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.
Seek examples and analogies to them.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of others.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.
Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism.

It is important to engage in an assignment that actually teaches critical listening. This will help you learn how to listen critically to what others are saying or asking you to do. You have to understand the assignment well in order to do a good job in following it. You can describe discussions on videotapes about the Quran in writing, then compare your version in small groups with others, trying to accurately reconstruct what you heard. Whenever possible, you should watch the piece a second time to verify what you heard or settle conflicting accounts of what you heard and what others heard. While watching a video, take notes. Afterward, compare and discuss your notes with your classmates. A leader of your group could every few minutes stop the video and have you outline the main point and raise critical questions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

LESSON 73(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[3]

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA)
SIGNS 21:30-21:41

Makkah: *Consider not those who were ungrateful*
that the heavens and the earth
had been interwoven and We unstitched them?
And We made every living thing of water.
Will they, then, not believe? (21:30)
And We made firm mountains on the earth
so that it should not vibrate with them.
And We made in it ravines as ways,
so that perhaps they will be truly guided. (21:31)
And We made heaven as a guarded roof.
Yet they are ones who turn aside from its signs. (21:32)
And it is He Who created the nighttime and the daytime,
the sun and the moon, each swimming in orbit. (21:33)
And We assigned not to any mortal before you immortality.
If you were to die will they be ones who dwell forever? (21:34)
Every soul is one that experiences death.
And We will try you with the worst and good as a test.
And to Us you will be returned. (21:35)
And when those who were ungrateful saw thee,
they take you to themselves not but in mockery:
Ha! Is this he who mentions your gods?
And they, for Remembrance of The Merciful,
they are ones who are ungrateful. (21:36)
The human being was created of haste.
I will cause you to see My signs, so seek not to hasten! (21:37)
And they say: When will this promise be

if you had been ones who are sincere? (21:38)
If those who were ungrateful but know at the time
when they will not limit the fire from their faces,
nor from their backs
and they will not be helped! (21:39)
Nay! It will approach them suddenly.
Then, it will dumfound them
so they will not be able to come back
nor will they be given respite. (21:40)
And, certainly, Messengers were ridiculed before thee.
Then, those who derided them were surrounded
by what they had been ridiculing. (21:41)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter has so far given us several types of evidence drawn from the universe, all testifying to God's Oneness, and stated a number of arguments denying any possibility of there being more than one God. It has also provided evidence that addresses people's hearts directly. Now the chapter takes the human heart by the hand to contemplate some of the great phenomena in the universe, as it is wisely managed by God. Yet the ungrateful remain heedless of the clear signs revealed all about them. For those who look however, the universe reveals aspects of itself that leave our minds in total amazement when we contemplate them with an open heart and alert senses. *Consider not those who were ungrateful that the heavens and the earth had been interwoven and We unstitched them?* (21:30) The next sentence of the verse states: We have made out of water every living thing. *And We made every living thing of water. Will they, then, not believe?* (21:30) This short sentence states a great and crucial fact. Indeed, scientists shower praise on Darwin for having identified that water was the first environment where life began.

For fourteen centuries, the Quran has drawn the attention of ungrateful to the great marvels God has placed in the universe, wondering how they could deny what they see everywhere: Will they not, then, believe? *And We made every living thing of water. Will they, then, not believe?* (21:30) How could they persist in their disbelief when everything around them in this universe inevitably leads to faith in God, the Creator, the Wise who conducts all affairs?

The chapter continues to point out awesome scenes of the universe: *And We made firm mountains on the earth so that it should not vibrate with them.* (21:31) The Quran, then, states that the mountains, firm as they are, maintain the balance of the earth so that it

does not sway or shake. This balance may be maintained in various forms, such as setting a balance between the external pressure on the face of the earth and the one inside it, i.e. internally. Or it may be that the height of a mountain in one place is counterbalanced by a deep valley in another. Whatever the case may be, this statement confirms that the mountains have a direct bearing on the balance and stability of the earth. It is the domain of scientific study to identify and prove how this stability and balance are achieved. But it is the Quranic text that invites us to contemplate such facts.

Let us now follow the magnificent aspects of God's creation in the wide universe: *And We made in it ravines as ways, so that perhaps they will be truly guided.*(21:31) The pathways made in the mountains in the shape of depressions between its high peaks assist the traveller in finding his way yet there is also another subtle implication here that refers to faith. It may be that travelers will find their way to accepting the faith just as they find their way through the mountains along such paths.

In Arabic, the sky refers to everything that is above us. We see above us something like a ceiling. The Quran states that the sky is a well-secured canopy. It is secure from any defect or contamination, since it symbolizes the height from which God's revelations are bestowed. *And We made heaven as a guarded roof. Yet they are ones who turn aside from its signs.* (21:32)

Finally a reference is made to time and place phenomena that are very close to us and our life on earth: *And it is He Who created the nighttime and the daytime, the sun and the moon, each swimming in orbit.* (21:33)

The night and day are two universal phenomena, while the sun and the moon are two great celestial bodies that are closely related to human life on earth. When we contemplate the succession of the day and night and the movement of the sun and the moon, we realize that they are so accurate as to admit no defect, and so consistent as to allow no failure. Such contemplation is sufficient to guide our hearts and minds to the fact that the system that applies to them is one, the will governing them is one and their great Maker is one.

This first passage of the chapter concludes with an outline that links the laws relevant to creation, formation and sustenance with those relevant to the nature and destiny of human life: *And We assigned not to any mortal before you immortality. If you were to die will they be ones who dwell forever? Every soul is one that experiences death. And We will try you with the worst and good as a test. And to Us you will be returned.* (21:34-21:35)

No human being has ever been granted immortality. Every crea-

ture is bound to die, and whatever has a beginning will certainly have an end. So if God's Messenger is also destined to die, why do they think they would be granted life everlasting? Since they cannot hope to live for ever, why do they not behave like ones who will inevitably taste death? Why do they not reflect and contemplate?

This: *Every soul is one that experiences death. And We will try you with the worst and good as a test. And to Us you will be returned* (21:35) is the law that governs life. It has no exceptions or exemptions. The living, then, must take this into account and prepare themselves for it. This short journey on earth is bound to come to an end, and its end is the death of every living thing. All shall return to God. But whatever happens to us during this trip through life, whether good or bad, is meant as a test:

The ungrateful deny the very existence of God, the Most Merciful, who has created the universe and set the rules that operate in it and sustain its existence. *And when those who were ungrateful saw **you**, they take **you** to themselves not but in mockery: Ha! Is this he who mentions your gods? And they, for Remembrance of The Merciful, they are ones who are ungrateful.* (21:36) They object to the fact that God's Messenger, Muhammad, speaks out against their deities, showing such inanimate idols to be useless. Yet they themselves rudely deny God, the Most Merciful. How singular!

They hurl abuse and mockery at God's Messenger, saying that it is unacceptable that he should criticize their idol worship. *And they, for Remembrance of The Merciful, they are ones who are ungrateful.* (21:36) Yet they, creatures of God as they are, find nothing wrong with the arrogance that leads them to deny God's existence and reject the Quran He has revealed to them. The irony of their attitude exposes to the full the far- reaching corruption that affects their nature and impairs their judgment.

What is more, they try to hasten the punishment against which the Prophet warns them. For, by nature, the human being is hasty: *The human being was created of haste. I will cause you to see My signs, so seek not to hasten! And they say: When will this promise be if you had been ones who are sincere?* (21:37-21:38)

Haste is present in the human being's very nature and constitution. He always stretches his eyes to what lies ahead, beyond the present moment, aiming to grasp it with his own hand. He wants to achieve, the moment it flashes in his mind, all that seems desirable. He wants to see all that is promised to him, even though it may be to his detriment. Such is man's nature, unless he establishes a firm relationship with God which gives him strength and reassurance. He will then trust to God's wisdom, leaving His will to run its course

without hastening events. For faith combines trust with patience and reassurance.

Those ungrateful hastened God's punishment, wondering when the promise of punishment in the hereafter, as well as in this life, would be fulfilled. The Quran paints here for them a scene of the suffering in the hereafter, while also warning them against a similar punishment to that which befell earlier communities which rejected the faith: *If those who were ungrateful but know at the time when they will not limit the fire from their faces, nor from their backs and they will not be helped! Nay! It will approach them suddenly. Then, it will dumfound them so they will not be able to come back nor will they be given respite. And, certainly, Messengers were ridiculed before thee. Then, those who derided them were surrounded by what they had been ridiculing.* (21:39-21:41)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DEVELOP QUESTIONS ABOUT QUESTIONS

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
How does the Quran teach us to think critically?
What is the question I am trying to answer?
Can I put the question in a better way?
Is the question I am asking clear? or too complex?
How do you evaluate the question?
What would need to be done to answer this question?
How can we find out?
What does this question assume?
Would x put the question differently?
How could someone settle this question?
Can we break this question down at all?
Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
Does this question ask us to evaluate something?
Do we all agree that this is the question?

To answer this question, what questions would we have to answer first?
I'm not sure I understand how you are interpreting the main question at issue.
Is this the same issue as x?
How would x put the issue?
Why is this question important?
How does the Quran describe the just person?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

LESSON 73(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA) SIGNS 21:42-21:50

Makkah: *Say: Who will guard you in the nighttime*
and the daytime from The Merciful?
Nay! They, from the Remembrance of their Lord,
are ones who turn aside. (21:42)
Or secure them their gods from Us?
They are not able to help themselves,
nor will they be rendered safe from Us. (21:43)
Nay! We gave enjoyment to these, their fathers
until their lifetime was long for them.
Consider they not that We approach the earth?
We reduce it of its outlying parts.
Or will they be the ones who are the victors? (21:44)
Say: I warn you only by the revelation.
But hear not the unwilling to hear,
the calling to them when they are warned. (21:45)
And if a breath afflicted them of punishment of your Lord,

they would, surely, say: O woe to us!
Truly, we had been ones who are unjust. (21:46)
And We will lay down the balances of equity
on the Day of Resurrection.
Then, no soul will be wronged at all.
And even if it had been the weight of a grain
of a mustard seed We will bring it.
And We sufficed as Ones Who Reckon. (21:47)
And certainly We gave Moses and Aaron the Criterion
between right and wrong and an illumination
and a Remembrance for the ones who are God-conscious, (21:48)
those who dread their Lord in the unseen
while they are ones who are apprehensive of the Hour. (21:49)
This is a blessed Remembrance We caused to descend.
Are you, then, ones who know not of it? (21:50)

COMMENTARY°

It is God who watches over every soul by night and day. He is the Most Merciful. Indeed, infinite mercy is His great attribute. Other than Him there is no one to watch over or protect anyone. Do the ungrateful know anyone else who can protect them? It is a rhetorical question, one which rebukes them for their turning away from God when it is He who watches over them at all times: *Say: Who will guard you in the nighttime and the daytime from The Merciful? Nay! They, from the Remembrance of their Lord, are ones who turn aside.* (21:42)

The same question is put to them again in a different form: (21:43) Such false deities do not have power of their own. They do not have access to God's power. As such, they are utterly helpless.

This sarcastic argument exposes the absurdity of the ungrateful' beliefs. Hence, the chapter stops arguing with them, but adds a moving touch which they feel in their hearts. It directs them to reflect on God's might as He folds the earth underneath triumphant armies. Thus the earth shrinks so that they are confined to a limited space, after they have wielded much power and authority. *Consider they not that We approach the earth? We reduce it of its outlying parts. Or will they be the ones who are the victors?* (21:44)

In its inimitable style, the Quran shows God's hand as it folds up the once vast space, making borders cave in, and reducing huge distances, in a splendid scene that combines fine movement and awesome feelings. It then asks rhetorically: *Or will they be the ones who are the victors?* (21:44) Is it that what happens to others does not

then apply to them?

At the height of this awesome scene, which leaves hearts trembling, the Prophet is instructed to deliver the final warning: *Say: I warn you only by the revelation. But hear not the unwilling to hear, the calling to them when they are warned.* (21:45) Let them, then, beware lest they should be the deaf who do not hear! It is the deaf who will suffer the fate of having the earth shrunk beneath them, and the hand of the Almighty smashing their power, doing away with them and their luxuries.

The chapter continues its discourse making a profound effect on people's hearts. It describes those very ungrateful as they begin to suffer God's punishment: *And if a breath afflicted them of punishment of your Lord, they would, surely, say: O woe to us! Truly, we had been ones who are unjust.* (21:46) In Arabic, the word, *nafhah*, used in this verse for 'breath' is normally associated with mercy and grace, but here it is used in the context of suffering so as to imply that even the slightest breath of God's punishment is sufficient to make them ready to confess.

The present passage concludes with a final scene from the Day of Reckoning:*And We will lay down the balances of equity on the Day of Resurrection. Then, no soul will be wronged at all. And even if it had been the weight of a grain of a mustard seed We will bring it. And We sufficed as Ones Who Reckon.* (21:47) The mustard seed here represents the smallest and lightest thing our eyes can see. Yet not even a mustard seed is overlooked or ignored. The scales that are used are so accurate that a single mustard seed makes a difference.

Let people, then, reflect on what they put forward for that day. Let hearts be attentive to the warnings, and let those who turn their backs or indulge in ridicule be warned. They may be able to evade punishment in this life, but on Judgment Day the reckoning takes every little thing into account. The scales then are so accurate that even a tiny seed can make all the difference.

Thus the accurate scales of the hereafter, the unfailing laws of the universe, the rules applicable to advocates of the faith and the laws of human nature converge in perfect harmony, operated by the hand of the Almighty. This testifies to the truth of God's Oneness, the theme that pervades this whole chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How do you understand these signs?
Would others see it this way?
Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?
What does X think is the cause?
Why do they differ?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialogical reasoning after studying these verses.

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA)

SIGNS 21:51-21:75

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:51)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:52)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:54)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:55)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:56)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:57)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:58)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:59)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:60)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:61)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:62)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:63)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:64)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:65)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:66)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:67)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:68)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:72)

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:75)

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA) SIGNS 21:76-21:93

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (21:76)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (21:77)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (21:78)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (21:79)
Makkah: Book 28: David (21:80)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon (21:81)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon (21:82)
Makkah: Book 28: Job (21:83)
Makkah: Book 28: Job (21:84)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael; Book 25: Enoch; Book 28: Dhu 'l-Kifl (21:85)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael; Book 25: Enoch; Book 28: Dhu 'l-Kifl (21:86)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (21:87)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (21:88)
Makkah: Book 28: Zechariah (21:89)
Makkah: Book 28: Zechariah, his Wife and Yahya (John) (21:90)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary (21:91)
Makkah: *Truly, this, your community, is one community and I am your Lord so worship Me.* (21:92) *But they cut asunder their affair between them. Yet all of them are ones who return to Us.* (21:93)

COMMENTARY°

Truly, this, your community, is one community and I am your Lord so worship Me. (21:92) This is the community of Prophets: a single community, sharing the same faith, following the same course, and turning to God alone. Thus we have a single community on earth, and a single Lord in heaven. He has no partners. No one can be worshipped but Him. This whole community follows the same line, acknowledging a single will in heaven and on earth. Thus, this whole round dovetails with the central theme of the chapter, emphasizing the right faith based on the concept of God's Oneness, which is confirmed by all universal laws. *But they cut asunder their affair between them. Yet all of them are ones who return to Us.* (21:93)

LESSON 73(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA) SIGNS 21:94-21:112

Makkah: *So whoever does*
as the ones in accord with morality
and he is one who believes,
then, his endeavoring will not be rejected.
And, truly, We will be One Who Inscribes it for him. (21:94)
And there is a ban on the town that We caused to perish.
They will not return (21:95)
until Gog and Magog are let loose
and they slide down from every slope. (21:96)
And the true promise will be near.
That is when the sight will be that
which fixed in horror of those who were ungrateful!
O woe to us. Surely, we had been in heedlessness of this.
Nay! We had been ones who were unjust. (21:97)
Truly, you and what you worship
other than God are fuel material for hell.
You are the ones who go down to it. (21:98)
If these had been gods, they would never have gone down to it.
All are ones who will dwell in it forever. (21:99)
There will be sobbing in it for them
and they, their gods, will not hear in it. (21:100)

Truly, those to whom there has preceded the fairer from Us,
those are ones who are far removed from it. (21:101)
They will not hear even the low sound of it.
And they, in that for which their souls lusted,
will be ones who will dwell in it forever. (21:102)
The greater terror will not dishearten them
and the angels will admit them:
This is your day that you had been promised! (21:103)
On a Day when We roll up the heavens
like the rolling up of the written scroll of manuscripts,
as We began the first creation,
We will cause it to return. It is a promise from Us.
Truly, We had been ones who do. (21:104)
And, certainly, We wrote down in the Psalms
after the Remembrance that the earth
will be inherited by My servants—
the ones who are in accord with morality. (21:105)
Truly, in this is the delivering of this message for the folk,
ones who worship. (21:106)
And We sent you not but as a mercy for the worlds. (21:107)
Say: It is only revealed to me that your god is One God.
Will you, then, be ones who submit to God? (21:108)
But if they turned away, then, say:
I proclaimed to you all equally.
And I am not informed whether
what you are promised is near or far. (21:109)
Truly, He knows the openly published saying
and He knows what you keep back. (21:110)
And I am not informed so that perhaps
it will be a test for you and an enjoyment for awhile. (21:111)
He said: My Lord! Give You judgment between us
with The Truth. And our Lord is The Merciful,
He Whose help is being sought
against what you allege. (21:112)

COMMENTARY°

Despite the fact that the followers of all Messengers constitute a single community, and despite the fact that all divine messages share the same basis, those followers divided themselves into factions. Each group took a portion and went away, allowing controversy to stir between them, and thus leading to division and hostility. Indeed this happened among the followers of a single messenger,

with some eager to kill others in the name of the faith, which they all shared.

They have divided themselves into factions in this life, but they will all return to God in the life to come:*But they cut asunder their affair between them. Yet all of them are ones who return to Us.* (21:93) The end is with Him, when they will face the reckoning and He requites them for what they do in this present life.

This is the law of action and reward. No one shall suffer any loss of any good deed based on faith. All such deeds are recorded with God who never loses sight of anything. *So whoever does as the ones in accord with morality and he is one who believes, then, his endeavoring will not be rejected. And, truly, We will be One Who Inscribes it for him.* (21:94)

Reward for good action is given in the life to come, even though parts of it may be advanced in this present life. Those cities which suffered total destruction will inevitably return to receive their ultimate requital. It is not possible that they will not be returned: *And there is a ban on the town that We caused to perish. They will not return.* (21:95)

We are then presented with a scene of the Day of Resurrection, starting with a sign that signals its approach. This sign is the opening of the gates for Gog and Magog: *Until Gog and Magog are let loose and they slide down from every slope. And the true promise will be near. That is when the sight will be that which fixed in horror of those who were ungrateful! O woe to us. Surely, we had been in heedlessness of this. Nay! We had been ones who were unjust.* (21:96-21:97)

What is intended here is to describe what happens on that day when it actually arrives, and to introduce it with a miniature scene of what is familiar to human beings. This is the scene of Gog and Magog being let loose, and their swarming down from every corner in a fast moving image. The Quran often uses notions that are familiar to *usn* and elevates these to draw scenes of the hereafter.

The scene portrayed here stresses the element of surprise that takes the onlookers: *That is when the sight will be that which fixed in horror of those who were ungrateful! O woe to us. Surely, we had been in heedlessness of this. Nay! We had been ones who were unjust.* (21:97) They shall not wink because of the great horror that has taken them by surprise. The text uses inversion here to bring forward the actual stirring in order to provide added emphasis.

The chapter does not go on to describe their condition further. Instead, it shows them speaking to give more life to the scene: *O woe to us. Surely, we had been in heedlessness of this. Nay! We had been ones who were unjust.* (21:97) This is the cry of one in utter distress.

He is at a total loss, his eyes are stirring and he invokes a curse upon himself, acknowledging his past errors, and repents when repentance is no longer of any use.

When this confession is made in such shock, the final verdict is announced. It cannot be changed: *Truly, you and what you worship other than God are fuel material for hell. You are the ones who go down to it.* (21:98)

The style employed here shows them as if they are now facing the ultimate reckoning, being taken to hell together with their worshipped idols. They are practically thrown in it mercilessly, as though they are small pebbles and hell is being stoned with them. At this moment, they are shown the falsity of their claims that these were deities. The proof is seen in that very scene: *If these had been gods, they would never have gone down to it. All are ones who will dwell in it forever.*(21:99) This is logical proof taken from a scene showing them, while they are still in this life, something that takes place in the hereafter. The chapter then goes on to show them actually in hell, describing their abode and conditions in it. They are in a state that deprives them of their receptive faculties: *All are ones who will dwell in it forever. There will be sobbing in it for them and they, their gods, will not hear in it.* (21:99-21:100)

Believers, on the other hand, are spared all this hardship, because they have been promised a goodly life in the hereafter: *Truly, those to whom there has preceded the fairer from Us, those are ones who are far removed from it. They will not hear even the low sound of it. And they, in that for which their souls lusted, will be ones who will dwell in it forever.* (21:101-21:102)

The phrase, 'its hissing sound', or its one word equivalent in Arabic used here, *hasisaha*, belongs to a number of Quranic terms with sounds that impart meaning. It describes the sound of the fire as it rages and burns. It is an extremely frightening sound. Hence, those given the promise of a good destiny are spared that sound, let alone suffering it. They are saved from the terror that leaves the ungrateful in a state of utter loss. Instead they enjoy whatever they desire, in complete security and bliss. They are warmly received by the angels, who give them comforting company, when the general atmosphere is one of horror: *The greater terror will not dishearten them and the angels will admit them: This is your day that you had been promised!* (21:103)

The scene is now drawn to its close, showing the ultimate state of the universe, which contributes to the great terror that overwhelms all on that day: *On a Day when We roll up the heavens like the rolling up of the written scroll of manuscripts, as We began the first creation,*

We will cause it to return. (21:104) Thus, the heavens are folded up since all matters have been settled, the reckoning is over, and the universe known to us has no further function to perform. A new world is born in a new universe: *It is a promise from Us. Truly, We had been ones who do.* (21:104)

Having drawn a strong image showing the end of the universe and all living creatures, the chapter now makes clear the divine law that determines who inherits the earth. In the end it is God's God-conscious servants who will be the masters of the earth. The two scenes are interlinked: *And, certainly, We wrote down in the Psalms after the Remembrance that the earth will be inherited by My servants—the ones who are in accord with morality.* (21:105)

As it is given in Arabic, this verse may be read in two ways. The first considers the Psalms as certain scriptures given in particular to the Prophet David. In this case, the reminder' is a reference to the Torah which was revealed earlier than the Psalms. The other reading makes of the term *zabur* a description of every revealed book, which is a portion of the original book recorded in the guarded Tablet, which in this case would be what the word 'reminder' refers to. This Tablet, thus, represents the complete version and the final authority to which all divine laws refer.
as God's God-conscious servants.

As the chapter draws to its close, its rhythm takes on a similar note to that of its opening: *Truly, in this is the delivering of this message for the folk, ones who worship. And We sent you not but as a mercy for the worlds.* (21:106-21:107) This Quran, and the laws it reveals of nature, the universe, human destiny both in this present life and in the life to come, and the rules that govern action and reward, provide a clear message. This message is appreciated by those who are ready to receive God's guidance. These are the ones who are described here as 'people who worship God.' For, a true worshipper is the one who has a soft heart, ready to receive a message, ponder over it and make use of it in his life.

Having guaranteed the right to freedom of thought and established the society that allows the human mind to think, this book also allows the human mind the freedom to determine what actions need to be taken. Thus, under the Quranic message and within its fundamental principles, we are free to develop and progress towards the highest attainable standard of human life.

Having highlighted this aspect of grace, the chapter states an order given by God to His Messenger. He is to confront those who deny the truth and ridicule his efforts. He is to identify the essence of his message as one which brings grace and mercy to all humanity:

Say: It is only revealed to me that your god is One God. Will you, then, be ones who submit to God? (21:108)

This is the most essential element of grace in the Quranic message. It is the belief in God's absolute Oneness that saves humanity from the burdens of ignorant myth, senseless idolatry and from the pressures of superstition. It establishes life on a firm basis, bonding it with universal existence, according to clear and consistent laws, leaving no room for whim or fleeting desire. It ensures that every human being is able to stand up with heads held high. Heads bow only to God, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists.

This is the path of grace: *But if they turned away, then, say: I proclaimed to you all equally. And I am not informed whether what you are promised is near or far.* (21:109) I have given you all that I have, and now both you and I have the same knowledge. A proclamation of the sort this verse hints at is one that takes place at a time of war so as to indicate the end of peace. This chapter, however, was revealed in Makkah, before war was made permissible in the Quranic message. This means that the Prophet is commanded to declare to the ungrateful that he has given up on them, leaving them aware of their destiny, and of which he has warned them. Thus, they have no excuse. They will have to taste the bitter fruits of their actions, knowing full well what awaits them.

Your situation is completely open. If He inflicts punishment on you, He does so on the basis of His perfect knowledge of all your affairs, public and private, overt or covert. On the other hand, when He delays punishment, He does so for a definite purpose. *And I am not informed so that perhaps it will be a test for you and an enjoyment for awhile.* (21:111) I have no knowledge of what God's intention is behind this delay. He may wish to put you to a certain trial, allowing you some reprieve until a certain date He might have determined. When that time comes, He may inflict on you very severe punishment.

Having discharged his trust, delivered his message, made his declaration in all fairness and warned people against forthcoming trials, the Prophet makes an appeal to his Lord. He requests God, the Most Merciful, to judge in fairness and in truth between him and those who ridicule his message. He seeks His help against their scheming, accusations and rejection, for help may be sought only from God: *He said: My Lord! Give You judgment between us with The Truth. And our Lord is The Merciful, He Whose help is being sought against what you allege.* (21:112)

The emphasis placed here on God's abundant grace is significant. It is God, the Most Gracious and Merciful, who sent His Mes-

senger and made this an act of His mercy. But he was met with rejection and ridicule by the hardened ungrateful. It is He who can bestow His grace on His Messenger and give him support against their blasphemies.

Thus the chapter ends on a powerful note, just as it opened with a powerful statement. The beginning and ending thus provide a profound and effective address.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

LESSON 74(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS

HOW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN) SIGNS 23:1-23:22

Makkah: *Surely, the ones who believe prospered,* (23:1)
those, they, who in their formal prayers
are ones who are humble (23:2)
and they, those who from idle talk,
are ones who turn aside (23:3)

and they, those who the purifying alms
are ones who do give (23:4)
and they, those who of their private parts,
are ones who guard, (23:5)
but from their spouses
or from what their right hands possessed.
Truly, they are ones who are irreproachable. (23:6)
Whoever was looking for something beyond that,
then, those, they are the ones who turn away. (23:7)
And those, they who their trusts
and their compacts are ones who shepherd (23:8)
and those, they who over their formal prayers are watchful, (23:9)
those, they are ones who will inherit, (23:10)
those who will inherit Paradise,
they are ones who will dwell in it forever. (23:11)
And, certainly, We created the human being
from an extraction of clay. (23:12)
Again, We made him into seminal fluid
in a stopping place, secure. (23:13)
Again, We created a clot from seminal fluids.
Then, We created tissue from the clot.
Then, We created bones from tissue.
Then, We clothed the bones with flesh.
Again, We caused another creation to grow.
So blessed be God, the Fairer
of the ones who are creators! (23:14)
Again, truly, after that, you will die. (23:15)
Again, truly, you will be raised up
on the Day of Resurrection. (23:16)
Certainly, We created above you seven tiers.
We had not been ones who are heedless of the creation. (23:17)
We caused water to descend from heaven in measure
and We ceased it to dwell in the earth. And We certainly are
ones who have power to take away. (23:18)
And We caused to grow for you gardens of date palm trees
and grapevines where there is much sweet fruit
for you and you eat of it (23:19)
and a tree that goes forth from Mount Sinai
that bears oil and a seasoning for the ones who eat it. (23:20)
And, truly, for you in the flocks there is a lesson.
We satiate you with what is in their bellies.
In them are many profits and of them you eat (23:21)
and on them and on boats you are carried. (23:22)

COMMENTARY°

It is a true promise *Surely, the ones who believe prospered* (23:1); nay, it is a firm decision ensuring success for the believers. If we take it as a promise, we know God never fails to honor His promises; and if we say that it is His decision, then no one can ever foil a decision by God. What is promised is success in the life of this world and in the life to come; success for the individual believer and for the community of believers. A believer will feel this success in his heart and will see it coming true in his day to day life. The success God promises includes all that human beings associate with success and what God keeps in store for His faithful servants.

So, who are those faithful servants, the believers who receive this document written by God, containing this promise and a clear declaration of success? Who are the believers promised all goodness, victory, happiness, success and goodly provisions in this life on earth; and further promised to be successful in the hereafter, when they receive God's reward and enjoy His pleasure? They will also have much more that is known only to God, and this will be given in their two lives. Who are these believers who will inherit paradise where they will abide?

23:2-23:9 give us a detailed list of their characteristics. (23:2-23:9) So, what do we make of these characteristics? They feel the reverence associated with formal prayer, *those, they, who in their formal prayers are ones who are humble* (23:2) as they stand up to address God, and their hearts are thus filled with awe, which is, in turn, reflected in their features and movements. Their spirits feel God's majesty as they realize that they stand in His presence. Thus, all their preoccupations and distractions disappear. Their thoughts and feelings are all concentrated on their discourse with Him. In His sublime presence, they are heedless of all their surroundings. They see and feel nothing but His majesty. Their minds and hearts are purged of even the slightest alien thought or feeling. In such a situation, a stray atom is reunited with its source, a wandering spirit finds its way, and a heart that has been long in isolation finds its company. Thus, all values, concerns and considerations diminish, except for the ones that are related to God in some way.

This: *and they, those who from idle talk, are ones who turn aside* (23:3) includes all frivolity, in words, actions, or concerns. A believer's heart has its own preoccupations which steer it away from frivolity. It is full with the remembrance of God and with reflection on His majesty and His signs that we see everywhere in the universe and within ourselves. Indeed, every scene in the universe fills our minds with wonder and gives a clear message to our hearts. More-

over, the duties required by faith keep a believer preoccupied with maintaining the purity of his or her heart, soul and conscience. Believers' duties include those of behavior which aim at maintaining the very high standards required by faith. Moreover, the task of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong aims at preventing any deviation in the life of the Muslim community. Jihad is also a duty that aims to repel aggression, protect the Muslim community and maintain its position and sovereignty. These duties are always there, and believers do not shirk their responsibilities. These are either individual or collective duties, sufficient to preoccupy people throughout their lives. Man's energy is limited, and it may either be spent in what serves and improves human life, or in frivolity and idle pursuit. By his faith, a believer is required to spend all his energy in what promotes life and sets it on the course of success and prosperity.

This does not preclude relaxation and seeking comfort when it is needed. But this is totally different from indulging in frivolous and idle pursuits.

Having come forward to declare their submission to God and demonstrate this in their formal prayer, and having turned away from all that is frivolous, true believers complement this by being active in charity. *And they, those who the purifying alms are ones who do give.* (23:4) The term used in Arabic for charity is zakat, but this word is often used in a wider sense that goes far beyond the obligatory financial worship with which it is normally associated. Such charity purifies man's heart and money. It purges hearts of selfishness and greed, and overcomes Satan's whispers of discouragement as he raises before us the spectre of poverty, and demonstrates our trust in God. It also makes our money, or what is left of it, pure and good, free of all obligations and doubts concerning its being lawful. Furthermore, charity protects the Muslim community against the imbalance that results from the extremes of poverty on the one side and affluence on the other. It provides social security for all individuals in the Muslim community, particularly the weaker elements, and it protects the community against disintegration.

This is a pointer to the purity of the human soul, the home and the community, and to the way of protecting oneself, family and society. *And they, those who of their private parts, are ones who guard.* (23:5) It is all the result of refraining from indulgence in sin and turning people's hearts only to what is permissible. Thus, the Muslim community is protected from the unrestrained promiscuity that undermines the family and allows dubious parenthood to increase and become acceptable.

The Quran defines here the clean and healthy way which allows a man to place the seeds of life in the right place: *And they, those who of their private parts, are ones who guard, but from their spouses or from what their right hands possessed. Truly, they are ones who are irreproachable.* (23:5-23:6) As for married couples, no argument is raised here, because marriage is respected in all human communities. The other form, referring to 'rightfully possessed' women, needs some explanation.

We have spoken about the question of slavery and the Quranic approach to it elsewhere. As we have stated, when the Quranic message was revealed, slavery was a universal system. Captives of war were made slaves, and this was an international institution. It was not possible for the Quranic message at the time, when it was engaged in military battles against its enemies who were trying hard to stop its spread with military force, to abolish slavery unilaterally. This would have meant that Muslim captives would remain enslaved by the enemies of the Quranic message, while the Quranic message would set enemy captives free. Hence, while putting an end to all other sources of slavery, the Quranic message made a provisional exception in the case of captives of war. Abolition of this remaining source was delayed until a new international system to regulate the question of war captives could be put in place.

With this source of slavery remaining, captive women continued to come into Quranic society. To give them equal treatment, on the basis of the system then operating throughout the world, meant that they should be slaves. Their enslavement did not allow them to become wives through normal marriage. Hence, the Quranic message allowed intercourse with them by their masters only, unless they were freed through the many ways the Quranic message provided for the same.

We see also in this permission a way to satisfy the natural needs of the women slaves themselves, so that they did not resort to immorality. We see this happening today, despite the international treaties prohibiting slavery, when women are taken captive in war. The Quranic message, however, does not condone such promiscuity. But the Quranic message did open up several ways for women slaves to gain their freedom: one of which automatically came into operation when the slave woman gave birth to her master's child. In this case, she became free on her master's death. Alternatively, her master may give her freedom, either voluntarily or in atonement for some offense he might have committed. Or, she may choose to buy her own freedom. A different situation applied if her master hit her across the face. He was, then, required to free her by way of compensation.

There were further ways to freedom as well.

Anyway, allowing slavery through war was a temporary necessity in order to maintain equal treatment in a world where all war captives became slaves. It was, however, not a part of the Quranic social system per se.

The limit is that of wives and women rightly possessed. *Whoever was looking for something beyond that, then, those, they are the ones who turn away.* (23:7) There can be no other legitimate way. Whoever tries to go beyond this limit actually breaks the boundaries of permissibility and falls in sin. He becomes an assailant of human honor. There can be no lawful relationship except through marriage or the results of war undertaken for the sake of the Quranic message. When transgression beyond these well defined limits takes place, the individual concerned becomes corrupt, like a sheep grazing out of bounds, and the family is undermined because of the lack of security felt by its members. Indeed the whole community feels endangered because its wolves have been set loose. The Quranic message is keen to avoid all that.

They, individuals and community alike, honor their pledges and discharge their trust.*And those, they who their trusts and their compacts are ones who shepherd.* (23:8) Both the individual and the community have many types of trust to maintain, the first of which is the trust encapsulated in their own nature, i.e. they are created by God in an upright fashion so as to be in harmony with the rest of the universe to which they belong. This testifies to God's Oneness by the natural feeling of unity that governs the universe. Believers are faithful to this great trust, and they protect their nature from deviation so that it continues to testify to God's Oneness. Other trusts are derived from this basic element.

The first pledge is that God has taken from, and made ingrained in human nature, committing it to believe in His existence and His Oneness. All other pledges, covenants and treaties derive from this first one. When a believer commits himself to something, he makes God his witness. Honoring his commitments is, to a believer, part of being God-fearing, of taqwa.

The Muslim community is also responsible for honoring its public trust, and for the fulfilment of its pledges to God and the duties that result from these pledges. The chapter gives its statement in very general terms so as to include every type of trust and pledge. Believers are faithful to all these, at all times. Being faithful is part of their character. No community can hope to have a straightforward life unless pledges and trusts are fulfilled, so that every individual and group are certain of this basic rule of community life. It is the rule

that gives everyone a sense of trust and security.

They do not neglect their formal prayers or miss them through laziness. *And those, they who over their formal prayers are watchful.* (23:9) Nor do they fail to attend to them as prayer should be attended to. They offer them on time, attending to obligatory and recommended parts, making them complete, omitting nothing essential. Their prayer is alive, filling their hearts and interacting with their consciences. Formal prayer maintains a bond between God and human hearts. Therefore, a person who does not attend regularly to his prayer is unlikely to attend diligently and conscientiously to his bonds with other people. The qualities of believers outlined in this chapter start with prayer and finish with prayer, so as to stress its unrivalled importance in the structure of faith. After all, formal prayer is the most perfect form of worship addressed to God.

These characteristics delineate the character of believers who are certain to be successful. While they are characteristics of individuals, they are decisive in giving the Muslim community its collective character and shaping the type of life it lives. It is an honorable life that befits man, the creature God has honored and allowed to move up on the way to perfection. It is clear that God does not want us to live like animals, merely eating and indulging in pleasure.

Since life on earth does not achieve the perfection God wants for humanity, He has willed that believers who follow His way should attain their goal in paradise, where they live forever, in complete security, and where they have no fear: *Those, they are ones who will inherit, those who will inherit Paradise, they are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (23:10-23:11) This is the ultimate success God has determined for believers. There is no goal beyond this.

Having given a detailed account of the qualities and characteristics of believers, the chapter moves on to point out the indications available within we ourselves that lead to faith. It speaks of the various stages of development of a human being, starting with the very beginning of human origin, and ending with resurrection on the Day of Judgment, to establish a firm link between this life and the life to come: (23:12-23:16)

The gradual formation of the human being, following the same sequence, confirms first the truth of the Originator, and also the deliberate planning in the course such formation follows. This cannot be the result of blind coincidence. Nor can it be a random beginning leading to a consistent line that never fails or deviates. The truth is that human beings come into existence in the way they do, rather than any other possible way, because our Creator wants it this way,

and He does things according to His own plan and design.

Moreover, by giving this full picture with the different stages shown to follow each other without fail also indicates that belief in the Creator who plans everything and following the course of action believers follow, as indicated in the first eleven verses of the chapter, is the only way to achieve the perfect standard human beings can achieve both in this life and in the hereafter. Thus, the two opening passages of the chapter are interlinked.

This statement: *And, certainly, We created the human being from an extraction of clay.* (23:12) implies that there are stages in the creation of human beings, without specifying them. The implication is much clearer in the Arabic' original where the term *sulalah*, given in English as 'essence', also connotes a chain of development. Hence, it means that we go through different stages, one leading to the other, from the very first beginning of clay to the eventual creation, man. This is a truth we get to know from the Quran. We do not need any confirmation of it from scientific theories concerned with the origins of the human being or other living things.

The Quran establishes this truth of God's work and design. Thus, we can contemplate the great divide between the clay and the human being who came from that clay through a succession of stages. The details of this succession are not mentioned because it is unimportant to the wider aims of the Quran. Scientific theories try to find a definite ladder for our origins and evolution. In their attempts, these theories may come up with some true conclusions and they may make mistakes. We cannot, however, confuse the truth established in the Quran, which mentions the succession of stages, with the attempts made by scientists to establish these different stages of succession. These attempts are always open to error, proving today what they may disprove tomorrow in the light of advanced techniques and technologies.

This truth is sometimes expressed very briefly in the Quran, when it says that human creation began with clay, giving no reference to the stages which the process of creation then went through. The ultimate reference then is the most detailed Quranic text, which refers to a 'succession of stages'. We should remember that the Quran uses a more general or shorter text, only because it is more suited to the context in which it occurs.

The Quran does not explain how the human being evolved from the essence of clay, because such explanation is not part of its objectives. The stages of this succession may be exactly as scientific theories suggest, or they may be different. It may happen that we will be able to formulate an accurate idea of such succession. However,

the parting point between the Quranic view of us and the way scientific theories look at him is that the Quran honors us, stating that a measure of God's spirit was breathed into us to make of us a person with the qualities and characteristics that distinguish us from animals. In this, the Quranic view is fundamentally different from that of all materialist theories. God certainly tells the truth.

This applies to the origin of the human race: it starts from an essence of clay. As for individual human beings, they go through well known stages:*Again, We made him into seminal fluid in a stopping place, secure.* (23:13) The creation formula that brings about new individuals of the human race, and their method of reproduction, follows a line set by God. A drop of fluid is discharged from the man to settle in the woman's uterus. It is not the whole drop; rather, a single cell out of hundreds of thousands forming this drop. It settles in this safe enclosure in the uterus which is supported by the hip bones, protecting it from the shocks and knocks that occur to the body as one moves about.

The Quranic text makes the gamete a stage in the succession of human creation, coming immediately after man's existence. This is true, but it also deserves contemplation. A human being in his full stature, and with all his features, elements and characteristics, is enclosed within this gamete. It then develops into an embryo when it begins its new existence through a new series of stages.

We are overwhelmed with amazement here at this fact in the development of the embryo which is stated in the Quran long before it was confirmed by embryology. This is the fact that bones are made of cells that are totally different from those of flesh. It has been confirmed beyond any shadow of doubt that bones are formed first in the embryo. In fact, not a single cell of flesh could be seen before the whole skeleton of the embryo is finally in place. This is what the Quran states: *Again, We created a clot from seminal fluids. Then, We created tissue from the clot. Then, We created bones from tissue. Then, We clothed the bones with flesh. Again, We caused another creation to grow. So blessed be God, the Fairer of the ones who are creators!* (23:14)

This is now the human being with his distinctive features. It is true that the human embryo is similar to animal embryos, but only in its physical stages. For then the human embryo is given a different sort of creation to make up this distinguished creature that we know, with his potential to achieve excellence. The animal embryo, on the other hand, remains within the animal grade, possessing nothing of the distinctive features and qualities of the human being.

God is certainly the only One who creates. The superlative form

is not used here in a comparative sense; rather, it indicates perfection in God's creation. *So blessed be God, the Fairer of the ones who are creators!* (23:14) It is He who has given human nature the ability to move from one stage to the next, in accordance with the law He has set, which will never change or be modified. It will not fail to continue until we achieve the degree of perfection assigned to us on the basis of a perfect order.

The theory of evolution seeks to prove the opposite, making the human being another stage of animal evolution, and giving animals the capability to attain human status. The facts we see disprove the existence of any such relation between the human being and animal, showing that no animal has the necessary qualities to evolve into human status. It will always remain within animal boundaries. Its animal evolution may have been attempted to be proven according to Darwin's theory or in some other way, but humanity remains a higher type of creation distinguished by certain qualities that make the human being what he is, and this could never have come about as a result of mechanical development. It is a gift from a higher power.

The chapter continues to depict the different stages of life to complete the journey. Human life that began on earth does not however end there, because an element from outside the earth forms an essential part of it, influencing the path it travels. The breathing of God's spirit in it has given human life a goal different from that of the body, and a destination unlike that of the destination of flesh and blood. Hence it achieves its completeness somewhere other than this earth, in a totally different world: *Again, truly, after that, you will die. Again, truly, you will be raised up on the Day of Resurrection.* (23:15-23:16)

Thus, death is the end of human life on earth, forming a bridge between the life we know and the life to come. As such, it is a stage in human life, not its end.

Then comes resurrection which heralds the last stage, when the perfect life begins, free of all the failings of earthly life, physical needs, fear and worry, and leading to no other stage because it represents the level of perfection human beings can attain. This, however, applies only to those who follow the way leading to such perfection, outlined in the opening verses of this chapter. It is the way followed by believers. By contrast, those who in this life sink to the level of animals go further down in the life to come so that they are right at the bottom. They are no longer human beings, because they become part of the fuel of hell, fed by stones and men.

The chapter moves on to point out well known, yet often forgotten, aspects in the universe which should lead people to faith: (23:17-23:22)

All these indicators are cited here as aspects of God's power and perfect planning. In their constitutions, functions and roles they move in perfect harmony and in the same direction. They are subject to the same law. They function in unison and serve man, the creature God has honored. Therefore, these aspects of the universe are shown to be interlinked with the stages of human life as outlined in the chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi dent you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not devel oped any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN)

SIGNS 23:23-23:32

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:23)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:26)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:27)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:28)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:29)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:30)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:31)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:32)

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN)
SIGNS 23:33-23:50

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:33)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:34)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:35)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:36)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:37)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:38)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:39)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:40)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:41)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:42)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:43)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (23:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (23:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (23:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (23:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (23:48)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (23:50)

LESSON 74(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN) SIGNS 23:51-23:77

Makkah: *O you Messengers!*
Eat of what is good
and do as one in accord with morality.
Truly, I am Knowing of what you do. (23:51)
And, truly, this, your community is one community
and I am your Lord so be God-conscious. (23:52)
Then, they cut their affair of unity asunder into sects among them,
each party glad with what was with them. (23:53)
So forsake you them for awhile in their obstinacy. (23:54)
Assume they that with the relief
We furnish them of wealth and children (23:55)
We compete for good deeds for them?
Nay! They are not aware. (23:56)
Truly, those, they are dreading their Lord,
ones who are apprehensive. (23:57)
And those, they who believe in the signs of their Lord (23:58)
and those, they who ascribe nothing
as partners with their Lord, (23:59)
and those who give what they gave with their hearts afraid
because they are ones who will return to their Lord, (23:60)
are those who compete with one another
in good deeds and they, in them,
are ones who take the lead. (23:61)
And We place not a burden on any soul but to its capacity.

And from Us is a Book that speaks The Truth for itself.
And they will not be wronged. (23:62)
Nay! Their hearts are in obstinacy towards this Quran
and they have other actions besides
as they are ones who act (23:63)
until, when We took ones who are given ease
with the punishment.
That is when they make entreaties. (23:64)
Make not entreaties this Day.
Truly, you will not be helped from Us. (23:65)
Surely, My signs had been recounted to you,
but you had been receding on your heels (23:66)
as ones who grow arrogant regarding it
and ones who nightly talk nonsense, talking foolishly. (23:67)
Meditate they not on the saying or drew not near them anything
that approaches not their fathers, the ancient ones? (23:68)
Or is it they recognize not their Messenger
so that they are ones who reject him? (23:69)
Or say they: There is madness in him?
Nay! He drew near them with The Truth,
but most of them are ones who dislike The Truth. (23:70)
And if The Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth
would have gone to ruin and whoever is in it.
Nay! We brought them their Remembrance, but they, from their
Remembrance, are ones who turn aside. (23:71)
*Or is it that **you** ask them for payment?*
*Yet the revenue from **your** Lord is better.*
And He is Best of the ones who provide. (23:72)
*And, truly, **you** call them to a straight path.* (23:73)
And, truly, those who believe not in the world to come
are ones who move away from the path. (23:74)
And even if We had mercy on them and removed the harm
which is on them, they would still be resolute in their defiance,
wandering unwilling to see. (23:75)
And, certainly, We took them with the punishment.
Then, they gave not into their Lord nor lower themselves (23:76)
until, when we opened a door for them of a severe punishment.
That is when they were ones who are seized with despair! (23:77)

COMMENTARY°

At this point in its quick references to earlier Messengers the chapter makes its address to the followers of all messengers, as

though they were all gathered together. Thus, the separating gulfs of time and place are shown to be meaningless when compared to the true bond of faith that unites them all: (23:51-23:52)

This address to His Messengers requires them to live as human beings, which is the very thing that those who opposed them questioned: Eating is a human need, but choosing only what is wholesome is the aspect that elevates human beings and makes them grow in purity. It enables them to establish a bond with the society.

They are also required to do good deeds. While taking action is common to all human beings, insisting on doing good is the characteristic of goodly people, providing a measure of control and a clear goal for their deeds. Again such people look up to the Supreme Society when they embark on anything.

No Messenger of God was ever required to abandon his humanity. Rather, what they were asked to do was to elevate this humanity to the highest standard God has made possible for human beings to achieve. Thus, the Prophets provided the role model and the ideal which other people should try to emulate. It is left to God to judge their actions according to His own fine measure: *O you Messengers! Eat of what is good and do as one in accord with morality. Truly, I am Knowing of what you do.* (23:51)

Emphasis is placed on the fact that neither time nor place is of any significance when compared with the single truth that all Messengers preached. They all shared a very distinctive nature, were given their messages by the One Creator of all, and worked towards the same goal: *And, truly, this, your community is one community and I am your Lord so be God-conscious.* (23:52)

This third passage begins by showing the state humanity reached after the generations which witnessed God's Messengers. This is the state God's last Messenger found them in. They were in dispute over the single truth preached by all God's messengers.

The chapter shows people oblivious of the truth the final Messenger put before their eyes. In their ignorance, they were totally unaware of the consequences they were bound to face. By contrast, believers worship God alone, do good deeds and remain apprehensive of what lies before them. They are in awe over the fact that they will inevitably be returned to God. The two situations are in perfect contrast: a believer is alert, cautious and heeding the warnings, while an unbeliever is deep in ignorance, unaware of what lies ahead.

The passage addresses them in different ways, at times denouncing their attitude, and at others discussing their doubts and providing clear answers to them. The passage also addresses their finer nature, pointing out what encourages people to believe, whether it be within

themselves or in the universe at large. It also picks up some of what they take for granted, using these as argument against them.

As the passage concludes, it leaves them to their inevitable destiny. It tells the Prophet Muhammad that he should continue his efforts, explaining his message. He should not be distressed at their obstinate rejection. He should repel their evil deeds with good ones, and seek refuge with God against Satan who tries hard to lead humanity along the path of error. (23:53-23:56)

All Messengers belonged to a single nation, preaching the same message, worship and pursuing the same direction. But when the Messengers had gone, humanity splintered into different groups which could not agree on what line to follow.

The Quran portrays such divergence as people in conflict, splitting into factions, quarreling and pulling apart from each other. The picture drawn here is full of effort and movement. In the end each faction is left with only a portion of the whole, delighting at their ability to hold on to this. Hence, no faction thinks of anything other than what it supposedly possesses. Each goes its separate way, shutting up all inlets so that no ray of light or fresh breath of air comes through. All live in their isolated quarters, busy with what they have, ignorant of everything else.

Once this image has been drawn, the chapter addresses God's Messenger: *So forsake you them for awhile in their obstinacy.* (23:54) Let them take their time, preoccupied with their own affairs, until their appointed time inevitably comes, spelling out their destiny.

The section adds a derisive question that highlights their lack of awareness. They think that the time they have been given, and the wealth and offspring they are allowed to enjoy means that they are favored with blessings. (23:55-23:56) Little do they realize the truth that it is all but a test which they have to go through: *We compete for good deeds for them? Nay! They are not aware.* (23:56) They simply do not perceive the destiny to which they are heading after having enjoyed what has been given in this life.

By contrast, the believers are always on the alert, taking necessary precautions: (23:57-23:61)

Here we see how faith affects hearts, imparting to them a special kind of refinement, sensitivity and aspiration to attain perfection. They are the ones who consider the consequences of their actions. They are always ready and willing to do their duties.

We see that believers are always in awe of their Lord, God-conscious, believing in His revelations and His signs, attributing no share of God to anyone other than Him, fulfilling the duties He requires of

them. Beyond all this, they 'give away whatever they have to give with their hearts filled with awe, knowing that to their Lord they shall certainly return.' This is a manifestation of their feeling that they actually fall short of what they should do. It is true that they have done their utmost, but they consider it far from adequate.

A believer senses God's care and feels His favors with his every and heartbeat. Hence, he thinks that whatever he offers of and good action is too little by comparison. At the same time, every grain in a believer feels God's greatness and power. With all his faculties he perceives how God regulates everything around him. Hence, he stands in awe of Him. He dreads meeting God, for fear of having fallen short of fulfilling his duties towards Him, or not having given Him what is due to Him of worship and gratitude.

It is these people who vie with one another in doing what is good. They are the ones who hasten to do good deeds, and are in the lead among those who do good. Their watchful eyes, alert hearts and minds prompt them to do what is required of them. Theirs is a totally different situation from the others who are lost in ignorance, thinking that God's blessings are given to them because they are favored. They are no better than game animals rushing towards bait. Such people are everywhere: they are overwhelmed with what they are given of life's comforts, distracted from their duties, full of their own importance. But then they only wake up to their fate when it is too late.

The Quranic message ensures that its followers' hearts are always alert. This is an alertness generated by faith right from the moment it settles in a person's heart. It neither defies human power, nor is too hard for us to sustain. It is a question of sensitivity enhanced by a believer's bond with God and his watchfulness in all situations, guarding against sin. It is perfectly within people's power when the light of faith shines in their hearts: *And We place not a burden on any soul but to its capacity. And from Us is a Book that speaks The Truth for itself. And they will not be wronged.* (23:62)

God has established people's duties as He knows their inclinations and abilities. He will hold them to account on the basis of what they do within their ability. He neither charges them with what they cannot bear, nor dismisses any little thing they do. All their deeds are documented in a 'record that speaks the truth,' highlighting it in its full value. Needless to say, God is precise in His reckoning.

People, however, tend to overlook the truth because their hearts are not touched by its invigorating light. Hence, they remain preoccupied with petty concerns, lost in a perpetual maze. They are only awakened when faced with inevitable doom, looking at the suffering that awaits them and enduring a humiliatingly and strong reproach: (23:63-23:67)

Thus, the reason for their headlong pursuit of worldly affairs is nothing like being burdened with what they cannot bear. It is simply that their hearts are blinded, unable to see the truth as clearly stated in the Quran. They are wont to follow a line different from the course charted by the Quran: *Nay! Their hearts are in obstinacy towards this Quran and they have other actions besides as they are ones who act.* (23:63)

The chapter then paints a picture of their being awakened by a sudden calamity: *Until, when We took ones who are given ease with the punishment. That is when they make entreaties.* (23:64) People who live in luxury are indeed the ones who are most preoccupied with life's comforts, totally oblivious to what lies ahead. Now they find themselves suddenly overtaken by suffering, and they cry out for mercy, making a passionate appeal for it to be lifted. It is a picture that contrasts with the life of luxury and arrogance they lead in this world. Hence, they receive a strong reproach: *Make not entreaties this Day. Truly, you will not be helped from Us.* (23:65) The scene is described as though it is taking place now. They are strongly reproached, made certain of having no support, and reminded of what they used to do in life: *Surely, My signs had been recounted to you, but you had been receding on your heels* 23:66 as ones who grow arrogant regarding it and ones who nightly talk nonsense, talking foolishly.* (23:66-23:67) It is as though what was being recited was a danger or a calamity you needed to avoid. You were too proud to submit to the truth. Indeed, you compounded your insolence, adding insult to injury, speaking ill of the Prophet and his message, but you, nevertheless, are willing to spend hours in idle chit-chat.

It was common practice for them to use obscene language when they gathered in circles around the Kabah, close to the idols they worshipped. Now the Quran paints for them a scene of when they are called to account for their indulgence, showing them raising their voices with cries for help. It is at this point that they are reminded of what they do now in their circles, as though both take place at the same time. This is a familiar method of the Quran, frequently depicting the Day of Judgment as though it were actually occurring at that precise moment.

In their hostility towards the Prophet and with their disparaging remarks about him and the Quran in their gatherings, the ungrateful represent an ignorant arrogance that is blinded to the truth. With such blind ignorance, the truth becomes the subject of derision and ridicule. Such people are encountered no matter what the time or place. Yet the state of ignorance that prevailed in Arabia at the time when the Quranic message was revealed serves as an example of

similar past and future situations where ignorance prevails.

Having shown the ungrateful this scene of reproach in the hereafter, the chapter takes them back to this world, questioning them about their attitude: what stops them from accepting what they are told by God's Messenger, whom they know to be a person of trust? What doubts do they have to prevent them from following divine guidance? Why do they turn away from it, ridiculing it when it represents the absolute truth? (23:68-23:74)

The message Muhammad, God's Messenger, preached could not be rejected by anyone who looks at it carefully, using his reason. It is a model of beauty, perfection, consistency and attraction. It fits with human nature, addresses people's minds and hearts, outlines a course to elevate human life, and lays down a fine constitution to follow and a perfect code of justice. It also includes what answers the needs of human nature and what helps its development and advancement. *Meditate they not on the saying or drew not near them anything that approaches not their fathers, the ancient ones?* (23:68) This is, then, the secret behind their attitude.

If so, it would have been strange for them and for their forefathers that a Messenger came to call on them to believe in God's Oneness. But the history of divine messages proves that Messengers followed one another, and all of them preached the same message advocated by Muhammad, God's last Messenger.

Could this have been the reason for their insolent rejection? Ye they knew their Messenger well. They knew his birth and ancestr *Or is it they recognize not their Messenger so that they are ones wh reject him?* (23:69) They also knew his character, honesty and integrity. Long before he received his message, they nicknamed him al-amin, which means 'the trustworthy'.

Some of the lowest in their ranks used to say this about him, knowing full well that he was the wisest and most reasonable person among them. They never knew him slip once. (23:70)

None of such possibilities had any foundation whatsoever. The fact is that most of them hated the truth because it deprived them of their false values and contradicted their desires and preferences: *Or say they: There is madness in him? Nay! He drew near them with The Truth, but most of them are ones who dislike The Truth.* (23:70)

The truth cannot be subservient to personal desires and preferences. For it is on the basis of truth that the universe is sustained, life flourishes and the laws of nature function: *And if The Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have gone to ruin and whoever is in it. Nay! We brought them their Remembrance, but they, from their Remembrance, are ones who turn aside.* (23:71)

Bearing this in mind, the Quranic message considers legislation for human life to be part of the universal law, formulated by the same hand that conducts the affairs of the universe and establishes coherence between all its parts. Human beings are part of the universe and subject to its law. Hence, it is only fitting that the One who legislates for the entire universe should also legislate for human life. When this is done, human life is no longer subjected to personal desires and preferences. Thus, it is immune to corruption: *And if The Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have gone to ruin and whoever is in it.* (23:71)

The community addressed by the Quranic message should be keen to follow its truth, not only because it is the truth, but also because it represents its glory. Without the Quranic message, it would have had no place in history: *Nay! We brought them their Remembrance, but they, from their Remembrance, are ones who turn aside.* (23:71) The Arabs were ignored throughout history until they were given the Quranic message. Since then, this community continued to be glorious as long as it adhered to the Quranic message. Its position on the world stage, however, gradually shrank when it abandoned the Quranic message, until it reached its present low depth. It will not recover its glory until it reverts to its true, guiding light.

The chapter resumes its questioning of their attitude and the doubts that may be the cause for their refusal to believe in the Messenger: *Or is it that you have asked them for payment? Yet the revenue from your Lord is better.* (23:72) Had you demanded any wages from them, such a request might be their cause for refusal. The fact is that you seek nothing from them: *And He is Best of the ones who provide* .(23:72) What could a prophet seek from human beings, poor and needy as they are, when he has access to God's inexhaustible favors? Indeed, what would a Prophet's followers hope to gain of this world's comforts when they seek what may be provided by God who grants everything people have? The fact is that when a human heart is in touch with God, this whole universe, with all that it contains, dwindles into insignificance.

Yet, like everyone else who does not believe in the life to come, these people deviate from the perfect way: *And, truly, those who believe not in the world to come are ones who move away from the path.* (23:74) Had they been well guided, they would have reflected on the stages of their existence, because such reflection is bound to lead to belief in the hereafter, when perfection and absolute justice are attainable. The life to come is merely a stage in the line God has charted for all existence.

These ungrateful are people who have lost their way and no

longer benefit from the tests to which they are exposed, be they tests of plenty and affluence or those of hardship. Hence, when they are tested with favor: *Assume they that with the relief We furnish them of wealth and children We compete for good deeds for them? Nay! They are not aware.* (23:55-23:56) Even if they are tested with difficulty and hardship, their hearts are not softened, nor are their consciences awakened. They do not turn back to God, appealing to Him to remove their hardship. They remain in such a condition until, on the Day of Judgment, they are visited with an even greater suffering. Then they will be truly desperate and bewildered. (23:75-23:77)

These are common features among such people. They are hard hearted, oblivious of their duties to God, and they deny the hereafter. The idolaters who opposed the Prophet when he delivered his message were of the same type.

Showing humility at a time of hardship, and turning to God, entreating Him and recognizing Him as the only refuge and resort are indicative of a change of heart and a returning to faith. A heart which establishes such links with God is bound to soften. Reflection and remembrance then provide protection against further slips and errors. Thus, hardship brings about real benefit. But the person who persists in arrogance is a lost case, without hope. He is left to his destiny when he will be overwhelmed with suffering in the life to come. He will then plunge into despair, finding neither refuge nor support.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions::

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

LESSON 74(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN?

CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN) SIGNS 23:78-23:92

Makkah: *And He it is Who caused you to grow,*
have the ability to hear and sight and mind.
But you give little thanks! (23:78)
It is He Who made you numerous on the earth
and to Him you will be assembled. (23:79)
And it is He Who gives life and causes to die
and His is the alteration of nighttime and daytime.

Will you not, then, be reasonable? (23:80)
Nay! They said the like of what the ancient ones said. (23:81)
They said: When we are dead and had been earth dust and bones,
will we be ones who are raised up? (23:82)
Certainly, we were promised this
—we and our fathers—before this.
This is nothing but the fables of the ancient ones. (23:83)
Say: To whom belongs the earth and whoever is in it
if you had been knowing? (23:84)
They will say: To God!
Say: Then, will you not recollect? (23:85)
Say: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens
and Lord of the Sublime Throne? (23:86)
They will say: It belongs to God!
Say: Then, will you not be God-conscious? (23:87)
Say: In whose hand is the kingdom of everything
and He grants protection?
No one is granted protection against Him
if you had been knowing. (23:88)
They will say: It belongs to God!
Say: How, then, are you under a spell! (23:89)
Nay! We brought them The Truth and,
truly, they are ones who lie. (23:90)
God took not to Himself any son,
nor had there been any god with Him.
For, then, each god would have taken away what he created.
And some of them would have ascended over some others.
Glory be to God above all that they allege! (23:91)
He is the One Who Knows the unseen and the visible.
Exalted be He above partners they ascribe. (23:92)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then takes the ungrateful on a further round of reflection, in the hope that their hearts will awaken when they see the pointers to faith within themselves and in the universe at large. *A*(23:78-23:80)

Indeed, if we would only reflect on our own form and constitution, the multi- faceted potential we have been given, and the faculties of perception with which we have been blessed, we would certainly acknowledge God. His guidance would be all these great faculties within us that testify to God's Oneness. No one other than God Almighty could produce such a creation with all these miracu-

lous aspects, large and small. For example, how does our sense of hearing function? How are sounds picked up and distinguished? How does our eyesight function, sorting out shapes and shades of light? And then, what about our mind and how it works? How does it recognize forms and things? How does it understand meanings, concepts, values, feelings and physical forms?

The mere understanding of the nature of these senses and faculties and their ways of functioning is, in itself, a miraculous human discovery. How do we, then, look at their creation and placement in man's body in such a way that is best suited to the nature of man's world. The degree of harmony achieved here reflects an overwhelming delicacy. Should only one of the many ratios that need to be met, in either man's nature or the nature of the universe, be disturbed, the whole relation no longer functions. Ears are not able to pick out sound, and eyes no longer see light. It is God's perfect design and limitless power that has achieved this perfect balance between human nature and the universe in which we live. But we do not show gratitude to God for His favors: *And He it is Who caused you to grow, have the ability to hear and sight and mind. But you give little thanks!* (23:78) Gratitude begins with a clear acknowledgement of the One who has given us all these favors and blessings, glorifying Him and recognizing His attributes, then addressing all worship to Him alone His Oneness is testified by His creation. Gratitude is further enhance when we use our faculties and senses to enjoy life in the manner c a firm believer who looks up to God before every action and in every situation.

It is He Who made you numerous on the earth and to Him you will be assembled. (23:79) He has placed you in charge of building human life on earth, after He gave you your hearing, eyesight and mind, as well as all the faculties and potentials that you need to fulfil the task assigned to you. (23:79) And to Him you shall be gathered when you will be accountable for all that you do in your lives on earth. You will be rewarded for all the good you do, and for following divine guidance. By contrast, you will reap the fruits of any evil or corruption of which you are guilty. Your lives on earth are not meant in vain, and you are not carelessly abandoned in your habitat. It is all for a definite purpose God has determined.

Both life and death occur at every moment, but it is God alone who causes them both to occur. *And it is He Who gives life and causes to die and His is the alteration of nighttime and daytime. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (23:80) The human being, the highest of all creatures on earth, cannot give life to a single cell. Similarly, we are totally incapable of depriving any living being of its life in

the full sense of the word. People may be the means of ending life, but they are not the ones who truly deprive a living entity of its life. It is God alone who grants life and causes death.

He is the One who has set this alternation in operation, just like He grants life and takes it away. Both sets of parallel situations are natural laws: one operates within the human being while the other operates in the world at large. When life is taken away from a particular body, it stops functioning and becomes motionless. Similarly, when light is taken away from the earth it darkens and becomes stagnant. But then life is brought back again and light is allowed to spread as the alternation takes place and the cycle continues uninterrupted, for as long as God wills. *Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (23:80) Will you not draw the right conclusion and admit that it is all part of God's perfect design and elaborate planning. It is He alone who is in full control of life and the universe.

The chapter now stops its argument with the ungrateful, and reports their claims about resurrection and reckoning in the life to come. This discussion follows a long list of signs and pointers confirming God's Oneness and His being the only Creator who causes life and death. (23:81- 23:83)

Their claims sound exceptionally singular after the chapter has enumerated many of the signs that testify to God's elaborate planning and His definite purpose of creation. It is He who has granted us our hearing, eyesight and mind, so that he is responsible for his deeds. He will thus earn a generous reward for his good actions or punishment for his bad ones. True reckoning and reward occur in full in the life to come. What we see in this life is that reward, whether good or bad, does not take place on earth. These are left until they fall due in the life to come.

God grants life and causes death. Hence, resurrection is by no means difficult. Life is breathed into beings at every moment, and it is only God who knows where it originates.

The point with these ungrateful is not that they fall short of appreciating God's wisdom and ability to resurrect life. They also ridicule the promises of resurrection and reward, saying that the same promise was given to their forefathers, but nothing of the sort has yet occurred. *Certainly, we were promised this—we and our fathers—before this. This is nothing but the fables of the ancient ones* (23:83) Resurrection will certainly occur at the time and place God has set for it in His elaborate plan. It will be neither brought forward nor put back at anyone's request, or in response to the ridicule of anyone who is unable to see the truth.

The Arab idolaters of old were muddled in their faith. They did

not deny God. Nor did they deny that He is the Creator of the heavens and earth or that He is always in full control of everything in the universe. But they, nevertheless, assigned to Him partners and claimed that they worshipped those partners so that they could bring them closer to God. They also claimed that He had daughters. Exalted is God above all such claims. Hence the chapter puts to them the facts that they acknowledge in order to set the record straight and bring them back to the true faith based on God's absolute Oneness. This is the logical conclusion to the premises they acknowledge. Indeed, they would have arrived at this conclusion themselves had they not deviated from their uncorrupted nature: (23:84-23:89)

This shows the extent of the confusion that lacks sound reasoning. It tells us to what extent the beliefs of the idolaters had degenerated by the time the Quranic message was revealed. The first question asks about the ownership of this earthly world: *Say: To whom belongs the earth and whoever is in it if you had been knowing?* (23:84) They acknowledge that they all belong to God, but they overlook this true fact when they address their worship to deities other than Him. Hence the question the Prophet is told to put to them: *They will say: To God! Say: Then, will you not recollect?* (23:85)

This question: *Say: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Sublime Throne?* (23:86) is about absolute Lordship that controls the whole universe and God's Supreme Throne. The term 'seven heavens' may refer to seven celestial bodies, or solar systems, or seven clusters of stars, or seven galaxies, or any seven astronomical entities. When God's Throne is mentioned, it implies a reference to His might and control of the universe and all existence. Hence when they are asked about the Lordship over all these, they give the right answer, saying that they all belong to God. Yet they do not show any fear of the Lord of the Supreme Throne who controls all seven heavens and what lies beyond them. They associate with Him idols that cannot lift themselves when they are thrown on the ground. Hence, the question: *They will say: It belongs to God! Say: Then, will you not be God-conscious?* (23:87)

This question: *Say: In whose hand is the kingdom of everything and He grants protection? No one is granted protection against Him if you had been knowing.* (23:88) is about power and dominion, asking them about the One who has power over all things, and who gives protection to all of His creatures so that no one can harm them in any way, other than according to His will. At the same time, no one can protect anyone or anything else against God. If God wants to inflict harm or punishment on any of His creatures, nothing can prevent it. Again they acknowledge that such power belongs to God alone.

Hence the question asking them about the cause of their delusion, which leaves them like people bewitched: *They will say: It belongs to God! Say: How, then, are you under a spell!* (23:89)

Having refuted all the idolaters' claims about God, taking to Himself a son or partners, the chapter states in all clarity the true principle of God's Oneness as explained by His Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad: (23:90-23:92)

Note how this statement employs different methods and styles. First, all argument with the idolaters is closed, and an emphatic assertion of their lying is given:*Nay! We brought them The Truth and, truly, they are ones who lie.* (23:90) Then follow some of the details of their lies: *God took not to Himself any son, nor had there been any god with Him.* (23:91) Irrefutable proof is then stated rendering all their claims false and showing the absurdity of pagan beliefs based on associating partners with God: *For, then, each god would have taken away what he created. And some of them would have ascended over some others.* (23: 91) Each deity would stress his independence and conduct the affairs of his creation according to his own law. Thus, every part of the universe, and every group of creatures would have a different basis and laws. There would be no common code applying to them all. *Glory be to God above all that they allege!* (23:91) Such superiority could take the form of a more sophisticated law operating in a particular part of the universe. However, the universe as a whole cannot function properly unless it is subject to a single law that applies to all its parts and all creatures living in it.

None of this multiplicity is found in the universe, where consistency of structure proves the Oneness of its Creator, and inner harmony testifies to its being run by a single will. Indeed, we clearly see that all parts of the universe function in perfect harmony: *God took not to Himself any son, nor had there been any god with Him. For, then, each god would have taken away what he created. And some of them would have ascended over some others. Glory be to God above all that they allege!* (23:91)

None other than God has any authority over any part of His creation, knowing anything that is unknown to God. *He is the One Who Knows the unseen and the visible. Exalted be He above partners they ascribe.* (23:92)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Evaluating Reasoning by:•
Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

LESSON 74(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN)

SIGNS 23:93-23:118

Makkah: *Say: My Lord! If **You** will cause me to see*
what they are promised, (23:93)
then, assign me not, my Lord, to the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (23:94)
*And, truly, We cause **you** to see what*
We promise them as certainly ones who have power. (23:95)
*Drive **you** back evil deeds with what is fairer.*
We are greater in knowledge of what they allege. (23:96)
And say: My Lord! I take refuge with Thee
from the evil suggestions of the satans. (23:97)
And my Lord, I take refuge with Thee
so that they not attend me. (23:98)
Until when death drew near one of them, he said:
My Lord! Return me (23:99)
so that perhaps I will do as one in accord
with morality in what I left behind.
No indeed! Truly, it is only a word that one who converses says.
And ahead of them is a barrier
until the Day they are raised up. (23:100)
When the trumpet will be blown,
there will be no talk of kindred among them
that Day nor will they demand anything of one another. (23:101)
Then, whose balance was heavy with good deeds,
those, they are the ones who prosper. (23:102)
And among ones whose balance was made light,
then, those are those who lost themselves.
They will be ones who will dwell in hell forever. (23:103)
Their faces will fry in the fire. And they will be
ones who are morose in it. (23:104)
Be not My signs recounted to you,
yet you had been denying them? (23:105)
They will say: Our Lord! Our misgiving prevailed over us.
We had been a folk, ones who go astray. (23:106)
Our Lord! Bring us out of this.
Then, if ever we reverted, truly,

we will be ones who are unjust. (23:107)
He would say: Be driven away in it
and speak not to Me. (23:108)
Truly, there had been a group of people
of My servants who say:
Our Lord! We believed, so forgive us
and have mercy on us for ***You*** *are Best*
of the ones who are most merciful. (23:1019)
But you took them to yourselves as a laughing-stock
until they caused you to forget My Remembrance
and you had been laughing at them. (23:110)
Truly, I gave recompense this Day
for what they endured patiently.
Truly, they, they are the ones who are victorious! (23:111)
He said: Lingered you in expectation
on the earth for what number of years? (23:112)
They said: We lingered in expectation
a day or some of a day.
So ask the ones who count. (23:113)
He said: You lingered in expectation not but a little.
If you had but been knowing. (23:114)
Assumed you that We created you in amusement
and that to Us you would not be returned? (23:115)
So exalted be God! The King, The Truth.
There is no god but He,
the Lord of the Generous Throne! (23:116)
And whoever calls to another god with God
of which he has no proof, then, truly,
his reckoning is with his Lord.
Truly, the ones who are ungrateful will not prosper. (23:117)
And say: My Lord! Forgive and have mercy
and ***You*** *are Best of the ones who are most merciful.* (23:118)

COMMENTARY°

At this point, the chapter stops addressing or speaking about them. It now turns its attention to God's Messenger, commanding him to appeal to God so that he is not placed with such people, if he ever witnesses the fulfilment of the warnings of suffering they have been given. He is further instructed to seek refuge with His Lord from the evil ones, satans, so as not to be irritated by or become fed up at what the claim of the ungrateful: (23:93-23:98)

The Prophet is certainly not going to be with the wrongdoers

when God inflicts on them a severe punishment in fulfilment of His warnings. But this prayer which he is instructed to repeat serves as a further precaution. It is also meant as a lesson to all believers so that they do not slacken. They should also be on their guard, attending to their duties, seeking refuge with God and praying to Him to bestow His grace on them.

God is certainly able to fulfil what He has warned the wrongdoers of, and to make it all happen during the lifetime of His Messenger: *And, truly, We cause you to see what We promise them as certainly ones who have power.* (23:95)

At the time of the revelation of this chapter, the Prophet was still in Makkah enduring with his followers much persecution from the idolaters. The policy followed by the Muslim community then, in implementation of God's instructions, was to repel a bad thing with something better. Muslims also had to demonstrate their patience in the face of adversity, leaving their destiny entirely to God: *Drive you back evil deeds with what is fairer. We are greater in knowledge of what they allege.* (23:96)

The Prophet was certainly immune to any promptings or persuasion by evil ones. However, here he is instructed to pray for protection against all this in an urgent appeal for further immunity against their evil. Being the perfect role model for all Muslims in all generations, his appeal provides a lead for them to follow. They should also seek refuge with God against all temptation put in their way by the evil ones. Indeed the Prophet is instructed to appeal to God for protection against such evil people coming near him in any way. *And my Lord, I take refuge with You so that they not attend me.* (23:98)

This may also be interpreted as an appeal lest they come near him at the time of his death. This sense is strengthened by the sign that follows: (23:99) This follows the Quranic method that ensures an easy flow from one point to another.

This last passage of the chapter continues to discuss the fate of the idolaters, showing it in a complete scene of the Day of Resurrection. It starts with an image of approaching death ending this life, and moves on to show what happens after the Trumpet is blown and the dead are brought back to life. This is followed by an emphatic statement of God's Oneness, coupled with a stern warning to those who associate partners with God, putting them on notice of what awaits them if they persist in their erring ways. The chapter concludes with a directive given to the Prophet to seek God's forgiveness, and to pray for His grace. God is certainly the best of all who show mercy.

These: (23:99-23:100) are the scene of approaching death, when the person is certain that he is about to die. At this moment, he appeals for a return to life so as to have a second chance to do what he should have done in the first place. He wants to set things right with regard to the family and assets he is leaving behind. This is shown as if it is happening at the present moment, witnessed by all. But the appeal is made too late. Hence, the answer is not given to the person concerned. It is declared for all to understand. *So that perhaps I will do as one in accord with morality in what I left behind. No indeed! Truly, it is only a word that one who converses says. And ahead of them is a barrier until the Day they are raised up.*(23:100)

It is only a word that carries little or no significance. It does not deserve to be considered. Indeed the speaker does not merit any attention. It does not express any sincerity; rather, it is prompted by the dawning awareness of the great difficulty ahead. It expresses the great stress the speaker finds himself under, but it has no basis in conviction.

Thus ends the image of the speaker at the point of death. Suddenly, barriers are raised between him and the rest of the world. The matter is settled, contacts are severed, doors closed and the curtain dropped: *so that perhaps I will do as one in accord with morality in what I left behind. No indeed! Truly, it is only a word that one who converses says. And ahead of them is a barrier until the Day they are raised up.* (23:100) They neither belong to the people of this life, nor to those of the hereafter. They are in the stage in between, which will continue until all are resurrected.

The chapter now speaks about that day, giving an image of what happens then and raising it for all to see. *When the trumpet will be blown, there will be no talk of kindred among them that Day nor will they demand anything of one another.* (23:101) All bonds come to an end, and all values people observe in this life are no longer of any consequence. 'There will be no ties of kinship' then. The awesome atmosphere makes them all silent, with no one uttering as much as a word, let alone enquiring about others.

The process of reckoning and weighing up deeds and actions is shown to proceed with speed: (23:102-23:104) This process is shown in a material image, with action and movement taking place, in the standard pattern the Quran employs. Hence we dread the scene of those idolaters being scorched by the fire, their faces changing color, darkening and looking full of gloom. It is a terrible image that almost transmits pain.

Those with light weight have lost everything, including themselves. When a person loses himself, what else can he own? What is

left for him? He has lost the very thing that makes his existence meaningful, or that gives him personality.

At this point the chapter changes style. So far, it has employed a reporting format. Now it makes a direct address, speaking to the people themselves. This makes the physical punishment, terrible as it certainly is, much less painful than the humiliation that is now poured on them. This address is stated as if it were taking place at that very moment, starting a long dialogue:*Be not My signs recounted to you, yet you had been denying them?* (23:105) When they hear this question they imagine that they are allowed to speak and make a plea. They think that perhaps if they admit their guilt, their plea might be accepted: (23:106-23:107)

Their admission of guilt tells of the bitter feelings they experience. They are indeed miserable. But they have exceeded the limits they are allowed. To go beyond these is to be impolite when they are addressed by none other than God. They are only permitted to answer the question put to them. Indeed the question is perhaps made only by way of rebuke, and it requires no answer. Hence they are strongly censured: *He would say: Be driven away in it and speak not to Me.* (23:108) They are told to shut up and remain silent as only befits people held in ignominy.

Indeed they deserve all the punishment and the misery they are made to suffer. (23:109-23:110)

The crime they perpetrated was not merely that they disbelieved and made their rejection of the faith a personal matter, which is in itself a grave offense. They went much further by allowing their stupid impudence to go as far as ridiculing the believers who pray to God for mercy and forgiveness. They derided them so often that such derision became their main preoccupation, stopping them from remembering God and glorifying Him, and from reflecting on the numerous signs God has placed in the world pointing them in the direction of faith. They are now called upon to compare their own station with that of the people they ridiculed.*Truly, I gave recompense this Day for what they endured patiently. Truly, they, they are the ones who are victorious!* (23:111)

A new phase of interrogation follows this stern, humiliating reply and the reasons that led to it: *He said: Lingered you in expectation on the earth for what number of years?* (23:112) God certainly knows the answer, but the question is put to them to emphasize the triviality of life on earth and to stress the shortness of its duration. Yet they bartered the eternal life of the hereafter for their portion of life on earth. Now they feel that it was totally insignificant. In their despair they are impatient, and cannot bother about that life or its

number of years: *They said: We lingered in expectation a day or some of a day. So ask the ones who count.* (23:113) Stress, grief and despair ooze from their reply.

They are given an answer that tells them that their life on earth is very short compared to what awaits them. They only need to have the right measure. *He said: You lingered in expectation not but a little. If you had but been knowing.* (23:114) Again they are strongly rebuked for denying the life to come. This is coupled with an outline of the purpose behind resurrection. This purpose has been clearly stated ever since the first creation: *Assumed you that We created you in amusement and that to Us you would not be returned?* (23:115)

Any claim of partnership with God has absolutely no evidence to support it, neither from the universe and how it is run, nor from human logic or nature. Anyone who makes such a claim will have to face the reckoning in front of God, and the result is known in advance: *And whoever calls to another god with God of which he has no proof, then, truly, his reckoning is with his Lord. Truly, the ones who are ungrateful will not prosper.* (23:117) This is an unfailing rule that is hound to come true. Success, by contrast, is guaranteed for the believers.

The last sign in this chapter, The Believers, gives the instruction to turn to God appealing for His mercy and forgiveness: *And say: My Lord! Forgive and have mercy and You are Best of the ones who are most merciful.* (23:118)

Thus the opening of the chapter and its end jointly emphasize success for the believers and utter failure and loss for the ungrateful. Both elements stress the basic qualities of believers. Thus, the beginning states that the believers humble themselves in prayer, while the end instructs them to humbly appeal to God for forgiveness and mercy. Both make the chapter a complete, well designed unit.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?

Where did they get that information?

What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above sign?
What the assumption of those who say that all disbelievers should be killed?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of one of the Quranic signs.
I was able to analyze my actions today and evaluate them.

LESSON 75(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS

THE MIDDLE COMMUNITY
ISLAMIC MODERATION:[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of Islam that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of Islam, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts of Islam include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the ummah throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts of Islam include the rulings of general custom (*urf*) personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of Islam set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*ummah*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

QURANIC CHAPTER 32: THE PROSTRATION (AL-SAJDAH)
SIGNS 32:1-32:11

Makkah: *Alif Lam Mim.* (32:1)
The sending down successively of the Book,
there is no doubt in it.
It is from the Lord of the worlds. (32:2)

Or they say: He devised it.
*Nay! It is The Truth from **your** Lord*
*that **you** warn a folk to whom no warner*
*approached them before **you**,*
so that perhaps they will be truly guided. (32:3)
God! It is He Who created the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them in six days.
Again, He turned His attention to the Throne.
You will have none other than Him
as protector and no intercessor.
Will you not, then, recollect? (32:4)
He manages every command
from the heaven to the earth.
Again, it will go up to Him in a day, the span
of which had been a thousand years
of what you number. (32:5)
That is the One Who Knows
of the unseen and the visible,
The Almighty, The Compassionate (32:6)
Who did everything that He created well.
And He began the creation of the human being
from clay. (32:7)
Again, He made human progeny from
the extraction of despicable water. (32:8)
Again, He shaped him
and breathed into him His Spirit.
And He made for you
the ability to hear and sight and minds.
But you give little thanks! (32:9)
They said: When we went astray on the earth
will we be in a new creation?
Nay! In the meeting with their Lord
they are ones who disbelieve. (32:10)
Say: The angel of death, who was charged with you,
will call you to itself.
Again, you will be returned to your Lord. (32:11)

COMMENTARY°

The three separate letters the chapter begins with were well known to the Arabs who were the first to be addressed by the Quran. They knew what speech they could compose of them and their like. They knew full well the great difference between their composition

and this Quran. It is a wide gulf recognized by any speech expert and anyone who practises putting ideas and meanings into words and sentences. Such a person realizes that the Quranic text has an inherent, subtle power that makes it particularly effective as it addresses people's hearts and minds. No human composition can have any similar effect. This is a fact that cannot be denied. A listener to the Quran will definitely recognize it and interact with it, to the exclusion of all other speech, even though he might not know that what he is listening to is the Quran. Numerous are the examples people of all sorts have experienced, confirming this fact.

The difference between the Quran and what people make up, using letters and sounds is unbridgeable. It is the same as the gulf between God's creation and what people make in any particular field. What is of God's making is distinct and remarkable. It cannot be matched by humans, even in the most mundane of things. Look at the color distribution in a single flower: it appears like a miracle for even the most skilful of painters in all ages. The same applies to the Quran and what people compose when they use the letters and sounds of language. *he sending down successively of the Book, there is no doubt in it. It is from the Lord of the worlds.* (32:2) This is a fact no one can deny. All doubt is negated in the middle of the sentence, because this is the essence of the question, and the point the sign wants to make. That it is preceded by the separate letters puts the doubters face to face with the indisputable fact. This book is composed of the like of such letters which they know, yet its construction is superior in every way. They do not deny that superiority in practice, or when they apply any recognized standards of judging speech.

Those whom God's Messenger is ordered to warn were polytheists, people who associated partners with God. Therefore, the chapter explains God's attribute by which they know the truth of God. It also distinguishes who deserves to have this great name, God, and who must never be associated with His status: (32:4-32:9)

This expression refers to the fact that God is above all creation. We cannot say anything about the throne, except to take it as a name. The word *istawa* is different, as it clearly indicates elevation and exaltation. The Arabic text also uses the word thumma, which is the conjunction 'then', but it is clear here that it does not indicate any chronological order, because no change of situation applies to God. He, limitless is He in His glory, is not in a certain situation, nor does He then move to a new one. This does not apply to God. It is only an abstract order. His exaltation means that His is a level high above that of His creation, and this is expressed in the way the sign is composed.§

Who could have? *God! It is He Who created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six days. Again, He turned His attention to the Throne. You will have none other than Him as protector and no intercessor. Will you not, then, recollect.* (32:4) It is sufficient to remember this fact and reflect on it for people to acknowledge God and to turn to Him alone, abandoning all else.

In addition to all that has been said about creation and elaborate planning, it is now stated that whatever takes place in the heavens, the earth or in between them will be presented to Him on the Day of Judgement when He will determine their fates: *He manages every command from the heaven to the earth.* (32:5) The expressions used here provide a great, broad perspective: 'from the celestial space to the earth.' Thus, human perception is given an impression that it can contemplate. In fact, the domain of what God regulates and governs is far greater than that of the heavens and the earth. For us, however, it is sufficient that we look at this broad expanse and reflect on the fact that God regulates everything in it when we cannot even imagine the figures of its dimensions.

Everything that has been determined and planned, with its results and consequences, is then put to Him, in His exalted presence, on the day He has determined for reviewing the results of actions, words, objects and living creatures.*Again, it will go up to Him in a day, the span of which had been a thousand years of what you number.* (32:5) Nothing of this is created in vain or abandoned or neglected. All run their course in accordance with God's design to an appointed time. They all "ascend to Him," because everything and every position and stage is below that of God Almighty. Hence they ascend or are raised to Him, by His permission, when He wills.

The Creator who regulates everything is the One who knows everything, whether absent or present. *That is the One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible, The Almighty, The Compassionate.* (32:6) He is in complete control of all creation, and He is able to accomplish what He wills. But He is also Most Merciful in what He wills and plans for His creation.

The Quran directs our attentions to this incomparable beauty so that we contemplate what we see and thus enjoy it. This is achieved through the statement: *Who did everything that He created well. And He began the creation of the human being from clay.* (32:7) We are thus invited to look for beauty and excellence throughout the universe.

One aspect of His excellent creation is the fact that our creation was begun from clay. The phraseology of this sign allows it to be understood as meaning that the clay was present at the beginning, in

the first stage. No mention is made of the number, length or duration of the stages.

This: *Again, He made human progeny from the extraction of despicable water.* (32:8) is a reference to semen, the fluid that represents the first stage of the foetus, going on to become a clinging cell mass, then an embryo that soon acquires bones and organs before the foetus reaches its complete form. It is a great journey when we consider the extraordinary development that this tiny drop of humble fluid goes through until it becomes a human being with perfect shape and constitution. The gulf between the first and the final stages is great indeed. This is expressed in the Quran in a single sign: *Again, He shaped him and breathed into him His Spirit. And He made for you the ability to hear and sight and minds. But you give little thanks!* (32:9)

In the light of this first miraculous creation of the human being and its miraculous progress, the chapter refers to the ungrateful' objections and doubts about resurrection. *They said: When we went astray on the earth will we be in a new creation? Nay! In the meeting with their Lord they are ones who disbelieve.* (32:10)

They cannot imagine that God will create them anew after they have died and become part of the earth. What is strange about this when compared to the first creation? God began the creation of the human being from clay, which means that its origin goes back to the earth in which they claim their bodies will decompose and be lost Indeed, the second creation is akin to the first one, with nothing strange about it. *They said: When we went astray on the earth will we be in a new creation? Nay! In the meeting with their Lord they are ones who disbelieve.* (32:10) It is such denial that makes them entertain doubts and objections to something true and clear. After all, something akin to it occurs at every moment. Therefore, their objections are answered with a statement making clear that they will die and be resurrected. The practical proof of the first creation is more than enough: *Say: The angel of death who was charged with you, will call you to itself. Again, you will be returned to your Lord.* (32:11) This is given as a confirmed piece of news. Who though is the angel of death? How does he gather people's souls? This is something that belongs to the realm beyond our perception, which is known to God alone. From Him we receive only accurate information. We can add nothing to what we receive from this source.

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?

3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life

LESSON 75(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34 as we move forward to Problem to Solve.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

QURANIC CHAPTER 32: THE PROSTRATION (AL-SAJDAH)
SIGNS 32:12-32:22

Makkah: *And if you but see*
when the ones who sin become ones who bend down their heads
before their Lord: Our Lord! We perceived and heard.
So return us.
We will do as ones in accord with morality.
Truly, we are now ones who are certain. (32:12)
And if We willed it, We would have,
surely, given every soul its guidance,
but My saying will be realized.
I will fill hell with genies and humanity one and all. (32:13)
Then, experience it.
As you forgot the meeting of this Day of yours, truly,
We forgot you. And experience the infinite punishment
for what you had been doing. (32:14)
Only those believe in Our signs who,
when they were reminded of them, fell down,
ones who prostrate themselves
and glorified the praise of their Lord

and they grow not arrogant, (32:15)
Madinah (32:16)
Madinah (32:17)
Madinah (32:18)
Madinah (32:19)
Madinah (32:20)
Makkah: *And, certainly, We will cause them to experience the closer punishment other than the greater punishment so that perhaps they will return.* (32:21)
And who does greater wrong than he who was reminded of the signs of His Lord, then, he turned aside from them? Truly, on the ones who sin, We are ones who requite. (32:22)

COMMENTARY°

Since they object to the very concept of resurrection, and express doubts about coming back to life, the chapter raises before their eyes a scene of the Day of Judgement which is full of life and movement. Moreover, it reports its dialogue as if it was taking place now: (32:12-32:14)

Before the chapter gives the answer to their humble request, it states the facts that apply to the whole situation and which determine people's fates: *And if We willed it, We would have, surely, given every soul its guidance, but My saying will be realized. I will fill hell with genies and humanity one and all.* (32:13)

Those evildoers who stand in front of God, hanging their heads are among those upon whom God's word shall be fulfilled. They will be told: *As you forgot the meeting of this Day of yours, truly, We forgot you.* (32:14) The reference here is to the Day of Judgment, but it is described as this present day, as if we are looking at its scenes now. They are made to taste the suffering because they forgot this day and neglected to prepare for it when they had all the time they needed to do so. *And experience the infinite punishment for what you had been doing.* (32:14) Needless to say, God does not forget anyone, but they are treated like people who have been forgotten. They are humiliated and abandoned.

The curtains are drawn and the final word has been said. The guilty evildoers are left to their abject fate. The reader feels as he passes these signs as if he has left them behind where they are looking fixedly at what awaits them.

Such is the fate of the wicked in the life to come. But they are not left alone until then. God warns them that they may incur pun-

ishment in this present life before they suffer the punishment of the Day of Judgment: *And, certainly, We will cause them to experience the closer punishment other than the greater punishment so that perhaps they will return.* (32:21) Yet this suffering, which is close at hand, carries with it an aspect of grace. God does not like to expose His creatures to suffering unless they incur such punishment by the actions they do or fail to do, and by being persistent in what incurs punishment. Therefore, God warns them that He will make them suffer in this life "so that they might return [to the right faith]." This may, perchance, let their nature wake up. The pain may bring them back to the truth. If they do, then they will avoid the fate of the wicked which we saw earlier.

However, if they continue to turn away when they are reminded of God's revelations and signs, and if they fail to return to the truth after their suffering in this present life, then they are confirmed wrongdoers: *And who does greater wrong than he who was reminded of the signs of His Lord, then, he turned aside from them?* (32:22) In such a situation, they deserve strong retribution both in this life and in the life to come: *Truly, on the ones who sin, We are ones who requite.* (32:22) What a serious and fearful warning from God Almighty to those who deserve such punishment.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran guides to what is what is honest, honorable, worthy, moral, conscientious, good, virtuous. What does the Quran give to those who are

guided? Good tidings to the ones who believe and who act in accord with morality. It is those who believe and who are moral people who will have a great compensation. Following God's guidance is to act morally. Acting in accord with morality results in a great compensation from God. Human beings have been created with a moral compass.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

LESSON 75(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY NOTING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases.

QURANIC CHAPTER 32: THE PROSTRATION (AL-SAJDAH) SIGNS 32:23-32:30

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (32:23)

And We assigned leaders from among them
to guide under Our command
when they endured patiently.
And they had been certain of Our signs. (32:24)
Truly, your Lord is He Who will distinguish among them
on the Day of Resurrection about what
they had been at variance in it. (32:25)
Guides them not how many We caused to perish
of generations before them amidst whose dwellings they walk?
Truly, in that are the signs. Will they not then hear? (32:26)
Consider they not
that We drive water to the barren dust of earth?
We drive out crops with it
from which their flocks eat and they themselves.
Will they not, then, perceive? (32:27)
And they say: When is this victory if you had been
ones who are sincere? (32:28)
Say: On the Day of Victory there will be no profit
for those who disbelieved if they,
then, have belief nor will they be given respite. (32:29)
So turn you aside from them and wait awhile.
Truly they are ones who are waiting awhile. (32:30)

COMMENTARY°

The section speaking about the believers and ungrateful, the God-conscious and the wicked, and the fates of both groups is now complete. The chapter then begins a new section that speaks briefly

about Moses and the revelations God gave him to serve as guidance to the Children of Jacob, just like the Quran was given to Muhammad to provide guidance to those who believe in God. Both recipients of divine revelations share common principles and a common faith. Choosing those who were patient in adversity among Moses' people to be leaders of their community carries strong implications for the believers, urging them to maintain their firm beliefs and to remain steadfast and patient in adversity. These are the qualities that make them leaders in this life and ensure that they will be established on earth. (32:23-32:25)

The clause, *so be you not hesitant about meeting Him* is an interpolation which means to assure the Prophet of the truth that has been given to him. It emphasizes that it is the same truth that Moses advocated as revealed in his book. The two prophets and the two books meet in their advocacy of this truth. This is the explanation I prefer for this clause.

Some commentators, however, suggest, that the phrase means 'about meeting with it', that is, the Torah, while others say that '*about meeting with Him*', means meeting the Giver of the Torah while still others say '*about meeting with him*' implies the meeting between Moses and Muhammad during the latter's night journey and ascension to heaven. Indeed convergence on the basis of truth and a common faith is the more likely as it serves to reassure the Prophet so that he remains steadfast despite all the opposition and persecution he and his followers encounter. It is also in line with what is stated in the next sign: *And We assigned leaders from among them to guide under Our command when they endured patiently. And they had been certain of Our signs.* (32:24) This implies that if the small group of believers living in Makkah at the time persevered and remained patient in adversity, like those leaders of the Children of Jacob, they would be leaders in the Muslim community. It establishes the characteristics that qualify people to be leaders, namely, patience in adversity and unshakeable faith. *Truly, your Lord is He Who will distinguish among them on the Day of Resurrection about what they had been at variance in it.* (32:25)

Now the chapter takes those who deny the divine message on a round that looks at the fates suffered by earlier communities who took a similar stance: *Guides them not how many We caused to perish of generations before them amidst whose dwellings they walk? Truly, in that are the signs. Will they not then hear?* (32:26)

The remains of past communities tell a highly effective story that touches sensitive hearts and alert consciences. The Arabs who were the first to be addressed by the Quran used to travel by the re-

mains of the peoples of the Aad and Thamud, and they saw the ruins of the townships where Lot's people lived. The chapter wonders how these were available to them, and how they pass them by, without feeling the need to avoid a similar fate. It tells them what sort of action is needed to avoid God's punishment: *Guides them not how many We caused to perish of generations before them amidst whose dwellings they walk? Truly, in that are the signs. Will they not then hear?* (32:26) It is indeed right that they should listen carefully to the histories of those communities through whose townships they pass, and that they should listen to the warnings before they are overwhelmed by a similar punishment.

The chapter then touches their hearts with an image of life as it starts, showing them a barren land before it quickens and life springs out of it. This image provides a contrast with the earlier one showing death and ruin devastating a land that was once full of life: *We drive out crops with it from which their flocks eat and they themselves. Will they not, then, perceive?* (32:27)

The final section refers to their hastening of the punishment against which they have been warned, and their doubts about the warnings they have been given. They are warned once more against the fulfilment of what they are hastening, when no declaration of belief will be of any benefit. Nor will they be given any respite. The chapter concludes with a directive telling the Prophet to leave them to their inevitable fate: (32:28-32:30)

The judgment referred to here means a decision on the dispute between the two parties and the fulfilment of the promise which they thought would never come true. They could not understand God's purpose in delaying it to the time He appointed for it. Their hastening of it will not change its timing, nor can they escape it.

This: *Say: On the Day of Victory there will be no profit for those who disbelieved if they, then, have belief nor will they be given respite* (32:29) is true whether this day occurs in this present life when God takes them as ungrateful, giving them no respite as their belief will be of no benefit, or in the life to come when their appeals for respite are refused. This answer sends a tremor of fear into their hearts. This is then followed with the final note in the chapter: *So turn you aside from them and wait awhile. Truly they are ones who are waiting awhile.* (32:30) This is a clear implicit warning of the consequences of waiting. It is made all the more explicit given the Prophet is told to turn away from them and leave them to their inevitable destiny.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What similarities and differences do the Quranic verses point out between the practice of the early Quraysh and the Quranic message?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

EPILOGUE

THE FIRST PLEDGE OF AQABA BY TWELVE MEN FROM MADINAH, DHU AL-HIJJA 2 BH/620 CE

The days of pilgrimage at last came round, and Muhammad sought the appointed spot, in a narrow sheltered glen near Mina.[1] His apprehensions were at once dispelled. A band of twelve faithful disciples were there ready to acknowledge him their prophet. Ten were of the Khazraj, and two of the Aws, tribe.

IBN ISHAQ

At the pilgrimage (Dhu Hajja) in 620 CE, twelve Helpers attended the fair and met at al-Aqaba—this was the first pledge of Aqaba—where they gave the Messenger the pledge of women. This was before the duty of making war was laid upon them.

These men were: From al-Najjar: Asad ibn Zurara; Auf ibn al-Harith and Muadh, his brother, both sons of Afra. From the Zurayq ibn Amir: Rafi ibn Malik and Dhakwan ibn Abd al-Qays ibn Khalada ibn Mukhlid ibn Amir ibn Zurayq.

From the Auf of the clan of Ghanm ibn Auf ibn Amr ibn Auf who were the Qawaqil: Ubada ibn al-Samit ibn Qays ibn Asram ibn Fihr ibn Thalaba ibn Ghanm; and Abu Abd al-Rahman who was Yazid ibn Thalaba ibn Khazma ibn Asram ibn Amr ibn Ammara of the Ghusayna of Bally, an ally of theirs.

From the Salim ibn Auf ibn Amr ibn al-Khazraj of the clan o the al-Ajlan ibn Zayd ibn Ghanm ibn Salim: al-Abbas ibn Ubada ibi Nadala ibn Malik ibn al-Ajlan.

From the Salima: Uqba ibn Amir.

From the Sawad: Qutba ibn Amir ibn Hadida. The Aws were represented by Abu 'l-Haytham ibn al-Tayyihan whose name was Malik of the clan of Abdul Ashhal ibn Jusham ibn al-Harith ibn al Khazraj ibn Amr ibn Malik ibn al-Aws.

From the Amr ibn Auf ibn Malik ibn al-Aws: Uwaym ibn Saida.

Yazid ibn Abu Habib from Abu Marthad ibn Abdullah al-Yazani from Abdul Rahman ibn Usayla al-Sannaji from Ubayda ibn al-Samit told me: I was present at the First Pledge of Aqaba. There were twelve of us and we pledged ourselves to the Prophet and that was before war was enjoined, the undertaking being that we should associate nothing with God; we should not steal; we should not commit fornication; nor kill our offspring; we should not slander our neighbors; we should not disobey him in what was right; if we fulfilled this paradise would be ours; if we committed any of those sins it was for God to punish or forgive as He pleased.

> Al-Zuhri from Abd Allah ibn Abd Allah al-Khaulani Abu Idris said that Ubayda ibn al-Samit told him: We gave allegiance to the Messenger that we would associate nothing with God, not steal, not commit fornication, not kill our offspring, not slander our neighbor, not disobey him in what was right; if we fulfilled this paradise would be ours; and if we committed any of those sins we should be punished in this world and this would serve as expiation; if the sin was concealed until the Day of Resurrection, then it would be for God to decide whether to punish or to forgive.

This was afterwards called the Pledge of Women, because, as not embracing any stipulation to defend the Prophet, it was the only oath required of the female sex. When the twelve had agreed to this, Muhammad replied: If you fulfill the pledge, Paradise will be your reward. He that shall fail in any part thereof, to God belongs His concern either to punish or to forgive. The memorable proceeding is known in the annals of Islam as the First Pledge of Aqaba because that was the name of the area where Muhammad with the twelve had met.[2]

Spread of Islam at Madinah CE 2 BH/620-621 CE

The twelve were now committed to the cause of Muhammad. They returned to Madinah as missionaries of Islam, again to report their success at the following pilgrimage. So prepared was the ground and so zealous the propagation, that the new faith spread rapidly from house to house and from tribe to tribe. The Jews looked on in amazement. The people whom for generations they had vainly endeavored to convince of the errors of idolatry were now of their own accord casting their idols to the moles and to the bats and professing belief in the one true God. The secret lay in the adaptation of the instrument. Judaism, foreign in its birth, touched no Arab sympathies. Islam, engrafted on the faith and superstition, the customs and the nationality of the Peninsula, found ready access to the heart.

Musab Deputed to Instruct Converts at Madinah

The leaders in the movement soon found themselves unable to keep pace with its rapid spread. So they wrote to the Prophet for a teacher able to recite the Quran and instruct inquirers in the faith. The young disciple Musab, who had lately returned from exile in Abyssinia, was sent to Madinah for that purpose. He lodged at Madinah with Asad ibn Zurara who had already been in the habit of gathering the converts together for prayer and reciting the Quran.

In course of time, others were sent for the same purpose, and among them the blind Abd Allah ibn Umm Maktum. The following narrative will illustrate the manner in which Islam was propagated at Madinah. Asad and Musab visited the quarter of the Aws, and, entering one of their gardens, sat down by a

well where a company of believers gathered round them.

Now Saad ibn Muadh and Usayd, chief men of the tribe, heard of the gathering at the well, and Saad, unwilling himself to interfere (being related to Asad), bade Usayd go and disperse them. Usayd seized his weapons, and hurrying to the spot, abused them. What brings you two here amongst us, he said, to mislead our youths and silly folk? Beware, if you have any care for your lives.

Musab disarmed his wrath by courteously inviting him to sit down and listen. Then Usayd stuck his spear into the ground and seated himself. As he listened, he was charmed with what he heard and forthwith embraced Islam. And he said: There is another beside me, Saad ibn Muadh, whom I will send to you. If yon can gain him over, there will not be one in his tribe left unconverted.

So he departed and sent Saad, and Musab persuaded him in like manner. So Saad returned to his tribe and swore that he would not speak to man or woman who did not acknowledge Muhammad. So great was his influence that by the evening every one of his clan was converted.[3]

There is a story of an aged chief who, like others at Madinah, had an image in his house. This image the young converts used to cast every night into a filthy well, and the old man as regularly cleansed it until, one day, they tied it to a dead dog and cast it into the well whereupon he abandoned his image and believed.

The devotions of the Aws and the Khazraj tribes were now conducted tc gether by the earnest missionary for even in such a matter the rival clans we impatient of a common leader from amongst themselves. So speedily, withot let or hindrance did Islam grow and take firm root at Madinah, and thus unexpectedly were the people prepared for a greater demonstration at the next time of pilgrimage.[4]

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
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75 = 32
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80 = 78
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82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT AND EPILOGUE

TEXT

1. See the Introduction to this text.

EPILOGUE

1. Ibn Hisham, p. 288; Tabari, i. 1211; Ibn Saad, p 147)

3. Ibn Hisham, p 291.

4. Ibn Saad, p. 148; Ibn Hisham, p. 289. Ibn Ishaq says Muhammad sent Musab of his own accord.

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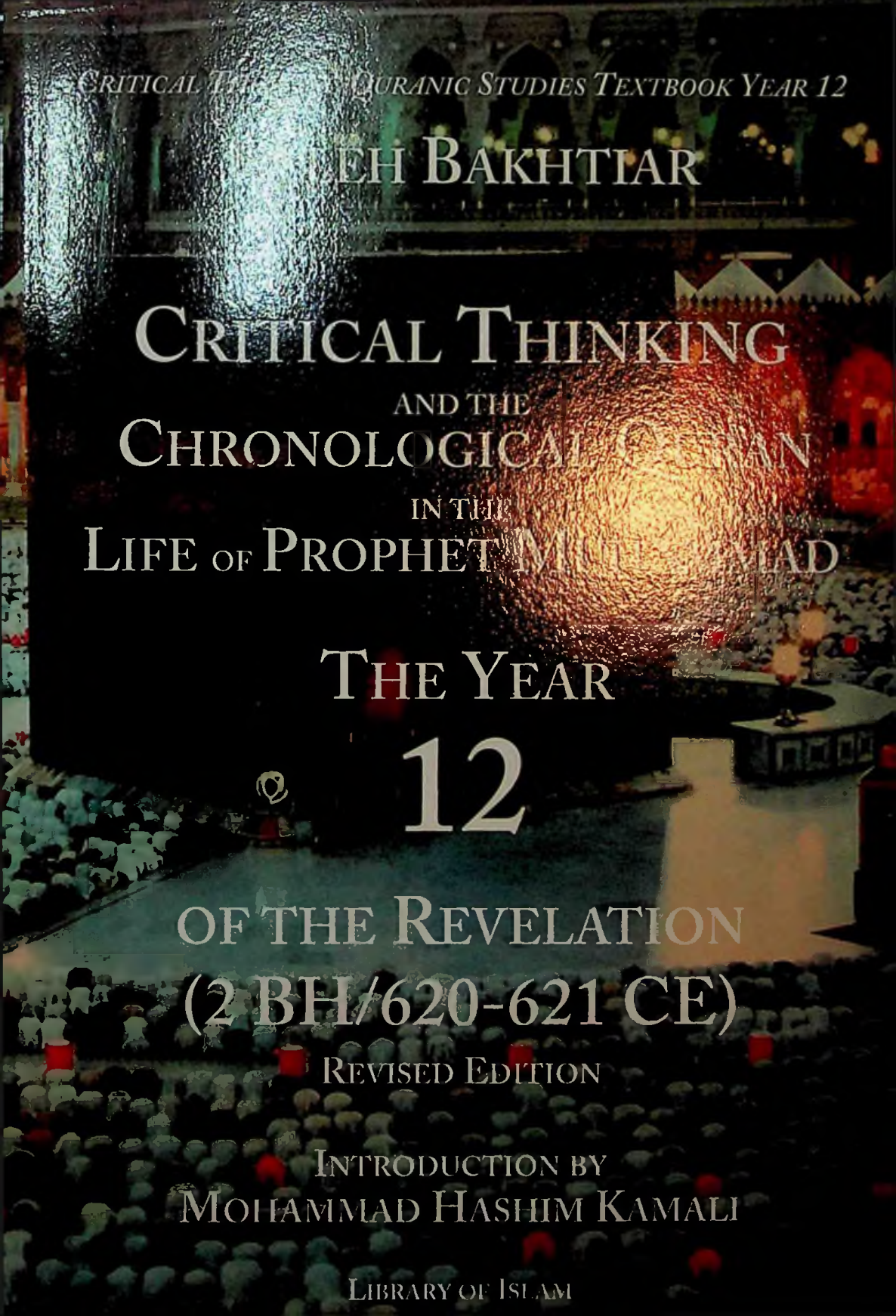
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eh Bakhtiar

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Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 12 of the Revelation (2 BH/620-621 CE)

Revised Edition

Laleh Bakhtiar

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 12, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 2 BH/ca. August 6, 620 CE-July 26, 621 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

to be significant: ahl)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: 'dhara'a)
7. Right Judgment (rushd)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**
   - Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

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Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION

READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING

BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 12*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 12* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 12*, we begin with Lesson 76, that is, Quran Chapter 52 which is the 76th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 67, 69, 70, 78 and, finally Lesson 81, Quranic Chapter 79.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 76(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, VOCABULARY

WHAT IS A CONCEPT?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

QURANIC CHAPTER 52: THE MOUNT (AL-TUR) SIGNS 52:1-52:28

Makkah: *By the mount* (52:1)
and by a Book inscribed (52:2)
on an unrolled scroll of parchment (52:3)
and by the frequented House (52:4)
and by the exalted roof (52:5)
and that which is poured forth over the seas, (52:6)
truly, the punishment of Thy Lord is that which falls. (52:7)
There is no one who averts it. (52:8)
On a Day when the heaven will spin a spinning (52:9)
and the mountains will journey a journey. (52:10)
Then, woe on a Day to the ones who deny, (52:11)
they, those are engaging in idle talk, play, (52:12)
on a Day they will be driven away with force
to the fire of hell with a driving away: (52:13)
This is the fire which you had been denying! (52:14)
Is this, then, sorcery or is it that you perceive not? (52:15)
Roast you in it!
Then, have patience, or you endure patiently not,
it is all the same to you.
You will be only given recompense
for what you had been doing. (52:16)
Truly, the ones who are God-conscious
will be in Gardens and bliss, (52:17)

ones who are joyful for what their Lord gave them.
And their Lord protected them
from the punishment of hellfire. (52:18)
Eat and drink wholesomely
because of what you had been doing. (52:19)
They will be ones who are reclining on couches arrayed.
And We will give in marriage to them lovely,
most beautiful eyed ones. (52:20)
And those who believed and their offspring
who followed them in belief,
We caused them to join their offspring.
And We deprived them not of anything of their actions.
Every man will be pledged for what he earned. (52:21)
And We furnished relief to them with sweet fruit
and meat such as that for which they lust. (52:22)
They will contend with one another for a cup around
which there is no idle talk
nor accusation of sinfulness. (52:23)
And boys of theirs will go around them
as if they had been well-guarded pearls. (52:24)
And some of them will come forward to some others
demanding of one another. (52:25)
They would say: Truly, we had been before
ones who are apprehensive among our people, (52:26)
but God showed grace to us and protected us
from the punishment of the burning wind. (52:27)
Truly, we had been calling to Him before.
Truly, He, He is The Source of Goodness,
The Compassionate. (52:28)

COMMENTARY°

These short signs: (52:1-52:16) use varied rhyming endings and a measured cadence which they maintain. In the Arabic text, they begin with a sign with just one word. Then the signs combine two words, then add more words until we have the last sign in this section of twelve words, yet the same powerful note is maintained.

The first sign reads in Arabic as *wa-Tur*, translated here as By Mount Sinai. The Arabic word, *Tur*, means a mountain with trees. Here, it most probably refers to the mountain mentioned in the Quran, in Moses' story where he received the tablets. The overall ambience is one of sacred objects stated in an oath by God confirming that something momentous will certainly take place.

The scripture inscribed on unrolled parchment refers, most probably, to the book of Moses which was written for him on the tablets. This reading fits well with the mention of Mount Sinai in the first sign. However, some scholars say that the reference is to the 'imperishable tablet' in heaven, as this fits with what follows, referring to the much-visited House and the vault raised high. This again is a clearly possible meaning.

The much-visited House may refer to the Kabah although it is more likely that it refers to a house in heaven where the angels worship. According to most scholars, the vault raised high refers to the sky.

God states an oath by these great creatures to confirm a great event. This opening makes us ready to receive it, fully aware that it is momentous: *Truly, the punishment of Your Lord is that which falls. There is no one who averts it.* (52:7-52:8) It is certain to happen. No one can stop it from happening. By their very sound, these two signs give the feeling that there is absolutely no question about its taking place. Furthermore, it overwhelms people: none can evade it. When a person receives this decisive note directly, without impediment, he feels its effect penetrate deep inside him.

These opening notes are followed by a fearful scene: *On a Day when the heaven will spin a spinning and the mountains will journey a journey.* (52:9-52:10) We have here two images that leave us shaken, bewildered: the sky that looks to us so firm and powerfully built is shaking and reeling, like high sea waves, and solid mountains slide away easily, lacking any firm base to stabilize them. It must be something extremely awesome that leaves the sky and the mountains in such chaos. So what will its effect on us be, a small and weak creature in the midst of a stupendous event?

In the midst of all this, the chapter hurls on those who deny the truth of the divine message something more serious and frightening; namely, a prayer hastening their punishment by the Almighty: *Then, woe on a Day to the ones who deny, they, those are engaging in idle talk, play.* (52:11-52:12)

This description applies in the first place to the pagan Arabs, their primitive beliefs, insupportable concepts and their way of life which the Quran describes in several places. It is all trifling play, nothing serious. They play like one hanging around in the middle of a lake, not aiming to reach the shore. Yet the description equally applies to anyone who leads their life on the basis of any concept other than the Quranic one. We cannot appreciate this unless we examine well known human concepts, as reflected in beliefs, legends or philosophies, and compare these with the Quranic concept of human

existence in particular and the existence of the universe generally. All concepts, even those advanced by famous philosophers seem to be no more than children's attempts to arrive at the truth as compared with the simple, profound and powerful truth as expressed by the Quranic message. This Quranic message puts its address directly to human nature, free of exertion or complexity. Human nature immediately responds because what is presented to it fits perfectly with the profound truth inherent in it. It explains its relation to the universe, as well as the relation between the universe and its Creator.

The Quranic message elevates people's concerns in as much as it elevates their concept of human existence and the human being's role in the universe. Furthermore, it provides clear and truthful answers to the questions everyone asks: Where have I come from, and why? Where do I go to when my term here is over? The Quranic answers to these questions define the true concept of existence. We are not a unique kind of creature. We come from where all creatures do, and we share with them the reasons for their existence. We go to where the Creator, in His infinite wisdom, determines. This means that the answers the Quranic message provides for our questions also give us a complete explanation of the universe, the interrelation between its inhabitants, its relation with us, and the bond between them all and the Creator of all.

The chapter issues a serious warning about what happens to those who play with vain trifles: *On a Day they will be driven away with force to the fire of hell with a driving away.* (52:13) This is a violent image. The chapter uses the Arabic word *datany* which signifies being pushed hard from behind. This suits those who spend their lives playing with trifles, unconcerned with what takes place around them. Therefore, they are driven and pushed in the back until they stand at the edge of hells fire, where they are told: *This is the fire which you had been denying!* (52:14)

At this point of utter distress, being pushed hard in the back and facing the fire in front, the ungrateful are faced with a strong rebuke that refers to their earlier denials: *Is this, then, sorcery or is it that you perceive not?* (52:15) They used to label the Quran as sorcery. Is the fire they are now facing also sorcery? Or is it the frightening truth? Or is it that they do not see the fire of hell in the same way as they could not see the truth of the Quran?

When this sarcastic rebuke is over, they are made to despair of any relief for their distress: *Roast you in it! Then, have patience, or you endure patiently not, it is all the same to you. You will be only given recompense for what you had been doing.* (52:16) Nothing is more painful to one who has to face such a calamity than to know

that bearing it with patience is the same as showing no patience at all. It will continue unabated and cannot be evaded in any way. Their suffering will be the same whether they panic or take things in their stride. Furthermore, it will continue regardless of what they do now. This suffering is the requital for what they have already done. Therefore, it cannot be altered.

The second section of the chapter is one of excitement, spreading comfort and happiness, particularly after the preceding scenes of outright distress: (52:17-28)

This scene is close to material comfort. It is of the type that addresses feelings in the early period, tempting the human soul with physical pleasures in their refined form. It contrasts with the scene of crude painful suffering that those who are oblivious to the truth have to face: *Truly, the ones who are God-conscious will be in Gardens and bliss, ones who are joyful for what their Lord gave them. And their Lord protected them from the punishment of hellfire.* (52:17-52:18) Just mere protection from the suffering of the fire which has already been described is a great blessing. How is it to be viewed then when it is coupled with admission into gardens and bliss? Moreover, these believers enjoy what God provides them with. It is all comfort and luxury plus hospitality and honor: *Eat and drink wholesomely because of what you had been doing.* (52:19) This in itself is a great blessing.

As they are so addressed from on high, they are told that they deserve whatever reward they are given. Furthermore, they will "recline on couches arranged in rows" giving them the pleasure of their brethren's company in such blissful surroundings. *They will be ones who are reclining on couches arrayed. And We will give in marriage to them lovely, most beautiful eyed ones.* (52:20) This represents mans best enjoyment.

Further honor is granted as their offspring, who are also believers, join them in their place of bliss. This is added care. Even if their offspring do not attain the standards of the God-fearing, as long as they are believers, they join their parents without detracting anything from their parents' reward. In no way, however, does this detract from personal responsibility and individual accountability. Rather, it is a favor that God bestows on them all: *And those who believed and their offspring who followed them in belief, We caused them to join their offspring. And We deprived them not of anything of their actions. Every man will be pledged for what he earned.* (52:21)

More is added to the scene as we are introduced to other aspects of enjoyment in an atmosphere of perfect happiness. These dwellers of heaven are given varieties of fruits and meat, and they pass around

a cup containing a drink that is totally different from the wines of this present world which loosen tongues with foul and dirty speech and tempt people into physical and mental sin. It is a pure drink causing no wrong: *They will contend with one another for a cup around which there is no idle talk nor accusation of sinfulness.* (52:23) They are gathered together as they pass it around, enjoying each others company. At the same time they are served by youths who reflect pure innocence and a shining friendliness: *And boys of theirs will go around them as if they had been well-guarded pearls.* (52:24)

This warm and happy scene is carried further as we are shown how these people in heaven converse, recalling memories of their worldly lives and outlining the reasons that ensured their happy end, with all its security, luxury, gratification and bliss. Thus the secret is given out and the way leading to this blissful ending is marked for all travellers: *And some of them will come forward to some others demanding of one another. They would say: Truly, we had been before ones who are apprehensive among our people, but God showed grace to us and protected us from the punishment of the burning wind. Truly, we had been calling to Him before. Truly, He, He is The Source of Goodness, The Compassionate.* (52:25-52:28)

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

CONCEPT MAPPING:

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

PRE-QUESTIONS:

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.

You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

DEFINITION:

What is....?

Where does ... fit?

What group does ... belong to?

CHARACTERISTICS:
How would I describe...?
What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

EXAMPLES
What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

EXPERIENCE
What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

LESSON 76(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAME INSIGHT TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[1]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 52: THE MOUNT (AL-TUR)
SIGNS 52:29-52:49

Makkah: *So remind! **You** are not,*
*by the divine blessing of **your** Lord,*
a soothsayer nor one who is possessed. (52:29)
Or they say: A poet! We await for the setback
of fate for him. (52:30)
Say: Await for I am with the ones who are waiting. (52:31)
Or command their faculties of understanding to this?
Or are they a folk, ones who are defiant? (52:32)
Or say they: He fabricated it?
Nay! They believe not. (52:33)
Then, let them bring a discourse like it,
if they had been ones who are sincere. (52:34)
Or were they created out of nothing?

Or are they ones who are creators of themselves? (52:35)
Or created they the heavens and the earth?
Nay! They are not certain. (52:36)
*Or are the treasures of **your** Lord with them?*
Or are they ones who are registrars? (52:37)
Or have they a ladder by means of which they listen?
Then, let ones who are listening
bring a clear authority. (52:38)
Or has He daughters and they have sons? (52:39)
*Or have **you** asked them for a compensation*
so that they are from something owed
ones who will be weighed down? (52:40)
Or is the unseen with them
and they write it down? (52:41)
Or want they cunning?
But it is those who were ungrateful,
they are the ones who are outwitted. (52:42)
Or have they a god other than God?
Glory be to God above partners they ascribe! (52:43)
And if they consider pieces of the heaven descending,
they would say: Heaped up clouds! (52:44)
So forsake them until they encounter their day
in which they will be swooning. (52:45)
A Day when their cunning will avail them not
at all nor will they be helped. (52:46)
And, truly, for those who did wrong
there is a punishment besides that,
but most of them know not. (52:47)
*So have **you** patience*
*for the determination of **your** Lord,*
*for, truly, **you** are under Our eyes;*
*and glorify the praises of **your** Lord*
*when **you** hast stood up at the time of dawn,* (52:48)
and glorify at night and the drawing back of the stars. (52:49)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter now begins a series of rhetorical questions fashioned to a fast beat, presenting clear facts and addressing any remaining doubts the human soul might have. This round is full of strong challenges which no human heart can withstand: (52:29-44)

The address here is to the Prophet:*So remind! **You** are not, by the divine blessing of **your** Lord, a soothsayer nor one who is pos-*

sessed. (52:29) He should continue to remind people, undeterred by their rude and impolite behavior or their raise accusations. They used to say of him that he was a soothsayer, or a madman. These two descriptions are linked by the common notion that soothsayers received their information from the jinn, and that the jinn possessed those who were mad. Thus, the devil was the common element in both descriptions. What made them use either adjective—poet or sorcerer—to describe the Prophet was the fact that they were overwhelmed by the Quran. Its address was so unfamiliar to them even though, by nature, they were highly eloquent. Since they could not even think of admitting that it was Gods word, they felt that they needed to provide some plausible explanation for its superiority over anything they or others could say. Therefore, they claimed that it was imparted by the jinn, or that the jinn helped in its composition. They alleged that the man reciting it, i.e. Muhammad, was either a soothsayer receiving information from the jinn, or a sorcerer relying on the jinns help, or a poet who had a jinn friend, or a madman possessed by a jinn who gave him such wonderful speech.

This is a wicked accusation. Therefore, God consoles His Messenger showing it to be of no importance and reassuring him that he continues to enjoy His favors which allow no element of soothsaying or madness to affect him: *So remind! **You** are not, by the divine blessing of **your** Lord, a soothsayer nor one who is possessed.* (52:29) This is followed by a denunciation of their assertion that he was a poet: *Or they say: A poet! We await for the setback of fate for him.* (52:30) They indeed said that. *Say: Await for I am with the ones who are waiting.*(52:31) Soon enough, you will know who will end up in a better position.

Some of the Quraysh elders were accorded a position of respect on account of their perceived wisdom in conducting affairs. These are referred to here with a clear note of sarcasm, as their attitude to the Quranic message is the antithesis of wisdom and logic. The chapter sarcastically wonders whether the descriptions they attach to Muhammad are what their wise elders have arrived at? Or is it that they are arrogant, unjust people who do not listen to what the wise elders counsel: *Or are they a folk, ones who are defiant?* (52:32) The first question is loaded with sharp sarcasm; the second carries an accusation that should put them to shame. One or the other is indeed true when they adopt such an absurd attitude.

They were always rude in what they said about the Prophet. They even accused him of fabricating what he said to them. The chapter disapprovingly wonders whether they have made such a claim of fabrication against the Prophet, implying that such an alle-

gation could never have been made: *Or say they: He fabricated it?* (52:33) It immediately explains what lies behind such a singular allegation: *Nay! They believe not.* (52:33) The fact that in their hearts they did not really believe is the reason why they made such a statement. They simply cannot appreciate the true nature of the Quran. Had they appreciated it they would have known that no human being could have authored it, and that it could only have been delivered by a man of truth.

Since their hearts cannot appreciate the truth of this revelation, the chapter challenges them to provide irrefutable proof: *Then, let them bring a discourse like it, if they had been ones who are sincere.* (52:34) This challenge occurs several times in the Quran, yet those who deny the truth of the Quran could not take up the challenge. Furthermore, this challenge remains valid for the rest of time, and no one will ever be able to produce anything like the Quran.

Similar phenomena, as well as the subtle and the undeniably secret, combine to give the Quran its quality of an absolute miracle that remains valid for all time. No self respecting person can argue about this. He will readily admit the truth that stares him clearly in the face whenever he looks at the Quran with an open mind: *Then, let them bring a discourse like it, if they had been ones who are sincere.* (52:34)

The next question wonders at their own existence, a truth staring them in the face which they cannot explain in any way other than what the Quran states: God, the Creator of all that exists has brought them into existence: *Or were they created out of nothing? Or are they ones who are creators of themselves?* (52:35) The thought that they just existed out of nothing is against the logic of nature. It merits no argument. On the other hand, neither they nor any other creature can claim that they created themselves. As neither case can be logically entertained, there only remains the true case stated in the Quran, confirming that they are all creatures of God, the only Creator and Originator. Since no one can claim any share of His attributes of creation and origination, then Lordship and God belong solely to Him. This is clear and true logic.

The chapter then directs their attention to the heavens and the earth: are they the ones who created these? Needless to say, the heavens and the earth did not create themselves, in the same way as humans do not do so: *Or created they the heavens and the earth? Nay! They are not certain.* (52:36) Neither they, nor anyone listening to the logic of nature, claim that the heavens and the earth created themselves or came into existence without being created. Nor do those people claim that they created them. Yet they stand in front of people

like a question requiring an answer. When those very ungrateful were asked who created the heavens and the earth, they said that God created them. Yet this truth did not acquire such clarity as to produce its normal effects in their hearts and minds, leading them to formulate true and clear conviction: *Or created they the heavens and the earth? Nay! They are not certain.* (52:36)

The chapter then takes them a step lower than that of the creation of either themselves or the world around them. It asks them whether they own God's treasures or have control of these so as to be able to cause benefit and harm: *Or are the treasures of your Lord with them? Or are they ones who are registrars?* (52:37) If they make no such claim, then who owns these treasures and controls all things? The Quran says that God is the One who gives in plenty or in small measure, and who determines all affairs in the universe. This is the only explanation of what happens in the universe.

A further step down is then taken, and the chapter asks whether they have any means to listen to the source of revelation: *Or have they a ladder by means of which they listen? Then, let ones who are listening bring a clear authority.* (52:38) Muhammad tells them that he is a Messenger of God and that he receives revelations from on high. They reject this, claiming it as false. The chapter asks whether they have the means to climb up and listen to what He says, gaining information that supports their claims that he receives no such revelations, and asserts that the truth is contrary to what he says. This requires that they provide compelling evidence in support of their claims. This is an allusion to the great authority the Quran speaks with, yet they reject its clear and powerful message.

The chapter then brings into focus one of their absurd claims, alleging that the angels are God s daughters. It addresses them directly, adding an element of further reproach: *Or has He daughters and they have sons?* (52:39) They considered girls to be inferior to boys, and anyone of them would be full of gloom and frustration when they were told that they had begot girls. Yet they unashamedly attribute female offspring to God Almighty. Thus the chapter uses their own traditions and values to shame them.

They disliked receiving the Prophet's address. They disliked his message of guidance, feeling that it was a burden, even though it was given to them clear and pure. He asked no wages or payment for his trouble. The least that such a free presentation deserves is an appreciative response and a gentle refusal if they did not want to accept what he offered. Therefore, the chapter denounces their unjustified attitude: *Or have you asked them for a compensation so that they are from something owed ones who will be weighed down?* (52:40) Since

they are not asked to pay anything for it, their attitude appears to be totally indefensible and unwarranted. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Again, the chapter puts before them their true position in this universe. They are creatures with certain limitations. They are given access to a certain portion of this world, beyond which they cannot penetrate. It all belongs to the Creator. What lies beyond their reach is God's own preserve and they have no knowledge of it: *Or is the unseen with them and they write it down?* (52:41) They are well aware that they have no knowledge of what lies beyond their perception even though it is a reality. They have no means of accessing it. It is God who writes in its record whatever He determines for His creatures, while they cannot write a thing in it.

The One who is in control of that hidden reality and whatever occurs in that hidden realm is indeed the One who can determine and scheme. How come, then, that in their position of inability to record anything they try to scheme against you, aiming to entrap you? Why do they imagine that they can determine any future event, saying of the Prophet that he is a poet who would soon die? *Or want they cunning? But it is those who were ungrateful, they are the ones who are outwitted.* (52:42) It is they who are subject to whatever is determined by the Creator and Controller of the hidden reality. His schemes will certainly apply to them and take their effect. He is the best of all schemers.

Does such a deity, if they have one, protect them against what God determines for them? *Or have they a god other than God? Glory be to God above partners they ascribe!* (52:43)

With this exaltation of God and its clear statement of His Oneness this series of rhetorical questions, characterized by a powerful beat, is concluded. All their arguments have been refuted, and all doubts removed. They are presented with the clear truth and left without any excuse to justify their hostility to it. At this point their stubbornness in rejecting the clear truth is put clearly before their eyes: (52:44) This means that even if God decides to punish them by making a part of the sky fall down upon them, destroying their world, and they see it falling on their heads, they would still claim that it is but a mass of clouds, bringing rain and prosperity. It is just like the one who denies the truth of what he sees, even with a sword piercing his neck, as it were.

Leave them, then, until they face the day when they will be thunderstruck; the day when none of their scheming will be of any avail to them, when they will receive no support. Closer at hand more suffering awaits the wrongdoers, but most of them are not aware of it.

So, await in patience your Lord's judgement; for you are under Our watchful eyes. Extol your Lord's limitless glory and praise when you rise, and extol His glory at night, and at the time when the stars retreat. (52:45-52:49)

This final passage begins with a clear warning against what will happen on that frightening day when the trumpet is first blown and they are all totally stunned. This takes place shortly before the resurrection, when nothing will be of benefit and no help can be expected from any quarter. If, in this life, they are able to scheme and take action, nothing can stave off what will happen on that day. However, they will also endure another type of suffering before that. This is left unspecified, but it is certain to happen: (52:47)

Thus this long and determined attack is concluded, bringing the ungrateful face to face with the severe punishments that await them, one close at hand and the other to occur later. The chapter then speaks to the Prophet who was the target of their false accusations. He is instructed to face such adversity with patience. He is to remain steadfast, continuing his efforts to advocate God's message, and to leave the decision to God who determines whatever He will: (52:48)

Yet this directive is coupled with a confirmation of God s kindly care. Such loving care is certain to remove all hardship that the Prophet may have to face. Thus, perseverance in the face of adversity becomes acceptable, and even welcome, since it is the means to such compassionate care: (52:48) This expression is unique, describing a position that has never been attained by any human being. Nowhere else in the Quran is this expression used, even though some similar expressions of overflowing care are used.

Finally, the way to maintain this close contact is outlined: (52:48-52:49) Thus, throughout the day, as one wakes up, during the night, at the time when stars begin to disappear at dawn, there is a clear chance to enjoy such friendly care. Glorifying God imparts strength, friendliness and the chance of a heartfelt address to God Almighty. All this stems from a dearly loving heart!

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains.

LESSON 77(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

QURANIC CHAPTER 67: THE DOMINION (AL-MULK)
SIGNS 67:1-67:14

Makkah: *Blessed be He in whose hands*
is the dominion
and He is Powerful over everything! (67:1)
He Who created death and this life
that He try you as to which of you
is fairer in action.
And He is The Almighty, The Forgiving, (67:2)
Who created the seven heavens one on another?
Thou hast not seen any imperfection
in the creation of The Merciful.
*Then, return **your** sight! Have **you** seen any flaw?* (67:3)
*Again, return **your** sight twice again*
*and **your** sight will turn about to **you**,*
one that is dazzled while it is weary. (67:4)
And, certainly, We made to appear pleasing
the lower heaven with lamps
and We assigned them things to stone satans.
We made ready for them the punishment of the blaze. (67:5)
And for those who were ungrateful to their Lord
is the punishment of hell.
Miserable will be the Homecoming! (67:6)
When they were cast down into it,
they would hear it sighing while it is boiling (67:7)
and about to burst with rage.

As often as a unit of them were cast down into it, the ones who are keepers there asked them:
Approaches not a warner to you? (67:8)
They will say: Yea! A warner drew near us, but we denied him.
And we said: God sent not down anything.
You are not but in a great going astray. (67:9)
And they would say: If we had been hearing or are reasonable,
we would not have been Companions of the Blaze. (67:10)
And they would acknowledge their impiety.
Then, hell for the Companions of the Blaze! (67:11)
Truly, those who dread their Lord in the unseen,
for them is forgiveness and a great compensation. (67:12)
Keep your saying secret or publish it, truly,
He is Knowing of what is in your breasts. (67:13)
Would He who created not know?
And He is The Subtle, The Aware. (67:14)

COMMENTARY°

The key to the whole chapter and the axis of the movement it sets in our hearts, minds, senses and feelings are found in its inspiring opening: (67:1) It is from the truth of Gods dominion and power that all images presented in the chapter as well as all hidden and apparent movements to which it alludes, branch out. Thus, the creation of life and death, testing people through them, the creation of the heavens and their adornment with lamps that serve as missiles pelting devils, the preparation of hell as it is described, the knowledge of what is secret and public, making the earth easy for humans to live upon, the destruction of early communities who rejected divine guidance, holding birds in the sky, Gods overwhelming power and His exaltation, providing sustenance to all as He pleases, His creation of people and granting them hearing, eyesight and hearts, causing them to multiply on earth and then gathering them all, His full knowledge of the hereafter which is His own preserve, the meting out of punishment to the ungrateful, the provision of water, which is essential to life, and the ability to take it away whenever He wishes all emanate from the fact that to God belongs all dominion in the universe. He has power over all things.

The chapter states a long sequence of truths that flow uninterruptedly with successive impressions and ideas to explain its concise, yet comprehensive, opening. It is, therefore, difficult to divide into passages. Let us, then, look at it as it develops its theme from start to finish.

Blessed be He in whose hand all dominion rests; who has power over all things. *Blessed be He in whose hands is the dominion and He is Powerful over everything!* (67:1)

Coming as it does at the outset of the chapter, this glorification imparts a feeling of the multiplication of God's blessings and their continued outflowing. The fact that dominion is mentioned alongside it suggests that this blessing flows over Gods kingdom. Therefore, it is glorified throughout the universe, as it is glorified with God Himself. It sounds like a hymn echoed throughout the universe and within every creatures heart. It begins with the divine word in Gods glorious book, the Quran, inscribed in a well-guarded record, and which spreads throughout the universe.

He is the Sovereign who has full control over the universe; *Blessed be He in whose hands is the dominion and He is Powerful over everything!* (67:1) He conducts its affairs. When this truth is established in the human heart, its direction and destination become well defined. It no longer turns to anyone or relies on anyone other than the Sovereign to whom all dominion belongs. It feels free from submission to anyone else. It, thus, addresses its worship to none other than Him.

Nothing escapes Him, and no one diverts or limits His will. He creates and does what He wants. He has full power over everything. His will is subject to neither limitation nor restriction. As this truth becomes well established, the human mind is free to perceive God s will and action that are free of any restriction our senses, perception of reality or what lies beyond it, or indeed our imagination can visualize. God's power extends far beyond anything that a human mind can entertain. After all, human imagination is restricted in its expectation of change by what is familiar to it. Appreciation of the truth of God's limitless power removes this restriction. Therefore, a believer expects God's power to accomplish anything, without limit or restriction. *He Who created death and this life that He try you as to which of you is fairer in action.* (67:2)

One of the results of His complete dominion of the universe and absolute power over all things is that He created death and life. The term 'death' in this context includes the death that precedes life and the one that follows its end, whereas 'life' includes this first life and the life to come. All these are of God's creation as stated in this sign. In this way, it establishes this truth in the human mind, alerting it to the test it aims to set. Nothing, then, comes by blind coincidence or without purpose. The test aims to establish, in reality, what God knows in advance of people's behavior on earth and the reward they merit for their actions: *And He is The Almighty, The Forgiving.* (67:2)

Thus, we should always be on the alert, considering every thought and every action. we should not be oblivious to anything. This also means that we are unable to rest. Therefore, the sign ends with the comment: It thus gives reassurance to every God-fearing servant. God is certainly The Almighty, but He is at the same time The Forgiving. When a persons heart is alert, aware that this life is a test, and tries to keep on the right track, he is reassured of God's forgiveness and grace. This gives us all the rest and comfort we need.

The truth the Quranic message establishes in peoples hearts does not depict God as chasing humans to afflict or punish them. He only wants them to be aware of the purpose behind their existence and of their true nature. He wants them to rise to the level worthy of His honor when He blew of His own spirit into them, elevating them above many of His other creations. When they have absorbed this truth and hold to it, they will find that His grace, mercy and forgiveness are always available to them.

This great truth is then anchored to the universe at its broadest and highest. At the same time, the universe is shown to be related to the truth of reward and requital in the life to come: (67:3-67:11)

Everything this passage mentions is a result of the first sign and is an aspect of the complete sovereignty God exercises over His dominion and of His free, unrestricted power. Everything it contains confirms what the second sign states of the creation of death and life to test people and then their reward according to what their test proves.

Whilst the Quran always turns our attentions to Gods creation generally, it also specifically directs us to the heavens above. The perfection of His creation is enough to make our eyes turn back in absolute amazement: ***You have not seen any imperfection in the creation of The Merciful. Then, return your sight! Have you seen any flaw?*** (67:3) No flaw, no defect, no imbalance is ever seen in Gods creation: (67:3) Can you detect anything out of place? ***Again, return your sight twice again and your sight will turn about to you, one that is dazzled while it is weary.***(67:4) You might have overlooked something in your first perusal, so make sure by looking again and again.

Posing such a challenge heightens the importance of what people are being directed towards. In this way, they are made to look seriously at the heavens and at Gods creation in general. It is precisely such a contemplating, examining look that the Quran wants people to cast. Familiarity breeds contempt, and our long presence in this world takes much away from its fascinating perfection and meticulous cohesion.

Like perfection, beauty is also deliberately placed in the uni-

verse. Indeed, the two stem from the same truth. When perfection is attained, beauty is a part of it. Therefore, having drawn our attention to the perfection in the creation of the heavens, the Quran now mentions their beauty: *And, certainly, We made to appear pleasing the lower heaven with lamps and We assigned them things to stone satans. We made ready for them the punishment of the blaze.* (67:5) What is the lowest heaven? Perhaps it is the one nearest to the earth and its people to whom the Quran is addressed. The lamps mentioned here may refer to the stars and planets that we see with the naked eye as we look up to the sky. This fits with the invitation to look at the sky at a time when they had nothing other than their eyes and what they saw of shining stars.

The chapter states that the lamps which adorn the lowest heaven also have another function: *And, certainly, We made to appear pleasing the lower heaven with lamps and We assigned them things to stone satans. We made ready for them the punishment of the blaze.* (67:5) We have established a rule in this commentary that we do not try to add any explanation to any matter relating to the world beyond our faculties of perception. We limit ourselves only to whatever God tells us about them, leaving the Quranic text as it is. This is certainly enough to state whatever is needed for our comprehension. We certainly believe that a different type of creation is the devils. Some description of them is given in the Quran, and we have referred to these in our commentary wherever they occur. We have though added nothing to what the Quran states. We, therefore, believe that these lamps, which God placed as adornments of the lowest heaven, are also used as missiles to pelt devils with. This may be in the form of shooting stars, as mentioned in another chapter:

The chapter speaks further about what God has in store for such devils, other than these pelting missiles: *And, certainly, We made to appear pleasing the lower heaven with lamps and We assigned them things to stone satans. We made ready for them the punishment of the blaze.* (67:5) This means that they will be pelted with missiles in this present life and that they will suffer the blazing fire in the life to come. Perhaps this comes as a follow up to what the chapter says about the heavens and prior to what it says about the ungrateful. The relation between devils and unbelievers is obvious. Thus, having mentioned the heavens and their lamps, the chapter refers to these lamps' other function, as missiles for pelting devils. Then, as it speaks of what is prepared for these devils in the life to come, the chapter mentions what is made ready for the ungrateful who follow those devils: *And for those who were ungrateful to their Lord is the punishment of hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming!* (67:6) It then

carries on to give us an image of hell, full of rage and anger, as it receives the ungrateful: (67:7-67:8)

The same is expressed by the angels who guard hell: *As often as a unit of them were cast down into it, the ones who are keepers there asked them: Approaches not a warner to you?* (67:8) It is clear that the question is meant as a rebuke. They share hells anger and they participate in meting out punishment. Nothing hurts a person in distress more than a rebuke. The answer is given in humility, acknowledging their own lack of judgement and utter stupidity when they denied God's Oneness, relying on no evidence whatsoever. Furthermore, they make a wild accusation against God s messengers, who have always stated the truth, clear and simple: *They will say: Yea! A warner drew near us, but we denied him. And we said: God sent not down anything. You are not but in a great going astray.* (67:9)

This is a prayer: *Would He who created not know? And He is The Subtle, The Aware.* (67:14) made by God against them. This after they have acknowledged their guilt, at a time and place they denied would ever occur. Prayer by God denotes a judgment. Thus, they are far removed from God's mercy. They cannot hope for forgiveness or exemption from punishment. They dwell in the blazing fire. What a fate!

It is customary in the Quran to portray images of the Day of Judgment in two contrasting scenes. Therefore, we now have a scene showing the believers as compared with the ungrateful. In this way, we have the full meaning of the statement at the chapter's outset: *He Who created death and this life that He try you as to which of you is fairer in action. And He is The Almighty, The Forgiving.* (67:2) Having mentioned the test, the chapter completes its account by speaking of the reward: *Truly, those who dread their Lord in the unseen.* (67:12)

The phrase beyond the reach of human perception expresses the meaning of the Quranic word *ghayibn* In its use in this sign it includes their fear of God whom they have never seen, as well as their fear of Him when they are alone, unseen by any human eye. Both are fine qualities, reflecting a pure feeling and a profound understanding which together qualify a person to receive what the chapter expresses in general terms as *for them is forgiveness and a great compensation.*

To watch God when one is alone, unseen by any other human being is the gauge of a heart's sensitivity and the quality that keeps conscience alive. Anas ibn Malik reports that some of the Prophets Companions said to him: Messenger of God! When we are with you

we are at a certain standard, but when we depart we are at a different one.

He asked: How do you feel with regard to your Lord?

They answered: God is our Lord in secret and open situations.

He said: Yours is not a case of hypocrisy.

The bond of God is, then, the essential criterion. Once it is firm in ones heart, one is a true believer.

This last sign provides a bridge linking what precedes it with what comes after. It emphasizes God's knowledge of everything, whether it is said in public or private. He, thus, challenges humanity. It is He who created them and He who knows their inner souls:

Keep your saying secret or publish it, truly, He is Knowing of what is in your breasts. Would He who created not know? And He is The Subtle, The Aware. (67:13-67:14)

They are told they can say what they like, in whatever way they like; it is all equally known to God, for He knows what is concealed deeper even than secrets. *Keep your saying secret or publish it, truly, He is Knowing of what is in your breasts.* (67:13) Even those thoughts that are kept deep within ones breast, unexpressed, are also known to Him. It is He who created these thoughts, just as He created the breasts that keep them. *And He is The Subtle, The Aware.*(67:14) The One who has created them must surely know all about them. (67:14) His knowledge encompasses every little detail and every hidden feeling and thought.

The Quran makes sure of instilling this truth in peoples minds because this gives them the correct understanding. Additionally, it keeps people alert and conscious of God, able to fulfil the trust believers are assigned in this world. This is the trust of faith, maintaining justice and dedication to God in both action and intention. Such understanding cannot be achieved until we clearly realize that we, our hearts and minds, our secrets and intentions, are all of God's creation; it is all fully known to Him. When a believer attains such realization, he purges his heart of bad intentions and fleeting thoughts just as he keeps his open behavior and expressed statements on the right track. He deals with God in all situations, public or private, open or secret.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully. Try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Have you tried the strategy below? How would your rate yourself?

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

LESSON 77(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[2]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues

which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[3]

QURANIC CHAPTER 67: THE DOMINION (AL-MULK) SIGNS 67:15-67:30

Makkah: *It is He who made the earth*
submissive to you,
so walk in its tracts and eat of His provision.
To Him is the rising. (67:15)
Were you safe from He Who is in the heaven
that He will not cause the earth
to swallow you up when it spins? (67:16)
Were you safe from He Who is in the heavens
that He will not send against you a sand storm?
You will know how My warner has been right! (67:17)
And, certainly, those who were before them denied.
Then, how horrible had been My reproach! (67:18)
Consider they not the birds above them
ones standing in ranks and closing their wings?
Nothing holds them back but The Merciful.
Truly, He is Seeing of everything. (67:19)
Who is this who would be an army for you
to help you other than The Merciful?
Truly, ones who are ungrateful are not but in delusion. (67:20)
Or who is this who will provide for you
if He held back His provision?
Nay! They were resolute,
turning in disdain and aversion. (67:21)
Then is whoever walks as one who is prone
on his face better guided,
or he who walks without fault on a straight path? (67:22)
Say: It is He who caused you to grow
and assigned you the ability to hear, sight, and minds.
But you give little thanks! (67:23)
Say: It is He who made you numerous on the earth
and to Him you will be assembled. (67:24)
And they say: When is this promise if you had been
ones who are sincere? (67:25)

Say: The knowledge of this is only with God
and I am only a clear warner. (67:26)
But when they saw the punishment nigh, the faces were troubled
of those who were ungrateful.
And it will be said to them:
This is what you had been calling for. (67:27)
Say: Considered you if God would cause me to perish
and whoever is with me or had mercy on us,
who will grant protection to the ones who are ungrateful
from a painful punishment? (67:28)
Say: He is The Merciful.
We believed in Him and in Him we put our trust.
Then, you will know who he is,
one who is clearly gone astray. (67:29)
Say: Considered you? If it came to be in the morning
that your water be sinking into the ground,
who approaches you with assistance from water springs ? (67:30)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter now refers to the earth, which God has created for us to live on. He smoothed it and provided in it all the means that enable it to support human life: *It is He who made the earth submissive to you, so walk in its tracts and eat of His provision. To Him is the rising.* (67:15)

The Arabic term used in the chapter to describe the earth as easy to live upon which is normally used to describe an animal that is'broken so that we can use it as a mount. Science tells us that use of this term is apt, because the earth which we see as stable and motionless is nonetheless certainly moving. What is more is that it is running at a fast pace, without stopping. Nevertheless, it is broken so as not to throw off its rider and not to trample him as it goes along. It does not shake him as it moves, but rather gives him an easy ride. Moreover, it is just like a mount that produces milk, yielding much.

When mans heart is alert to this great fact, God, the Creator, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful, allows him to go about wherever he wishes, and to eat of His provisions: *It is He who made the earth submissive to you, so walk in its tracts and eat of His provision. To Him is the rising.* (67:15)

Do you feel secure that He who is in heaven will not cause the earth to swallow you up when it quakes? Or do you feel secure that He who is in heaven will not let loose against you a sandy whirlwind. You will come to know the truth of My warning. Those who lived

before them also disbelieved. How terrible was My rejection of them? (67:16-67:18)

This strong warning now gives way to a call to reflect on something that we often sees but rarely consider and contemplate. It is yet another aspect of God's great design of creation and of His limitless power: *Consider they not the birds above them ones standing in ranks and closing their wings? Nothing holds them back but The Merciful. Truly, He is Seeing of everything.* (67:19)

The next sign, however, returns the ungrateful to fear. Thus, they alternate between feelings of fear and admiration of Gods creation: *Who is this who would be an army for you to help you other than The Merciful? Truly, ones who are ungrateful are not but in delusion.* (67:20)

Who will provide for you, if He were to withhold His provision? Yet they persist in their arrogance and in rebellion. *Or who is this who will provide for you if He held back His provision?* (67: 21)

Every mental endeavor we make is part of God's provision. Is He not the Creator who gave us the ability to think and invent? Besides, what can anyone produce unless he uses a substance initially made by God, and utilizes natural and human factors provided by Him? *Nay! They were resolute, turning in disdain and aversion.* (67:21)

On top of all this, they described the Prophet and those who followed him as having gone astray, claiming that they were better guided than them. The same is levelled at the advocates of faith by ungrateful in every community. Therefore, the chapter paints a true to life image of the status of both parties: *Then is whoever walks as one who is prone on his face better guided, or he who walks without fault on a straight path?* (67:22) The one who grovels on his face is either someone who actually walks on his face instead of the right way using his feet and legs, or is someone who trips as he walks, falling on his face. He then lifts himself up only to trip again. Both are miserable conditions, beset with affliction and hardship. Neither leads to proper guidance or goodness. How far removed such conditions are from that of one who walks upright, steady along a way that is free of pitfalls and crookedness, fully aware of the goal towards which he moves.

The first is the situation of a miserable person who has deviated from God's way and, as such, become deprived of His guidance. He is on a collision course with Gods laws and creatures, taking up a way different from theirs. Therefore, he is always falling and tripping, tired and lost. The second situation is that of a happy person, benefiting by Gods guidance and enjoying travelling along the way

charted by believers who always glorify and praise Him. Thus, he joins the procession of the entire universe and of all living and inanimate creatures.

In connection with following guidance or error, the chapter reminds people of the means God has provided for them and the faculties of understanding He has equipped them with, yet still they do not put these to good use: *Say: It is He who caused you to grow and assigned you the ability to hear, sight, and minds. But you give little thanks!* (67:23)

A reminder follows making it clear that God has not created humanity and given them all their distinctive qualities haphazardly, without a definite purpose: it is all for the purpose of initiating life that incorporates a test and then the administering of reward and requital at the end: *Say: It is He who made you numerous on the earth and to Him you will be assembled.* (67:24)

The Arabic term used in the sign to denote multiplication also signifies spreading far and wide, which provides a contrast in both image and meaning with the second action of gathering. The chapter gives both images in a short sign so as to present these vividly before our eyes. Thus, people who have spread all over the earth will realize that they are moving towards an end that brings them all together for an ultimate purpose: one that brings the test of life and death to its final goal.

The chapter then mentions their doubts concerning this promised gathering: *And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (67:25) Such a question is put only by one who is in serious doubt or one who is in stubborn denial. Knowing the exact time of the fulfilment of the promise adds nothing to its truth. It has nothing to do with the fact that it is the time appointed for requital after the test has been completed. It is the same to them whether it takes place tomorrow or after millions of years. What is certain is that it is going to happen. Then they will be gathered to receive what they deserve for what they have done in their lives.

God has not imparted knowledge of the Day of Judgment to anyone of His creatures, because such knowledge serves none of their interests. Indeed, imparting such information is against the very nature of this day and has no bearing on the duties people are asked to fulfil in preparation for it. On the contrary, withholding such information from all creatures and keeping it with God Almighty is an act of wisdom that serves human interests. Therefore, the answer: *Say: The knowledge of this is only with God and I am only a clear warner.* (67:26)

We see them here putting forward questions that imply doubts and being given firm and decisive answers. The chapter then presents

an image depicting the subject of their questioning, this day has now arrived. The promise they have seriously doubted is fulfilled and they face it here and now: *But when they saw the punishment nigh, the faces were troubled of those who were ungrateful. And it will be said to them: This is what you had been calling for.* (67:27) Here is this day that you have always claimed will never take place; it is staring you in the face.

The ungrateful hoped that the Prophet and the small group that followed him would soon perish, thereby ridding them of a problem that caused much anxiety. They counselled each other to persist until he so died, when they would be able to patch things up and resume their life as before. Sometimes they voiced the claim that God would take Muhammad and his followers away because they were in error, fabricating lies against God! Therefore, as the chapter puts before them the scene of gathering and requital on the Day of Judgment, it alerts them to the fact that even if their wish were fulfilled, they would not be immune from facing the consequences of their disbelief. Therefore, it is far better for them to be well prepared for this appointed day, shown to them as though it were taking place there and then: *Say: Considered you if God would cause me to perish and whoever is with me or had mercy on us, who will grant protection to the ones who are ungrateful from a painful punishment?* (67:28)

The chapter then outlines the believers' attitude, one based on faith, and how they place their full trust in God, relying on Him. They are very confident, assured that they are on the right course, well guided, and that the ungrateful are in manifest error: *Say: He is The Merciful. We believed in Him and in Him we put our trust.* (67:29)

That God is mentioned here by His great attribute, the Lord of Grace, refers to His profound and infinite mercy which He grants to His Messenger and the believers who follow him. He will not destroy them as the ungrateful wish He would.

The chapter instructs the Prophet to highlight the bonds they have with their Lord, the Lord of Grace. The first is the bond of faith, in Him we believe and this is followed by one of total reliance, and in Him we place our trust. The phraseology of this sign suggests a close relation between them and God who favors His Messenger and the believers with the permission to announce this close relationship. Indeed, God instructs the Prophet to announce it, as if He is saying to him: Do not be afraid of what the ungrateful say. You and those with you are attached to Me, and you are permitted by Me to declare that you are the recipient of this honor, so announce it to them.' What a great gesture of honor!

This is followed by an implicit warning: *Then, you will know*

who he is, one who is clearly gone astray. (67:29) This is phrased in such a way that should make them ashamed of their stubborn rejection of the divine faith. It also invites them to review their positions, lest they be the ones who are in complete error. If they are, this inevitably makes them subject to painful suffering, as clearly stated in the previous sign: *Say: Considered you if God would cause me to perish and whoever is with me or had mercy on us, who will grant protection to the ones who are ungrateful from a painful punishment?* (67:28) At the same time, the chapter does not outrightly brand them as being in error, so as not to harden their attitude. This method of advocacy is one that works well with some people.

The chapter ends with a note that mentions punishment in this present life in the form of depriving the ungrateful of the most essential thing of life, namely, water: *Say: Considered you? If it came to be in the morning that your water be sinking into the ground, who approaches you with assistance from water springs?* (67:30)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:
I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

LESSON 78(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 69: THE REALITY (AL-HAQQAH) SIGNS 69:1-69:37

Makkah: *The Reality!* (69:1)
What is The Reality? (69:2)
*And what would cause **you** to recognize*
what The Reality is? (69:3)
Makkah: Salih and the People of Thamud;
Hud and the People of Aad (69:4)
Makkah: Salih and the People of Thamud (69:5)
Makkah: Hud and the People of Aad (69:6)
Makkah: Hud and the People of Aad (69:7)
*Then, will **you** see of them any ones who endure?* (69:8)
Makkah: Moses and Pharaoh (69:9)
Makkah: Moses and Pharaoh (69:10)
Makkah: Moses and Pharaoh (69:11)
Makkah: Moses and Pharaoh (69:12)
Makkah: *And when the trumpet*
will be blown with one gust, (69:13)
and the earth and the mountains will be mounted,
then, will be ground to powder in one grinding, (69:14)
so on that Day will have come to pass
The Reality (69:15)
and the heaven will be split.
For on that day they will be
as ones who are frail, (69:16)
and the angels will be at its borders.
*The Throne of **your** Lord above them*
will be carried by eight on that Day. (69:17)
That Day you will be presented.
Your private matters will not be hidden. (69:18)
And for him who will be given his book in his right hand
he will say: Lo and behold! Recite my book! (69:19)
Truly, I thought that I would be

one who encounters my reckoning. (69:20)
And he will have a well-pleasing, pleasant life (69:21)
in a magnificent Garden. (69:22)
Its clusters, that which draws near. (69:23)
Eat and drink wholesomely for what you did in the past,
in the days, that which have gone by. (69:24)
But as for him who is given his book to his left he will say:
O would that I was not given my book, (69:25)
and that I was not informed of my reckoning! (69:26)
O would that my death had been my expiry! (69:27)
My wealth availed me not. (69:28)
Perished from me is my authority. (69:29)
It will be said: Take him and restrict him. (69:30)
Again, broil him in hellfire (69:31)
and after that in a chain of the length of seventy cubits.
So insert him in it. (69:32)
Truly, he had not been believing in God, The Sublime, (69:33)
nor did he urge food for the needy. (69:34)
This day he is not to have any loyal friend here (69:35)
and no food, but foul pus (69:36)
which none eat but ones of inequity. (69:37)

COMMENTARY°

The words used here, their very sound, meaning and construction contribute to this ambience. The chapter starts with one Arabic word, a*l-Haqqah*, translated here as The Reality. It is mentioned on its own as a subject that has no predicate. This is followed by a question that emphasizes the fact that the event referred to is extremely grave. This question is followed by the spreading of an air of mystery, so as to take the subject matter out of the area of mans knowledge: *And what would cause you to recognize what The Reality is?* (69:3) The chapter, however, does not answer the question. Instead, it leaves us stirring at this awesome event about which we know nothing. Indeed, we cannot know anything about it because it is beyond our knowledge.

All such devastation and catastrophe seems, however, to be exceedingly small when compared to the horrors of the Striker, the Inevitable Truth, which those ungrateful deny, even though they have seen what befell earlier communities that denied it. These fates, terrible catastrophes in their own right, are of a limited nature compared to the absolute calamity that the Striker brings about on the day to be witnessed by all. Having thus introduced this horror in general

terms, the chapter now portrays its details: (69:13-69:17)

We believe that there will be a single sounding of the trumpet and that this will be followed by these events. We do not know any details, however, because these events belong to a world about which we have no information except these texts. We have no other source to refer to. Moreover, no further details can add to the significance of these statements. To try to learn such details is a useless exercise which we are instructed not to resort to. When the trumpet is sounded once, a huge movement will take place: *And the earth and the mountains will be mounted, then, will be ground to powder in one grinding.* (69:14) The image of the earth and the mountains being lifted high and thrown so that they are crushed and levelled is absolutely terrifying. We walk over the earth in peace and reassurance, feeling that it is firm in its position. We look at the mountains and feel how stable and firmly placed they are. Yet both are lifted and sent crashing, as if they were a ball in a child's hand. How small we must feel, and how small is our world, compared with such great power.

What happens when all this takes place? It is the very thing the chapter is speaking about: *So on that Day will have come to pass The Reality.* (69:15) What is certain is the Day of Resurrection, which is called by many names such as *al-Haqqah, al-Qariah,* or *al-Waqiah* as if the certainty of its happening is part of its very nature. Using this last name here is deliberate, intended to give a particular impression countering all doubt and denial. Yet this is not all. The skies will also be seriously affected: *And the heaven will be split. For on that day they will be as ones who are frail,*(69:16) We do not know for certain to what the term the heaven refers to here, but this statement and similar ones referring to celestial events on that great day speak of a collapse of the order that keeps the universe functioning according to an accurate and fascinating plan. Once this perfect order collapses, all its different parts will be in chaos.

An air of majesty then spreads over the entire stage. All the sounds of the trumpet, the crashing, the rending asunder of stars then dies down, and we have an image of the Almighty's Throne: *The Throne of your Lord above them will be carried by eight on that Day.* (69:17) The angels are on all sides of the sky that has been torn and rent asunder, and the throne is there above them carried by eight of their number. Are they eight angels, or eight rows of angels, or eight classes, or some other eight known only to God? We do not know who or what they are, just as we do not know what the throne is like, or how it is carried. Knowledge of all these details has not been imparted to us, and God wants us to know of them only what He tells us. Therefore, we leave aside all details of these unknown matters

and concentrate instead on the majestic aura they impart to the whole scene. This is what we are meant to feel as the events of that awesome day are reported. *That Day you will be presented. Your private matters will not be hidden.* (69:18)

The chapter now presents two images, one of the winners and one of the losers. This is again done as though it is happening at this very instant: (69:19-69:24)

The account given here of these blessings includes some aspects of material comfort. This suited the state of those addressed by the Quran at the time. They were still newcomers to the Quranic message; it had not yet given its distinctive hue to their feelings, nor had they had the chance to appreciate luxuries higher than any material comfort: (69:21-69:24)

Such blessings and comforts are coupled with a special honor that is felt in the fact that the chapter makes its address directly to those deserving of it, saying to them to eat and drink as they please. This type of blessing is the one those who were the first to be addressed by the Quran could appreciate in the early stages of their new bond with God. Their feelings had not yet attained the sublime level that finds in being close to God what is much higher than any material comfort or luxury. Yet this type can satisfy the needs of many people across many generations. (69:25-69:37)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.

Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.

Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a way t o get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.

Do not negate or embarrass the students.

Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.

Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Why? If that is so, what follows? Are you assuming that...?
How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...? For example? Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?
Can I summarize your point as ...? What is your reason for saying that?
What do you mean when using this word? Is it possible that...?
Are there other ways of looking at it?
How else could we view this matter?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked. Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

LESSON 78(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present*

and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 69: THE REALITY (AL-HAQQAH) SIGNS 69:38-69:52

Makkah: *So I swear an oath*
by what you perceive (69:38)
and what you perceive not. (69:39)
Truly, it is the saying of a generous Messenger, (69:40)
and not the saying of a poet.
Little do you believe! (69:41)
Nor is it the saying of a soothsayer.
Little do you recollect! (69:42)
It is a sending down from the Lord of the worlds. (69:43)
And if he fabricated against Us some sayings, (69:44)
truly, We would have taken him by the right hand (69:45)
and, again, We would have severed his life-vein. (69:46)
And there is none of you who would be
ones who hinder Us from him. (69:47)
And, truly, it is an admonition
to ones who are God-conscious. (69:48)
And We well know that there are among you,
ones who deny. (69:49)
And, truly, it will be a regret
for ones who are ungrateful. (69:50)
And, truly, it is The Truth of certainty. (69:51)
So glorify the Name of your Lord, The Sublime. (69:52)

COMMENTARY°

So, no friend has he here today, nor any food except the filth that none other than the sinners eat. *This day he is not to have any loyal friend here and no food, but foul pus which none eat but ones of inequity.* (69:35-69:37)

This complements the announcement from on high concerning the fate of such a miserable person. Since he had no faith in God and did not encourage the feeding of the needy, he has no friends, and he is deprived of all favors. His food is the filth that pours out of the people of hell. Such is the food that serves well those hardened hearts that are devoid of all compassion. It is a type of food that *which none eat but ones of inequity.* (69:37) He is essentially one of the sinners.

THE QURANIC REVELATIONS

The chapter now makes a categorical statement defining the nature of the Quran recited by God s noble Messenger, but received by the Arabs with derision and ridicule: (69:38-69:43)

The statement is very clear, definite and certain. Therefore, it requires no oath to prove it or to confirm its source. It comes from the truth. It requires no further confirmation. *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:38-69:39) This is an expression that imparts a sense of greatness to both the visible world and the world beyond. Needless to say, the universe is far greater than what people can say, and indeed what they can imagine. Indeed, all that humans can see and imagine is what they need to fulfil their role of building the earth, as God has willed placing them in charge of it. Within the great universe, their planet, the earth, is no more than a barely visible particle. Humans cannot go beyond what they are allowed to see and comprehend of this vast universe, its laws and secrets.

Thus, using its own tools, science has started to break through the prison walls of materialism to breathe the fresh air to which the Quran refers in statements:*So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:38-69:39) Yet in our own midst there are some who continue to try to close the windows with both their hands, to prevent the light from coming through, preferring to live in darkness. They do so in the name of science, without realizing that intellectually they lag behind science, and spiritually they lag behind religion. Moreover, they are backward, unable to move freely in pursuit of the truth. All this backwardness puts them in a position unworthy of man, the creature God has honored. (69:40-69:43)

Poetry has its musical beat and it may be full of fine and beautiful images, but it can never be confused with the Quran. There is a fundamental difference between the two. The Quran establishes a complete concept of life based on truth, a holistic approach and clear notions of God's existence, the universe and life. Poetry, on the other hand, is an expression of a series of charged reactions that rarely reflects a consistent vision of life and this in situations of pleasure and anger, freedom and restriction, love and hate, as well as other changing influences.

Furthermore, this consistent concept the Quran lays down is initiated in whole and in part by the Quran itself, and attributed to its divine source. Every aspect of this concept suggests that it is not of man's making. It is not in the nature of human beings that they should come up with a complete concept of the universe. They have never done so in the past, nor will they ever be able to do so. We have a

complete record of what human intelligence has come up with concerning the universe and the power that controls its system. It is all recorded in philosophical and intellectual works, as well as in poetry. When these are set side by side with the Quranic concept, it is clearly apparent that the latter is not the work of a human mind. It is of a unique status, one that distinguishes it from all that the human intellect can produce.

The same applies to soothsaying. Never in human history, up to the present moment, has a soothsayer produced a complete code of living like the one delineated in the Quran. All that soothsayers produce is limited to rhyming sentences containing some aspects of wisdom or ambiguous references.

Authoritative biographical works about the Prophet report several events when the elders of the Quraysh privately rejected this whole idea. Ibn Ishaq reports a meeting attended by a large number of Makkans and chaired, as it were, by al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, who was one of the more respected Quraysh elders. This was held shortly before the pilgrimage season and the idea was to agree an appropriate strategy:

In his opening address, al-Walid said: Now that the pilgrimage season is approaching, people will start arriving from all over the place. They must have heard about your friend [meaning the Prophet]. So you had better agree what to say when you are asked about him. We must guard against having too many opinions, particularly if they are mutually contradictory.

When his audience asked his advice as to what they should say, he preferred to listen to their suggestions first. What concerned al-Walid most was that the opinion they would come out with should take account of the fact that Muhammad was asking people to listen to the Quran, Gods message, expressed in beautiful language and powerful style. The description they would attach to Muhammad should also account for his persuasive, eloquent argument.

Descriptions like'fortune-teller, madman, poet and magician were proposed. None was considered convincing by al-Walid, who pointed out weaknesses in each, one after the other. He told his people that what Muhammad said was nothing like what was said by such men. When nobody could suggest anything more plausible, they asked al-Walid if he had a better suggestion.

He said: What Muhammad says is certainly beautiful. It is like a date tree with solid roots and rich fruit. Every one of these suggestions you have made is bound to be recognized as false. The least disputable one is to claim that he is a magician who repeats magic words which make a us fall out with our father, mother, wife and

clan. They all approved of al-Walid's suggestion and set about preparing their propaganda campaign to make the pilgrims wary of Muhammad and unwilling to meet him.

Another prominent Quraysh figure to speak out about the Quran was al-Nadr ibn al-Harith, when the Quraysh felt at a loss after having failed to win any compromise from the Prophet. He outlined their predicament in the following way:

People of Quraysh, you are confronted with a problem for which you have not been able to find a solution. When Muhammad was still a young man living among you, he won general admiration because he always spoke the truth and his honesty could not be faulted. When he had grown grey, and started to preach whatever he is preaching to you, you began to allege that he was a sorcerer. By God, he is no sorcerer. We have seen magicians and their tricks in the past. You also accused him of being a fortune teller. By God, he is not one, for we have seen fortune tellers and how they repeat their rhyming phrases. You also claimed that he was a poet. Again I say that, by God, he is not a poet, for we have seen poets and listened to all types of poetry. You claimed that he was also a madman, but he is far from being so. We have seen what madness has done to people, and how it causes them to say incoherent things. I say, people of Quraysh, you have to look at this question very carefully, for you have a big problem on your hands

The similarity between what the two prominent Quraysh figures state is almost complete. This is not surprising, considering their unresolved dilemma of how to deal with the Quran. We also mentioned in our discussion of the previous chapter, The Pen, how Utbah ibn Rabiah reacted to the Quran, when he tried to make some offers to the Prophet in the hope that he would stop advocating his message. When they alleged that Muhammad was a sorcerer or a soothsayer, that was nothing but a stratagem, crude at times and cunning at others. It only needed a little reflection to realize that it was all wrong. Therefore, there was no need for an oath of any sort to confirm that the Quran was the word of a noble Messenger and a revelation from on high.

The statement that the Quran is the word of a noble Messenger. This does not mean that it is of his own composition. It rather means that it is a different type of word, one not uttered by a poet or a soothsayer. It can only be said by a Messenger from God, carrying it from the One who sent him. What confirms this meaning is the word 'Messenger' being sent with it. He is neither a poet nor a soothsayer composing his own words alone or with the assistance of a jinn. This is further confirmed by the categorical statement that follows: *It is a*

sending down from the Lord of the worlds. (69:43)

As the chapter draws to its conclusion, it issues a terrifying threat to anyone who fabricates something about the very serious matter of faith. The threat is issued so as to affirm the only possible scenario of the Prophet being very truthful and honest in delivering the message entrusted to him. The proof is that God has not punished him severely as He would have done so had the Prophet been anything other than that: (69:44-69:47)

The import of these signs is confirmation that Muhammad only told them the truth. Had he invented something other than what was revealed to him from on high, God would have killed him in the way the signs describe. Since this did not take place, the inevitable conclusion is that he was truthful.

Yet this confirmation is given in a scene that goes much further than the actual statement, adding some fearsome connotations, action and life. We see here the violent, scary action of someone being seized by the right hand and his life-vein being cut. It makes a clear impression of Gods limitless power and humanitys utter weakness in comparison.

It adds a suggestion that this question of faith is so serious that it allows no complacency or leniency towards anyone, not even Muhammad in his close relation with God. Furthermore, these signs carry a strong beat, spreading an air of fear and submission to God.

The chapter concludes with a statement of the true nature of the Quran: (69:48-69:51)

This Quran reminds God-fearing hearts and they remember. The truth the Quran states is ingrained in people's hearts, but the reminder brings it to the fore in the minds of those who are God-fearing. Others continue to be preoccupied, unaware, and as such they benefit nothing by the reminder that this book, the Quran, provides. It is a fact that the God-fearing find in the Quran life, light, knowledge and remembrance, but none of these is experienced by other people.

In the face of all denials and rejection by the ungrateful, the Quran is indeed truth absolute. *And, truly, it is The Truth of certainty.* (69:51) It is not merely the truth, but the truth absolute, reconfirmed in absolute terms. In fact, every word in the Quran is profoundly true; every sign carries enough evidence that it originates with God, who Himself is the Truth.

At this point, an instruction is given from on high to the noble Messenger. It comes at the right time and during the right situation: *So glorify the Name of your Lord, The Sublime.* (69:52)

This is the most suitable action as it reflects acknowledgement of God's glory and mans position as God s servant. To glorify God

is the feeling that a believer experiences after the last statement explaining the nature of the Quran is given and after the long discussion of God Almighty's greatness.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 79(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 70: THE STAIRWAYS OF ASCENT (AL-MAARIJ)
SIGNS 70:1-70:35

Makkah: *One who supplicates asked*
for a punishment that will fall (70:1)
on the ones who are ungrateful
for which there will be no one to avert (70:2)
from God, the Possessor of the Stairways of Ascent. (70:3)
The angels and the Spirit go up to Him on a Day
whose measure had been fifty thousand years. (70:4)
So have you patience with a graceful patience. (70:5)

Truly, they see it as distant, (70:6)
but We see it as near at hand. (70:7)
On a Day the heaven will become as molten copper (70:8)
and the mountains be as wool clusters (70:9)
and no loyal friend will ask a loyal friend, (70:10)
although they are given sight of them.
One who sins would wish that he offer for ransom
—from the punishment of that day—his children (70:11)
or his companion wife, or his brother (70:12)
or his relatives who gave him refuge, (70:13)
or whoever is on the earth altogether,
again, if that would rescue him. (70:14)
No indeed. Truly, it is the furnace of hell (70:15)
removing their scalps, (70:16)
calling whoever drew back and turned away (70:17)
and gathered wealth and amassed. (70:18)
Truly, the human being was created fretful. (70:19)
When the worst afflicted him, he is impatient. (70:20)
And when the good afflicted him, begrudging. (70:21)
But the ones who formally pray, (70:22)
those, they are ones who continue
with their formal prayers (70:23)
and those who in their wealth
there is a known obligation towards (70:24)
the one who begs
and the one who is deprived (70:25)
and those who sincerely
validate the Day of Judgment. (70:26)
And those, they are ones who are apprehensive
of the punishment of their Lord. (70:27)
Truly, as to the punishment of their Lord,
there is no one who is safe from it. (70:28)
Those, they are ones who guard their private parts, (70:29)
but not from their spouses
or what their right hands possessed.
Truly, they are not ones who will be reproached. (70:30)
But whoever was looking beyond that, those,
they are ones who turn away. (70:31)
And those, they, who in their trusts
and to their compacts are ones who shepherd. (70:32)
And they, those are who, giving their testimony,
are ones who uphold. (70:33)
And those, they who over

their formal prayers are watchful. (70:34)
Those will be in Gardens, ones who are honored. (70:35)

COMMENTARY°

The inquirer has asked about a suffering which is hound to befall the ungrateful. Nothing can ward it off, as it comes from God, the Lord of the Ways of Ascent.*One who supplicates asked for a punishment that will fall on the ones who are ungrateful for which there will be no one to avert from God, the Possessor of the Stairways of Ascent.* (70:1-70:3)

The very concept of the hereafter was very difficult for the Arab polytheists to understand. They strongly resisted it. In fact they received it with so much amazement that they denied it outright. They further challenged the Prophet, in various ways, to bring it about or to define its timing. A report attributed to Ibn Abbas mentions that the person who asked the question quoted in the first sign of the chapter was al-Nadr ibn al-Harith. Another report quotes him as saying that the reference is to the question by the ungrateful about God's punishment, which is certain to engulf them.

Regardless of who the specific individual was the chapter reports that someone asked about this punishment, indeed, sought to hasten it, and further confirms that it is inevitable because it has been determined by God and that it will soon come. It states that no one can prevent its happening or ward it off. Therefore, to question or hasten it is ill-advised. Moreover, this punishment is to befall the ungrateful, in total, which means that those who question it are included like every other unbeliever. It is administered by God, *The Stairways of Ascent.*

Having absolutely confirmed the inevitability of such punishment, the chapter describes the day when it will take place, affirming that it will soon arrive. However, God's measure is different from humanity: *The angels and the Spirit go up to Him on a Day whose measure had been fifty thousand years. So have you patience with a graceful patience. Truly, they see it as distant, but We see it as near at hand.* (70:4-70:7)

The statement that the length of that day is fifty thousand years may be an expression of very long duration as is customary in Arabic idiom, or it may express a true fact meaning that the day in question is equal to fifty thousand of our years despite its being just a single day. We can easily imagine this considering that our earth days represent the length of time the earth takes to revolve once in position. There are stars, however, which take thousands of our days to revolve

once. This is not to say that this is what is meant here; we only state this to make it clear that the length of days can differ greatly.

If one of God's days is equal to fifty thousand of our years, then the punishment of the Day of Judgement is certainly close, according to Gods measure, even though people may think it far away. Therefore, God tells His Messenger to be patient with them: *Truly, they see it as distant, but We see it as near at hand.*(70:6-70:7) The order to remain patient is part of the divine message's essence; it is required of every messenger and every believer. This is fundamentally necessary because the burden is heavy and the task hard. It is vitally important to keep the believers united and content, looking to their ultimate goal.

God, who has bestowed this message from on high and has made this promise which the ungrateful hasten, determines events and their timings as He pleases, according to His overall plan for the universe. Human beings remain unaware of His will and plan; therefore, they hasten things. When time goes by without fulfilment of the promise, they begin to doubt. Worry may also be experienced by advocates of the divine message themselves. They too may entertain thoughts and desires that the promise be fulfilled soon. Therefore, they are given the following instruction so that they may remain firm: *So have you patience with a graceful patience.* (70:5) The address here is delivered to the Prophet so as to give him reassurance in the face of the opposition and rejection he faced. It also adds another truth here, highlighting the fact that God sees matters in a different way. He does not measure things by means of our small measures: *Truly, they see it as distant, but We see it as near at hand.* (70:6-70:7)

On the day when the sky will be like molten lead and the mountains like tufts of wool (70:8-70:14)

In the midst of this situation, the guilty hears something that closes the door to any fleeting hope. Indeed, all will listen to what makes the situation abundantly clear: (70:15-70:18)

There is absolutely no place for such impossible notions of escape, even though one would offer ones children, spouse, brothers, kinsfolk and everyone else in ransom. It rages on ready to burn, but it also tears the skin away, *removing their scalps.* (70:16) It tears the skin off both the face and head. Here, the fire is described as if it has a will of its own, deliberately taking part in inflicting punishment on the guilty: *Calling whoever drew back and turned away* (70:17) Those people who turned away when they were called upon to follow the truth embodied in the divine message are now called again. This time the caller is the raging fire, and this time they cannot turn away. In the past, they were busy amassing riches and hoarding them. Now

their attentions cannot be diverted from responding to this call by the raging fire. Nor can they divert it from themselves, no matter what they offer in ransom.

We are born with a restless disposition: when misfortune befalls us, we are fretful; and when good fortune comes our way, we grow tight-fisted. Not so those who pray, and always attend to their prayers; who give a due share of their possessions to the one who asks [for help] and the one who is deprived; who believe in the Day of Judgment; who stand in fear of their Lord's punishment, for none may feel totally secure from their Lord's punishment; who guard their chastity except with those joined to them in marriage, or those whom they rightfully possess—for then, they are free of all blame, whereas those who seek to go beyond that [limit] are indeed transgressors; who are faithful to their trusts and to their pledges; who stand up for the truth when they bear witness; and who attend to their prayers without fail. They are the ones to be honored in the gardens of paradise. (70:19-70:35)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a

point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again.* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

LESSON 79(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Consequences follow from our actions.

REASONING WELL

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

IMPLICATIONS IN REASONING

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

QURANIC CHAPTER 70: THE STAIRWAYS OF ASCENT (AL-MAARIJ)

SIGNS 70:36-70:44

Makkah: *What is with those who were ungrateful*
—ones who run forward towards thee,
eyes fixed in horror, (70:36)
to the right and the left, tied in knots. (70:37)
Is not every man of them desirous of being caused
to enter into a Garden of Bliss? (70:38)
No indeed.
Truly, We created them out of what they know. (70:39)
So I swear an oath by the Lord of the rising places
and the setting places,
that We certainly are ones who have power (70:40)
to substitute better for them.
And We are not ones who are outrun. (70:41)

So let them engage in idle talk and play
until they encounter the Day of theirs
that they are promised, (70:42)
the Day when they will go forth swiftly
from their tombs as though they had been
hurrying to a goal (70:43)
with their sight, that which is humbled.
Abasement will come over them.
That is the Day which they had been promised. (70:44)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then depicts a Makkan scene in which we see the ungrateful going hurriedly to where the Prophet was reading the Quran. Once there, they would split into groups around him. The chapter criticizes their hurrying and grouping when they had no intention of listening to or of heeding his advice: *What is with those who were ungrateful—ones who run forward towards you, eyes fixed in horror, to the right and the left, tied in knots.* (70:36-70:37)

There is implied sarcasm in the question. It describes their confused movement, with the Arabic expression adding a connotation of their being led. The question wonders at their confusion: they move hurriedly, but without any intention of receiving guidance. They only want to learn what the Prophet says before splitting into small groups discussing how to resist what they have heard. What is wrong with them, then? *Is not every man of them desirous of being caused to enter into a Garden of Bliss?* (70:38) How can they entertain such hopes when their behavior leads only to hell, and not to heaven and its gardens of bliss? Do they think that they have a high position with God to ensure that they will enter heaven despite the fact that they disbelieve in Him, oppose the Prophet, scheme against the Quranic message? They must imagine that they command very high value with God to achieve such elevation.

The answer is swift and decisive: *No indeed. Truly, We created them out of what they know.* (70:39) They are aware that they have been created from a humble fluid they know well enough. There is an implicit, yet profound touch here, destroying all their pride and arrogance without using a single objectionable word. Yet the sign is so expressed that it depicts a state of utter humiliation and ignominy. How can they hope to be in heaven when they disbelieve and commit evil deeds, knowing from what substance they are created? In Gods measure, they are too lowly to hold favor with Him. Why would He waive His law of administering justice to all according to their deeds

just for them?

Confirming their unimportance and lowly status, the chapter states that God is able to replace them with better creatures. Furthermore, they cannot escape the punishment their actions deserve: *So I swear an oath by the Lord of the rising places and the setting places, that We certainly are ones who have power to substitute better for them. And We are not ones who are outrun.* (70:40-70:41)

The point at issue needs no oath, but the mention of risings and settings reflects Gods greatness. These movements may refer to the rise risings and settings of the millions upon millions of stars in the universe. On the other hand, this may be a reference to sunrise and sunset over every point on our planet. At every moment, there is a sunrise and a sunset, as the earth continues to revolve. Whichever the meaning intended, the mention of these risings and settings gives us a feeling of the greatness of the universe and the Almightiness of God who created the universe. Do those people, created from humble fluid, need an oath by the Lord of all star risings and settings to realize that He is able to create better people? Do they need an oath confirming that they cannot escape from Him?

The chapter concludes with an address to the Prophet telling him to leave them to face their fate on that promised day. It shows their status then when they utterly distressed: (70:42-70:44)

This address implies a definite warning that should fill them with worry and anticipation. Indeed, the image describing them and their movements on that day should add intense fear. Moreover, it carries a clear element of sarcasm to parallel their pride and conceit. We see them coming out of their graves, hurrying on like people rallying to a flag or to a statue they worship. This is consistent with what they do in this life when they rally to flags and statues on festive days. Now they do the same, but there is no festivity on that day. Their description is completed by the statement, 'with ignominy overwhelming them.' We can almost see their faces clearly through these words. We see them humiliated, overwhelmed by ignominy. They used to play and indulge in idle talk, but now they are exhausted, broken: *Abasement will come over them. That is the Day which they had been promised.*(70:44) That is the day they doubted would ever happen. Yet in their denial, they tried to hasten its arrival.

Thus the chapter ends, with perfect harmony between its opening and end. It represents an episode in the long discussion of the major issue of resurrection, reckoning and requital, setting the Quranic concept of life in contrast with un-Quranic concepts.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

INTERLUDE
THE NIGHT JOURNEY (AL-ISRA)
RAJAB 27, 1 BH/621 CE

HISTORY

And from his own narration on the authority of Ibn Abbas that he said regarding the interpretation of God's saying: *Glory be to Him Who caused His servant to set forth by night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa around which We blessed so that We cause him to see Our signs. Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (17:1)

HISTORY

Then the Messenger was carried by night from the mosque at Makkah to the Masjid al-Aqsa, which is the temple of Aelia, when Islam had spread in Makkah among the Quraysh and all the tribes.[1]

It is pieced together in the story that follows, each one contributing something of what he was told about what happened when he was taken on the night journey. The matter of the place of the journey and what is said about it is a searching test and a matter of God's power and authority wherein is a lesson for the intelligent; and guidance and mercy and strengthening to those who believe.

It was certainly an act of God by which He took him by night in what way He pleased to show him His signs which He willed him t see so that he witnessed His mighty sovereignty and power by whic He does what He wills to do.

According to what I have heard Abd Allah ibn Masud used to say: Buraq, the animal whose every stride carried it as far as its eye could reach on which the Prophets before him used to ride was brought to the Messenger and he was mounted on it. His companion (Gabriel) went with him to see the wonders between heaven and earth, until he came to Jerusalem's temple.

There he found Abraham the friend of God, Moses, and Jesus assembled with a company of the Prophets, and he prayed with them. Then he was brought three vessels containing milk, wine, and water respectively.

The Messenger said: I heard a voice saying when these were offered to me: If he takes the water, he will be drowned and his people also; if he takes the wine, he will go astray and his people also; and if he takes the milk, he will be rightly guided and his people also. So I took the vessel containing milk and drank it.

Gabriel said to me, You have been rightly guided and so will

your people be, Muhammad.

I was told that al-Hasan said that the Messenger said: While I was sleeping in the *hijr,* Gabriel came and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came a second time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came to me the third time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up and he took hold of my arm and I stood beside him and he brought me out to the door of the mosque and there was a white animal, half mule, half donkey, with wings on its sides with which it propelled its feet, putting down each forefoot at the limit of its sight and he mounted me on it. Then he went out with me keeping close to me.

I was told that Qatada said that he was told that the Messenger said: When I came up to mount him, he shied.

Gabriel placed his hand on its mane and said: Are you not ashamed, O Buraq, to behave in this way? By God, none more honorable before God than Muhammad has ever ridden you before.

The animal was so ashamed that he broke out into a sweat and stood still so that I could mount him.

In his story al-Hasan said: The Messenger and Gabriel went their way until they arrived at the temple at Jerusalem. There he found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among a company of the Prophets. The Messenger acted as their leader in formal prayer.

Then he was brought two vessels, one containing wine and the other milk. The Messenger took the milk and drank it, leaving the wine.

Gabriel said: You have been rightly guided to the way of nature and so will your people be, Muhammad. Wine is forbidden you.

Then the Messenger returned to Makkah and in the morning he told Quraysh what had happened. Most of them said: By God, this is a plain absurdity!

A caravan takes a month to go to Syria and a month to return and can Muhammad do the return journey in one night ? Many Muslims gave up their faith; some went to Abu Bakr and said: What do you think of your friend now, Abu Bakr? He alleges that he went to Jerusalem last night and prayed there and came back to Makkah. He replied that they were lying about the Messenger; but they said that he was in the mosque at that very moment telling the people about it. Abu Bakr said: If he says so then it is true.

And what is so surprising in that? He tells me that communications from God from heaven to earth come to him in an hour of a day or night and I believe him, and that is more extraordinary than that at which you boggle!

He then went to the Messenger and asked him if these reports were true. When he said they were, he asked him to describe Jerusalem to him. Al-Hasan said that he was lifted up so that he could see the Messenger speaking as he told Abu Bakr what Jerusalem was like. Whenever he described a part of it he said: That's true. I testify that you are the Messenger of God until he had completed the description, and then the Messenger said: And you, Abu Bakr, are the Siddiq. This was the occasion on which he got this honorific title.

Al-Hasan continued: God sent down concerning those who left Islam for this reason: We made the vision which we showed you only for a test to men and the accursed tree in the Quran. We put them in fear, but it only adds to their heinous error. Such is al-Hasan's story with additions from Qatada.

One of Abu Bakr's family told me that Ayisha, the Prophet's wife, used to say: The Messenger's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night.

Yaqub ibn Utba ibn al-Mughayrah ibn al-Akhnas told me that Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan when he was asked about the Messenger's night journey said: It was a true vision from God.

What these two latter said does not contradict what al-Hasan said, seeing that God Himself said: We made the vision which we showed thee only for a test to men; nor does it contradict what God said in the story of Abraham when he said to his son: O my son, verily I saw in a dream that I must sacrifice you, and he acted accordingly. Thus, as I see it, revelation from God comes to the Prophets waking or sleeping.

I have heard that the Messenger used to say: My eyes sleep while my heart is awake. Only God knows how revelation came and he saw what he saw. But whether he was asleep or awake, it was all true and actually happened.

Al-Zuhri alleged as from Said ibn al-Musayyab that the Messenger described to his companions Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as he saw them that night, saying: I have never seen a man more like myself than Abraham.

Moses was a ruddy faced man, tall, thinly fleshed, curly haired with a hooked nose as though he were of the Shanua. Jesus, Son of Mary, was a reddish man of medium height with lank hair with many freckles on his face as though he had just come from a bath. One would suppose that his head was dripping with water, though there was no water on it. The man most like him among you is Urwa ibn Masud al-Thaqafi.

The following report has reached me from Umm Hani bint Abu Talib, whose name was Hind, concerning the Messenger's night jour-

ney.

She said: The Messenger went on the night journey while he was in my house. He slept that night in my house, the house of my father, Abu Talib. He prayed the final night prayer, then he slept and we slept. A little before dawn the Messenger woke us, and when we had prayed the dawn formal prayer he said: O Umm Hani, I offered the formal prayed with you the last evening prayer in this valley as you saw. Then I went to Jerusalem and prayed there. Then I have just prayed the morning formal prayer with you as you see.

He got up to go out and I took hold of his robe and laid bare his belly as though it were a folded Egyptian garment. I said: O Prophet of God, don't talk to the people about it for they will give you the lie and insult you.

He said: By God, I certainly will tell them.

I said to a slave of mine: Follow the Messenger and listen to what he says to the people, and what they say to him. He did tell them and they were amazed and asked what proof he had. He replied that he had passed the caravan of so-and-so in such-and-such a valley and the animal he bestrode scared them and a camel bolted, and I showed them where it was as I was on the way to Syria. I carried on until in Dajanan. I passed by a caravan of the so-and-so clan. I found the people asleep. They had a jar of water covered with something. I took the covering off and drank the water replacing the cover. The proof of that is that their caravan is this moment coming down from al-Baida by the pass of al-Tanim led by a dusky camel loaded with two sacks one black and the other multihued.

The people hurried to the pass and the first camel they met was as he had described. They asked the men about the vessel and they told them that they had left it full of water and covered it and that when they woke it was covered but empty. They asked the others too who were in Makkah and they said that it was quite right: they had been scared and a camel had bolted, and they had heard a man calling them to it so that they were able to recover it.

THE ASCENT TO HEAVEN

One whom I have no reason to doubt told me on the authority of Abu Saied al-Khudri: I heard the Messenger say. After the completion of my business in Jerusalem, a ladder was brought to me finer than any I have ever seen. It was that to which the dying man looks when death approaches. My companion mounted it with me until we came to one of the gates of heaven called the Gate of the Watchers. An angel called Ishmael was in charge of it, and under his command were twelve thousand angels each of them having twelve thousand

angels under his command.

As he told this story that the Messenger used to say: And none knows the armies of God but He. *And none knows the armies of your Lord but He.* (74:31)

When Gabriel brought me in, Ishmael asked who I was, and when he was told that I was Muhammad he asked if I had been given a mission, and on being assured of this he wished me well.

A traditionist who had got it from one who had heard from the Messenger told me that the latter said: The angels who met me when I entered the lowest heaven smiled in welcome and wished me well except one who said the same things but did not smile or show that joyful expression which the others had. And when I asked Gabriel the reason he told me that if he had ever smiled on anyone before or would smile on anyone hereafter he would have smiled on me; but he does not smile because he is Malik, the Keeper of Hell. I said to Gabriel, he holding the position with regard to God which he has described to you: *One who is obeyed and, again, trustworthy.* (81:21)

Will you not order him to show me hell?

And he said: Certainly!

O Malik, show Muhammad Hell.

Thereupon he removed its covering and the flames blazed high into the air until I thought that they would consume everything. So I asked Gabriel to order him to send them back to their place which he did. I can only compare the effect of their withdrawal to the falling of a shadow, until when the flames retreated whence they had come, Malik placed their cover on them.

In his tradition Abu Said al-Khudri said that the Messenger said: When I entered the lowest heaven I saw a man sitting there with the spirits of men passing before him. To one he would speak well and rejoice in him saying: A good spirit from a good body, and of another he would say: Faugh! and frown, saying: An evil spirit from an evil body.

In answer to my question Gabriel told me that this was our father Adam reviewing the spirits of his offspring; the spirit of a believer excited his pleasure, and the spirit of an infidel excited his disgust so that he said the words just quoted.

Then I saw men with lips like camels. In their hands were pieces of fire like stones which they used to thrust into their mouths and they would come out of their posteriors. I was told that these were those who sinfully devoured the wealth of orphans.

Then I saw men in the way of the family of Pharaoh: *And on a Day when the Hour is secure it is said: Cause the people of Pharaoh to enter the severest punishment.* (40:46) with such bellies as I have

never seen. There were passing over them as it were camels maddened by thirst when they were cast into hell, treading them down, they being unable to move out of the way. These were the usurers.

Then I saw men with good fat meat before them side by side with lean stinking meat, eating of the latter and leaving the former. These are those who forsake the women which God has permitted and go after those he has forbidden.

Then I saw women hanging by their breasts. These were those who had fathered bastards on their husbands. Jafar ibn Amr told me from al-Qasim ibn Muhammad that the Messenger said: Great is God's anger against a woman who brings a bastard into her family. He deprives the true sons of their portion and learns the secrets of the forbidden.

To continue the tradition of Said al-Khudri: Then I was taken up to the second heaven and there were the two maternal cousins Jesus, son of Mary, and Yahya (John), son of Zechariah. Then to the third heaven and there was a man whose face was as the moon at the full. This was my brother Joseph, son of Jacob. Then to the fourth heaven and there was a man called Idris. And we have exalted him to a lofty place. Then to the fifth heaven and there was a man with white hair and a long beard, never have I seen a more handsome man than he. This was the beloved among his people Aaron, son of Imran. Then to the sixth heaven, and there was a dark man with a hooked nose like the Shanua. This was my brother Moses, son of Imran. Then to the seventh heaven and there was a man sitting on a throne at the gate of the immortal mansion.

Every day seventy thousand angels went in not to come back until the Day of Resurrection. Never have I seen a man more like myself. This was my father Abraham. Then he took me into Paradise and there I saw a damsel with dark red lips and I asked her to whom she belonged, for she pleased me much when I saw her, and she told me: Zayd ibn Haritha. The Messenger gave Zayd the good news about her.

From a tradition of Abd Allah ibn Masud from the Prophet there has reached me the following: When Gabriel took him up to each of the heavens and asked permission to enter he had to say whom he had brought and whether he had received a mission and they would say: God grant him life, brother and friend! until they reached the seventh heaven and his Lord. There the duty of fifty prayers a day had been made obligatory upon him.

The Messenger said: On my return I passed by Moses and what a fine friend of yours he was! He asked me how many formal prayers had been made obligatory.

I told him fifty.

He said; Formal prayer is a weighty matter and your people are weak, so go back to your Lord and ask him to reduce the number for you and your community.

I did so and He took off ten.

Again I passed by Moses and he said the same again; and so it went on until only five formal prayers for the whole day and night were left. Moses again gave me the same advice.

I replied that I had been back to my Lord and asked him to reduce the number until I was ashamed, and I would not do it again. He of you who performs them in faith and trust will have the reward of fifty prayers.[1]

Makkah: *Glory be to Him Who made His servant*
journey by night
from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa
around which We have blessed
so that We cause him to see Our Signs.
Truly He is The Hearing, The Seeing. (17:1)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter begins with glorifying God, the most fitting action to confirm the bond between God and His servants in the atmosphere of compassion and friendliness imparted by the mention of the night journey: *Glory be to Him Who caused His servant to set forth night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa around which We blessed so that We cause him to see Our signs. Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (17:1)

The chapter emphasizes the position of the human being as God's servant: The emphasis here is needed in the context of the Prophet's ascension to heaven where no human being had gone before. It is important in this context that the status of human servitude to God should always be remembered. In its simplicity and purity, Islam insists that no similarity could ever exist between God and any creature.

The Arabic text of this opening verse uses the verb which denotes 'traveling during the night'. It is sufficient then to use this verb to denote the time of the action. Yet the verse adds the phrase, *laylan*, or 'by night', to give an added sense of the still night and the ease of travel. The journey from the Sacred Mosque to the Aqsa Mosque was one chosen by God, the Compassionate, who knows everything. It provided a link between all monotheistic faiths from the time of Abraham and Ishmael to the time of the last Prophet, Muhammad. It

also established a link between the holy places in all these religions. It seems that this unusual journey served as an announcement that the last Messenger was the heir to the heritage of all former Messengers. His message staked a claim to all these holy places. Thus it becomes a journey that goes beyond the scope of time and place.

The opening verse describes the Aqsa Mosque as one with blessed environs. This description shows the blessings surrounding the mosque and flowing in abundance. This impression could not have been given with a direct description such as 'the mosque which we have blessed. This is another example of the refined use of language characteristic of the Quran.

The Prophet's night journey was a telling sign, and it was accompanied by others, as the opening verse says in stating its purpose: so that We might show him some of Our signs. Covering the distance between the Sacred Mosque in Makkah and the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, in a very short period that did not allow the Prophet's bed to become cold, is a sign of God's power, whatever the means used to accomplish it. It opens our minds to new horizons in the universe and reveals latent potentials within humanity. It shows that those human beings chosen by God to be the bearers of His message have the latent ability to receive whatever greater powers God wishes to give them. It is God who has honored man, giving him a favored position among His creation, and endowed him with such potentials. *Glory be to Him Who caused His servant to set forth by night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa around which We blessed so that We cause him to see Our signs. Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (17:1) He indeed hears and sees all that is beyond the reach of our hearing and seeing faculties.

It is especially impressive that the opening verse of this chapter starts with glorifying God. After defining the purpose of this journey, it finishes with highlighting two of God's attributes, perfect hearing and seeing that encompass all things. This quick movement across purposes reflects the finest points of the expression used. The glorification is addressed to God Himself, and the statement about the purpose of the night journey comes from Him, while the description of God's powers is made in the form of an indisputable statement. All these forms are combined in one verse so as to give their different imports.

The night journey is a remarkable sign which God wished to demonstrate. It is an amazing journey by human standards. The Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, which was the destination of the first part of this journey, is at the heart of the Holy Land which God assigned to the Children of Jacob before He caused them to be driven out of it.

LESSON 80(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

QURANIC CHAPTER 78: THE TIDING (AL-NABA)

SECTION 1 (78:1-78:30): THE DAY OF DECISION

Makkah: *About what demand you*
of one another? (78:1)
Of the sublime tiding (78:2)
about which they are ones who are at variance in it? (78:3)
No indeed! Soon they will know. (78:4)
Again, no indeed! Soon they will know. (78:5)
Make We not the earth for a cradling (78:6)
and the mountains as stakes? (78:7)
And We created not you in pairs (78:8)
and We made your sleep as a rest. (78:9)
And We made the nighttime as a garment. (78:10)
And We made the daytime for you to earn a living. (78:11)
And We built over you seven superior ones. (78:12)
And We made a bright, light-giving lamp. (78:13)
And We caused to descend
that which are clouds bringing rain, water cascading, (78:14)
with which We bring about grain and plants (78:15)
and luxuriant Gardens. (78:16)
Truly, the Day of Decision would be a time appointed, (78:17)
a Day the trumpet is blown. Then, you approach in units (78:18)

and the heaven will be let loose and will be all doors. (78:19)
And the mountains will be set in motion
and will be as vapor. (78:20)
Truly, hell will be on the watch, (78:21)
a destination for the ones who are defiant, (78:22)
one who lingers in expectation in it for many years. (78:23)
They experience in it not any coolness nor any drink, (78:24)
but scalding water and filth, (78:25)
a suitable recompense! (78:26)
Truly, they had been not hoping not for a reckoning (78:27)
and they denied Our signs with a denial. (78:28)
But We counted everything in a Book. (78:29)
Experience it! We will never increase you
but in punishment. (78:30)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter opens by shunning the enquirers and the enquiry. It wonders that anyone should raise doubts about resurrection and judgement, which were central points of bitter controversy. For the ungrateful could hardly imagine that resurrection were possible, despite the fact that it is most logical. The chapter asks what they are talking about: About what are they asking? *About what demand you of one another?* (78:1) We are then given the answer. The question is not meant to solicit information but rather draws attention to the subject of their questions and stating its nature: *Of the sublime tiding about which they are ones who are at variance in it?* (78:2-78:3) The answer does not name the event but describes it to enhance the feeling of wonder and amazement at such people. The dispute was between those who believed in resurrection and those who denied it, but the questions were raised by the latter only.

The chapter does not provide any more details about the event in question. It simply describes it as great before adding an implicit threat which is much more frightening than a direct answer. *No indeed! Soon they will know. Again, no indeed! Soon they will know.* (78:4-78:5) The phrase, 'no indeed,' is used here as the nearest possible rendering of the Arabic term, kalla, which denotes strong shunning. The whole sentence is repeated to add force to the threat implied.

We are then taken on a quick round of the universe in which we see a multitude of scenes, creatures and phenomena. Contemplation of which strongly shakes any human heart: (78:6-78:16)

In this round we traverse the vast universe, observing a great

multitude of scenes and phenomena, which are sketched out with great economy of words. This helps make the rhythm sharp and penetrating, like an incessant hammering. The form of questioning implying a statement is also used here deliberately. It may be likened to a strong hand shaking those who are still unaware. It draws their attention to all these creatures and phenomena which provide strong evidence of the deliberate planning and designing which go into their creation, the ability to create and re- create, and the wisdom behind creation, which dictates that no creature will be left out of the great reckoning. Therefore, we come back to the fateful tiding, the subject of the argument.

The first leg in this round takes us across the earth and the mountains: *Make We not the earth for a cradling and the mountains as stakes?* (78:6-78:7) Both facts mentioned here can be easily recognized and appreciated by everyone. Indeed, even primitive we can be affected by them once our attention is drawn to them.

In its second leg, this round touches upon various aspects of human existence: *And We created not you in pairs.* (78:8) Again, this is a well established phenomenon, easily recognized by every human being. God has made the survival and continuity of humanity conditional on each of the two different sexes, male and female, playing its role in life fully. Not much knowledge is required to appreciate what this involves of comfort, pleasure and recreation. Therefore the Quranic statement stands to be appreciated by every generation in every society according to its abilities and knowledge.

God has willed that sleep should overpower a person. *and We made your sleep as a rest. And We made the nighttime as a garment. And We made the daytime for you to earn a living.* (78:9-78:11) and make him lose consciousness and activity. When asleep, we are in a state which is unlike life and unlike death. It ensures rest for our body and mind and compensates both for whatever effort we have exerted during wakefulness. All this happens in a way the true nature of which we cannot conceive. Our will plays no part in it and it is impossible for us to discover how it happens. When awake, we do not know our condition while we are asleep. We are also unable, when asleep, to observe our condition and how sleep affects us. It is one of the secrets of our constitution and of all living creatures, unknown except to the Creator Who has made sleep essential for life. For there is no living creature who can stay without sleep except for a limited period. If we were forced, by external means, to stay awake, we would certainly die.

The final leg of this round touches on the creation of heaven: (78:12-78:16) The seven mighty ones God has built above the earth

are the seven heavens or skies, the precise nature of which is known only to God. They may be seven galaxies which have a bearing on our planet or on our solar system. The phrase may also refer to something else that is unknown to us. What we know for certain, however, is that these seven have a strong constitution and do not easily disintegrate. This much we know about the stars and we observe in what we call 'the sky'. The chapter also points out that the construction of the seven mighty ones is in perfect harmony with the creation of the earth and the world of man. This is implied in the following signs: *And We made a bright, light-giving lamp.* (78:13) This is a reference to the sun which shines and gives the heat necessary for the earth and its living creatures. It also plays an important part in forming the clouds by evaporating sea water: *And We caused to descend that which are clouds bringing rain, water cascading.* (78:14) The Arabic text refers to these clouds as something squeezable. But who squeezes them to extract their juice? The winds, maybe, or perhaps some kind of electric charge in the atmosphere! Beyond both types, however, there is the hand of the Designer, who has assigned to everything in the universe its respective qualities.

The use of the word 'lamp' to refer to the sun is very apt, for a lamp gives heat and light. It also shines as if it is ablaze. The heat and the light provided by the sun combine with the water flowing in abundance, time after time, from the 'squeezable' clouds to help the seeds send out their shoots. This is how grains, vegetables, bushes and wide-branching trees grow. This consonance in the design of the universe could not have been achieved without God's careful planning. Any person can appreciate this if his attention is drawn to it. If he acquires advanced knowledge, he finds even more consonance and congruity in the universe, which leaves him wondering in complete amazement. He then finds completely insupportable the argument that all this is the result of coincidence. He considers those who evade admitting the fact of elaborate and conscious planning pigheaded and unworthy of respect.

All this has been for work and pleasure, but there are reckoning and reward to follow, on the appointed day: *Truly, the Day of Decision would be a time appointed, a Day the trumpet is blown. Then, you approach in units and the heaven will be let loose and will be all doors. And the mountains will be set in motion and will be as vapor.* (78:17-78:20) Creation is not without purpose. The Creator, who has accurately measured human life and carefully provided perfect harmony between it and the universe, will not let people just live and die in vain. Reason cannot accept that those who do good and the evildoers should both end in dust. The rightly-guided and the

straying folk, the just and the tyrants cannot all share the same fate. There must be a day when everything is judged and evaluated. The day is appointed by God: *Truly, the Day of Decision would be a time appointed.* (78:17)

It is a day when upheaval overtakes the universe and destroys its systems. *A Day the trumpet is blown. Then, you approach in units and the heaven will be let loose and will be all doors. And the mountains will be set in motion and will be as vapor.* (78:18-78:20) The 'Trumpet' is a kind of horn of which we know nothing except its name and that it will be blown. We need not waste our time trying to discover how, for such discovery will not strengthen our faith.

God has revealed to us what we need to know of the secrets of the universe so that we may not waste our energy in the futile pursuit of useless knowledge. We can imagine, however, a blast on a Trumpet which people answer by arriving in droves. We can visualize the scene whereby all the generations of humanity rise up, walking in their multitudes, from all directions, to attend the great reckoning. We can imagine the fearful sight of people rising from their graves and the great, huge, endless crowd they form. We can feel the horror of the day, people's helplessness and fear. We do not know where all this will happen, nor when, for the universe is full of great events: *And the heaven will be let loose and will be all doors. And the mountains will be set in motion and will be as vapor.* (78:19-78:20)

The chapter takes another step, beyond resurrection, to describe the fate of the tyrant ungrateful and also that of the God-conscious It begins with the former group who raise doubts about the fatef tiding: (78:21-78:30)

Hell has been created so that it may watch the tyrants and tran gressors and await their arrival. They find it well prepared to receive them, as if they are returning to their natural home after having sojourned on earth a while. It is a home in which they stay endlessly. (78:24) The next sign provides an exception to this, but the exception is even worse: (78:25) Their throats and stomachs bum as they drink the boiling fluid, which is the only 'coolness' they have, while their other drink is the filth of the burning bodies, decaying in the enormous heat. The Quran comments that this is 'a fitting recompense'. It is in keeping with what they have done in their lives. For they thought they would never return to God: (78:27-28) Their denial, as the Arabic sign suggests, is strongly emphatic and stubbornly upheld. But God keeps a meticulous record which does not leave out anything they do or say: (78:29) Then follows a reproach coupled with the tiding that they can hope for no change in their condition and no abatement of its intensity: (78:30)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities

ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?:

LESSON 80(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

QURANIC CHAPTER 78: THE TIDING (AL-NABA)
SECTION 1 (78:31-78:40): THE DAY OF DECISION

Makkah: *Truly, for the ones who are God-conscious,*
there is a place of security, (78:31)
fertile gardens and grapevines, (78:32)
and full breasted maidens of the same age (78:33)
and a cup overflowing. (78:34)
No idle talk will they hear in it nor any denial, (78:35)
*a recompense from **your** Lord, a gift, a reckoning.* (78:36)
from the Lord of the heavens and the earth
and of whatever is between them,
The Merciful.
against Whom they possess no argument. (78:37)
On a Day when the Spirit
and the angels will stand up ranged in rows
They will not assert themselve.
but he to whom the Merciful gave permission
and who said what is correct. (78:38)
That is the Day of The Truth; so whoever willed
took his Lord to himself as the destination. (78:39
We warned you of a near punishment on a Day
when a man will look on what his hands put forward
and the ones who are ungrateful will say:
O would that I had been earth dust! (78:40)

COMMENTARY°

We then have the corresponding scene of the God-conscious in complete bliss. *Truly, for the ones who are God-conscious, there is a place of security, fertile gardens and grapevines, and full breasted maidens of the same age and a cup overflowing.No idle talk will they hear in it nor any denial, a recompense from **your** Lord, a gift, a reckoning.* (78:31-78:36) If hell is a vigilant watch guard which the tyrants cannot escape, the God-conscious, the God-fearing will end

in a place of security. What a place it is: *Fertile gardens and grapevines.* (78:32) The vine tree is specifically mentioned because it is well known to the addressees. The God-fearing will also have companions who are described here as high-bosomed and of equal age. They also drink from a cup overflowing with refreshing beverage.

These luxuries are given a physical description so that we may better appreciate them. The precise nature of these luxuries and how they may be enjoyed remain unknown to us as our understanding is restricted by our limited world. But the enjoyment provided to the God-conscious is not purely physical. *A recompense from **your** Lord, a gift, a reckoning.* (78:36)

The chapter closes with the final scene of the day when all this happens. It is a scene in which we see the angel Gabriel, who is the Holy Spirit, and all the angels standing in ranks before God, their Most Merciful Lord. They stand in awe of Him; no one dares utter a word without prior permission from Him. (78:37-78:38)

The recompense given to the God-conscious and to the tyrant transgressors, which was detailed in the previous section, is from your Lord. *From the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever is between them, The Merciful, against Whom they possess no argument.* (78:37) What a befitting context to reaffirm the eternal truth of God. God is the Supreme Lord of man, the heavens and earth, this life and the next, who metes out reward for God-consciousness and punishment for transgression and tyranny. But above all He is the Most Gracious. The reward He assigns to each group is a manifestation of His mercy. Even the torment endured by the transgressors originates from God's mercy. For it is indeed part of mercy that evil should be punished and that it should not have the same end as good.

The other divine attribute implied here is majesty: *from the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever is between them, The Merciful, against Whom they possess no argument.* (78:37) In this awesome situation neither the human being nor angel can speak without permission from the Most Gracious. Whatever is said will be right because He does not permit anyone to speak whom He knows will not be saying what is right.

When we think that the angels, who are favored by God, and absolutely pure from sin, stand silent in front of God and dare not speak without His permission, we are bound to feel how awesome the atmosphere is. Having motivated such a feeling, the chapter delivers a warning to those who have chosen not to hear or see: *That is the Day of The Truth; so whoever willed took his Lord to himself as the destination. We warned you of a near punishment on a Day when a man*

will look on what his hands put forward and the ones who are ungrateful will say: O would that I had been earth dust! (78:39-78:40)

Those who raise doubts and question the reality of the Day of Resurrection are here shaken violently: *That is the Day of The Truth; so whoever willed took his Lord to himself as the destination.* (78:39) There is no room left for doubt and controversy. Yet there is time for mending one's erring ways before the fearful watch guard, i.e. hell, becomes a permanent home: *That is the Day of The Truth; so whoever willed took his Lord to himself as the destination.* (78:39) The warning is stern enough to make the drunken awake: (78:40) It will not be long coming, for man's life is but a short period. The scourge is so fearful that the ungrateful, when faced with it, will send up that great cry expressing the wish that they had never lived: *We warned you of a near punishment on a Day when a man will look on what his hands put forward and the ones who are ungrateful will say: O would that I had been earth dust!* (78:40)

This is the cry of one who is in great distress, who feels ashamed for what he has been and what he has done. He feels that it is better not to be, or to be something as worthless as dust, than to witness such a fearful occasion. The terrible position of the ungrateful is the subject of the questions and doubts they raise concerning that fateful tiding.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to write a summary of the signs in this lesson.:

LESSON 81(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

QURANIC CHAPTER 79: THE ONES WHO TEAR OUT (AL-NAZIAT)

SIGNS 79:1-79:26

By the ones who tear out vehemently, (79:1)
by the ones who draw out a drawing out, (79:2)
by the ones who are swimmers, swimming, (79:3)
the ones who take the lead, taking the lead (79:4)
by the ones who manage a command, (79:5)
on a Day when the first bang trembles, (79:6)
succeeded by the one that comes behind it. (79:7)
Hearts beating painfully on that Day, (79:8)
their sight, that which is humble. (79:9)
They say: Are we ones who were to be restored
to our original state (79:10)
when we would be crumbled ones? (79:11)
They said: That is a return again of one who is a loser. (79:12)
Truly there will be but one scare. (79:13)
That is when they would be the ones awakening. (79:14)
Has the discourse of Moses approached you? (79:15)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:16)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:18)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:20)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:21)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:26)

COMMENTARY°

OVERVIEW

This chapter is just one example of many in this part of the Quran which shares a common objective; namely, to drive home to us the reality of the hereafter, its inevitability and its awesome nature, and to stress its importance to the divine planning of our life in this world. Such planning culminates in our death and subsequent resurrection in a new life. As it sets out to drive this idea home to us, the chapter touches upon our emotions in a variety of ways that are directly relevant to its central theme.

First we have an ambiguous opening which creates an air of fear

and worried expectation. The rhythm here is quick and throbbing; it helps evoke feelings of fear, surprise and wonder:*By the ones who tear out vehemently, by the ones who draw out a drawing out, by the ones who are swimmers, swimming, the ones who take the lead, taking the lead, by the ones who manage a command,* (79:1-79:5)

This equivocal, shaking opening is followed by the first of those scenes which deal with the hereafter. The style and tempo of the opening is here maintained and thus serves as a framework for the overall scene: (79:6-79:14)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.

Lesson 81(2). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait God-consciousness (*taqwa*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

Quranic Chapter 79: The Ones Who Tear Out (al-Naziat)

Signs 79:27-79:46

Makkah: *Is your constitution harder to create or the heaven which*

He built? (79:27)
He exalted its vault and shaped it (79:28)
and He made its night dark and brought out its forenoon. (79:29)
And, after that, He spread out the earth. (79:30)
He brought out from it its water and its pasture. (79:31)
And the mountains He set firm, (79:32)
an enjoyment for you and for your flocks. (79:33)
When the Greater Catastrophe would draw near, (79:34)
on that Day the human being will recollect
for what he endeavored. (79:35)
Hellfire will be advanced for whoever sees. (79:36)
As for whoever was defiant (79:37)
and held this present life in greater favor, (79:38)
then, truly, hellfire will be the place of shelter! (79:39)
And as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and prohibited
desire from his soul, (79:40)
truly, the Garden will be the place of shelter! (79:41)
*They ask **you** about the Hour. When will it berth?* (79:42)
*Then, what are **you** about that **you** remind of it?* (79:43)
*To **your** Lord is the Utmost Boundary of it.* (79:44)
*And **you** are only one who warns to such a one*
whoever dreads it. (79:45)
It will be as though a Day they see it, they linger not in expectation
but an evening or a forenoon. (79:46)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter is just one example of many in this part of the Quran which shares a common objective; namely, to drive home to us the reality of the hereafter, its inevitability and its awesome nature, and to stress its importance to the divine planning of our life in this world. Such planning culminates in our death and subsequent resurrection in a new life. As it sets out to drive this idea home to us, the chapter touches upon our emotions in a variety of ways that are directly relevant to its central theme.

First we have an ambiguous opening which creates an air of fear and worried expectation. The rhythm here is quick and throbbing; it helps evoke feelings of fear, surprise and wonder:*By the ones who tear out vehemently, by the ones who draw out a drawing out, by the ones who are swimmers, swimming, the ones who take the lead, taking the lead, by the ones who manage a command,* (79:1-79:5)

This equivocal, shaking opening is followed by the first of those scenes which deal with the hereafter. The style and tempo of the

opening is here maintained and thus serves as a framework for the overall scene: *On a Day when the quake quakes, succeeds the one that comes close behind it, hearts beating painfully on that Day, their sight, that which is humble. They say: Will we be restored to our original state when we had been crumbled bones? They said: That is a return again of one who is a loser. Truly, there will be but one scare. That is when they would be the ones awakening.* (79:6-79:14)

Having cast an air of awe, the chapter then provides an account of the end met by some of the ungrateful during the time of Moses and Pharaoh. Here the rhythm is quieter and more relaxed to suit the narrative style: "Have you heard the story of Moses? His Lord called out to him in the sacred valley of Tuwa, saying: (79:15-79:26) This account serves as an introduction to the great principle the chapter aims to establish.

Leaving history aside, the chapter then takes up the open book of the universe. It paints great scenes of the universe which testify to the limitless power and careful planning of God, the Creator of the universe who controls its destiny both in this life and in the life to come. These scenes are drawn in a powerful style and contain a strong rhythm in harmony with the opening of the chapter and its general cadence. (79:27-79:33)

Then comes a statement about the great and overwhelming event, which will be accompanied by the distribution of rewards for actions done in this life. The rewards are portrayed in such a way as to fit in harmoniously with the event itself: (79:34-79:41)

At this point, when we are overwhelmed by the respective fates of the transgressors who prefer this life to the next, and the God-fearing who restrain themselves, the chapter turns to those who deny resurrection, yet ask the Prophet to fix its time. The rhythm here is superb. It further contributes to the awe produced by the account of the Last Hour. *They ask **you** about the Hour. When will it berth? Then, what are **you** about that **you** remind of it? To **your** Lord is the Utmost Boundary of it. And **you** are only one who warns to such a one whoever dreads it. It will be as though a Day they see it, they linger not in expectation but an evening or a forenoon.* (79:42-79:46) Perhaps we should note that these signs end with the sound aha, which adds length to the meter, intensifying the effect of majesty and awe.

We need no more than a glance in order to recognize the perfect coherence and harmony in the building of heaven. (79:28) Knowledge of the laws which govern the existence of the creatures in the sky above us and provide a perfect balance between their actions, movements and mutual effects helps us to understand the full mean-

ing of this sign. It intensifies our feeling of the limitlessness of their very real world, of which human knowledge has uncovered only a tiny part. It overwhelms us with wonder and astonishment. We stand speechless at the infinite beauty of the universe. We can give no explanation for it except that a superhuman power has planned and governs it. This explanation is now accepted even by most of those who profess not to believe in any religion.

The Arabic words used in this sign: *And He made its night dark and brought out its forenoon.* (79:29) add to the strength of the general tone. They also have stronger connotations than the translation suggests. They are used here because they are more fitting with the general context. The succession of darkness and light, at night and in the morning, is a phenomenon recognized by all, but it may be overlooked because we are so familiar with it. Here, the Quran reminds us of its permanent novelty. For it is repeated anew every day, producing the same effects and reactions. The natural laws governing this phenomenon are so precise and miraculous that they continue to impress and astonish us as our knowledge increases.

Spreading out the earth is a reference to the levelling of its surface so that it becomes easy to walk on, and to the formation of a layer of soil suitable for cultivation. *And, after that, He spread out the earth. He brought out from it its water and its pasture. And the mountains He set firm,* (79:30-79:32) Setting the mountains firm is a result of the final shaping of the surface of the earth and its cooling down to a level suitable for the emergence of living organisms. God also brought out water from the earth. This applies to springs that allow deep waters to flow out onto the surface of the earth. It also applies to rain water, since it comes originally from the earth. He also brought forth the pastures, which is, in this context, a reference to all plants upon which we and animals feed, and which directly and indirectly sustain life.

All this happened after heaven was built, the night darkened and the earth spread. Recent astronomical theories support this Quranic statement, for they assume that the earth was moving in its orbit, with day and night succeeding each other for hundreds of millions of years before it was levelled and spread out, becoming suitable for vegetation, and before its surface took its final, present shape of plains, valleys, mountains and oceans.

The Quran declares that all this is for you and your cattle to delight in. *An enjoyment for you and for your flocks.* (79:33) This is a reminder to the human being of what God has made for him, and of His perfect and elaborate planning. It is not by chance that heaven was built in this fashion and the earth spread out to take its present

shape. Our existence, as God's vicegerent, was taken into account. Indeed, human life and progress depend on so many factors which operate in the universe generally, and in the solar system in particular, and even more particularly on the earth itself. All these factors must be made to function in absolute harmony.

Following the Quranic method of delivering a short statement which embodies the basic fact, yet is rich with hints and inferences, the chapter names just a few of these harmonized factors — the building of heaven, the darkening of the night, the bringing forth of daylight, the spreading of the earth, the manipulation of its waters and pastures and the setting firm of mountains — for us and our flocks to delight in. This statement ensures the elaborate planning of the universe is understood by everybody, regardless of education standard. It addresses all humanity, throughout all ages and societies, whether primitive or advanced. The reality of such meticulous and elaborate planning, however, goes far beyond the level mentioned here. The very nature of this universe rules out any possibility of its formation by chance, for no chance construct could result in such perfect and absolute harmony on such an immeasurable scale. The harmony starts with the fact that our solar system is unique among millions and millions of planetary systems, and our earth is also a unique planet with regard to its location in the solar system. It is this uniqueness that makes life on earth possible.

The reality touched upon in this part of the chapter serves as an introduction to the reality of the hereafter, which is the main theme of the whole chapter. *When the Greater Catastrophe would draw near, on that Day the human being will recollect for what he endeavored. Hellfire will be advanced for whoever sees. As for whoever was defiant and held this present life in greater favor, then, truly, hellfire will be the place of shelter! And as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and prohibited desire from his soul, truly, the Garden will be the place of shelter!* (79:34-79:41)

This present life is a period of comfort and enjoyment which are given in precise and accurate measure. Its duration is determined according to the overall planning of the universe and human life. Its comfort and enjoyment will end at the time appointed for their expiry. When the great event takes place, it ravages all and overwhelms all. The fleeting comfort of this life is extinguished. The whole universe, its built heaven, spread out earth and firm mountains are overturned and all living creatures are overwhelmed. *On that Day the human being will recollect for what he endeavored.* (79: 35) He might have been distracted by the events and comforts of this life and he might have overlooked what he has done. But he will recall it all then, when

remembrance brings him nothing but sadness and grief as he realizes what a miserable end he faces. *Hellfire will be advanced for whoever sees.* (79:36) The term 'bringing in sight' is particularly powerful. It is rich in connotations and further strengthens the rhythm. The result is an image so vivid we almost see it in front of us now.

Then, people will have different destinies and the aim of earlier planning in the first life is revealed: *As for whoever was defiant* 79:37 and held this present life in greater favor, then, truly, hellfire will be the place of shelter!* (79:37-79:39) The Arabic term rendered here as 'transgress the bounds of what is right' means literally 'tyrannize', but this term is used here, as elsewhere in the Quran, in a much wider sense than the strict despotism of rulers and dictators. 'Tyranny' is used here as being synonymous with exceeding the limits of right and truth. Therefore, these three signs refer to all those who transgress the boundaries of right, prefer this life to the future life, taking no heed of the latter. Since consciousness of the hereafter defines the values and standards to be applied, he who prefers this present life suffers a breakdown of values and standards resulting in his adoption of faulty standards of behavior. This puts him in the category of despots and transgressors. Thus, hell which is brought in sight of everybody on that great day will be his dwelling place.

The one who fears to stand in front of God does not indulge in sin. If he slips and commits a sin, in a moment of weakness, his fear of God will lead him to repent and pray for forgiveness. *And as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and prohibited desire from his soul, truly, the Garden will be the place of shelter!* (79:40-79:41) Thus, he remains within the area of obedience, the central point of which is the control of one's caprice and desires. Indulgence of desire and caprice is essentially the cause of all forms of tyranny and transgression. It is the spring of evil. The human being hardly ever falls for any reason other than succumbing to caprice and desire. Ignorance is easy to cure. Desire, once ignorance has been cured, is a plague which requires a long and hard struggle to overcome. Yet fear of God is the only solid defense against violent attacks of desire. Indeed, there is hardly any other defense which can withstand such attacks. Therefore, the chapter mentions fear of God and control of desire together in one sign. This fact is here stressed by God, the Creator of the human being and the only One who knows the human soul, its weaknesses and their effective cure.

God does not ask us to suppress our desires, because He knows that it is not possible for us to do so. He simply asks us to control our desires and not to let them control us. He tells us that fear of standing before our Lord, the Almighty, should be of great assistance.

He has fixed our reward for this hard struggle: Paradise as a dwelling place. For God knows perfectly well the hardships involved in this struggle and the high standards to which we are elevated by the same. This struggle, self-control and elevation help us fulfil our humanity. Such fulfilment cannot be achieved by giving way to all desires, and following caprice wherever it leads, on the pretext that desire and caprice are part of human nature. God, who made us sensitive to certain urges, also gave us self-discipline. He also gives us paradise as a reward when we elevate ourselves to a high standard of humanity.

There are two types of freedom. The first is achieved through scoring a victory over one's desires and releasing oneself from the chains of caprice. When a person achieves such a victory he finds himself able to fulfil these desires and caprices in a controlled and balanced way which emphasizes his freedom of choice. This type of freedom is human, one which suits the honor God has bestowed on man. The other type is animal freedom, represented in man's defeat, his enslavement by his desires, and his loss of control over himself. This type of freedom is advocated only by those who have lost their humanity, so they try to cover their slavery with a dress of deceptive freedom.

The last part of the chapter is expressed in a rhythm which evokes awe. *They ask you about the Hour. When will it berth? Then, what are you about that you remind of it? To your Lord is the Utmost Boundary of it. And you are only one who warns to such a one whoever dreads it. It will be as though a Day they see it, they linger not in expectation but an evening or a forenoon.* (79:42- 79:46)

Every time the diehards among the pagan Arabs heard a description of the fearful events of the Day of Judgement, and the reckoning which then takes place, they used to ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) to specify its time: *Then, what are you about that you remind of it?* (79:43) It is an answer which suggests that the Last Hour, or the Day of Judgement, is so great and majestic that the questions put by the ungrateful concerning it sound stupid and pitiful. Moreover, such questions are only put forward by the impudent. The great Prophet himself is asked: Why should you be concerned with its exact timing?

It is so great that neither you nor anyone else should ask to be informed of its exact time. This knowledge belongs to God alone, not to anybody else. *To your Lord is the Utmost Boundary of it.* (79:44) He is the Master of everything which relates to it. The Prophet's own duties, and the limits he should not, and need not exceed are well defined: *And you are only one who warns to such a one whoever dreads it.* (79:45) He is to warn those who will benefit

by such warnings. Such people will then live according to their firm belief that it will arrive at the time appointed by God.

It so grips the soul that our present life with all its epics, events and luxuries will seem to those who lived them shorter than a single day, just one evening or one morning. *It will be as though a Day they see it, they linger not in expectation but an evening or a forenoon.* (79:46) So, the whole world, its centuries and generations will shrink to nothing longer than a morning or an evening in the sight of the very people who quarrel and fight for it, preferring it to their share in the life to come. Yet for such passing enjoyment they abandon the hereafter and forego the certain prospect of dwelling in paradise. This is definitely the greatest stupidity of all, which no person who has ears to hear and eyes to see can ever perpetrate.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

EPILOGUE

THE SECOND PLEDGE OF AQABA

Thus another year passed away in comparative tranquillity, and the month of pilgrimage in Dhu al-Hijja 1 BH/621 CE , when the Madinah converts were again to rally around the Prophet, drew near.[1] Messages and reports of the amazing success of Islam had no doubt reached the Prophet but he could hardly have been prepared for the enthusiastic numbers ready to crowd to his standard, and swear allegiance to him as Prophet. But the occasion was critical, and it was necessary to proceed with caution.

The Quraysh, if aware of the hostile confederacy—hostile because pledged to support a faction in their community—would have good ground for offense The sword might prematurely be unsheathed, and the cause of Islam endangered. The movement, therefore, was conducted with the utmost secrecy. Even the great body of Madinah pilgrims, in whose company the converts travelled, were unaware of the meeting.

MUSAB REPORTS SUCCESS TO MUHAMMAD

Musab, the teacher sent to Madinah, who accompanied the pilgrim party, immediately on his arrival went to the Prophet and related all that happened in Madinah. The Prophet rejoiced greatly when he heard of the numbers of the converts, and their eagerness in the service of Islam.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETING BY NIGHT AT THE CLOSE OF THE PILGRIMAGE

To elude the scrutiny of the citizens the meeting between the Prophet and his new adherents was to be by night and that the strangers, in case suspicion were aroused, might be as soon as possible beyond reach of their enemies, the time was deferred to the close of the pilgrimage when, the ceremonies and sacrifices being finished, the multitude would on the following morning disperse to their homes. The spot was to be the same secluded glen of Aqaba, outside Mina, where the men of Madinah had met the Prophet before. They were to move there cautiously, after all had retired to rest, waking not the sleeper, nor waiting for the absent.[1]

An hour or two before midnight, the Prophet, attended only by his uncle Abbas, went to the rendezvous, the first of the party. To secure the greater secrecy, the intended meeting, he had told his followers not be present, the less to excite suspicion.

They had not long to wait. Soon the converts from Madinah, singly and by twos and threes, were seen arriving through the moonlight, moving stealthily along the stony valley and barren rocks towards the spot. They were seventy-five in all, sixty-two of the Khazraj, eleven of the Aws with two women, and included the twelve converts who had before met the Prophet there.

When all were seated, Abbas, in a low voice, broke silence by a speech something to this effect: Men of the Khazraj![2] This, my kinsman who dwells amongst us in honor and in safety. His clan will defend him—both those that are converts,and those that still hold to their ancestral faith and defend him to the last. But he prefers to seek protection from you. Wherefore, you Khazrajites, consider the matter well, and count the cost. If you be resolved and are able to defend him, then give the pledge. But if you doubt your ability, at once abandon the design.

Then spoke Al-Bara, an aged chief: We have listened to your words. Our resolution is unshaken. Our lives are at the Prophet's service. It is now for him to speak.

The Prophet began, as he used to by reciting passages from the Quran. He invited all present to the service of God, and dwelt upon the claims and blessings of Islam. Then coming to the business of the night, he ended by saying that he should be content if the strangers pledged themselves to defend him as they would defend their wives and children. At once, from every quarter, arose a confused, tumultuous noise. It was the eager voices of the seventy-five bearing witness to their readiness to take the pledge, and protesting that they would receive and defend the Prophet even at the cost of life and property.

Then Abbas, holding his nephew's hand, called aloud: Hush! There may be spies abroad. Let your leaders of years stand forth, and speak on your behalf. In truth, we are fearful for your safety if our people should discover us. Then when you have plighted your faith depart silently to your camp. So their chief men stood forth.

Then said Al-Bara[3]: Stretch out your hand, O Muhammad! He stretche it out and Bara struck his hand thereon, as the manner was in taking oath c fealty. The Madinites came forward one by one, and did the same. The women repeated only the words of the pledge taken by the twelve in the former year. Muhammad never took women by the hand on such an occasion. They used to step forward and recite the prescribed words, and then he would say: Go, you have pledged yourselves.

Then the Prophet named the twelve of the chief men, and said: Moses chose from amongst his people twelve leaders. Thus shall you be the leaders and sureties for the rest even as the disciples of Jesus were and I am the surety for my people.

They answered: Be it so.[4]

At this moment the voice of one crying aloud, a straggler perchance, searching for his company, was heard at hand. Excited fancy conjured up a Qurayshite if not an infernal spy. The Prophet gave command and the assembly dispersed hurrying back to their several halting places.

And so ended the memorable night of the Second Pledge of Aqaba.[5]

THE UNGRATEFUL QURAYSH CHALLENGE THE MADINAH CHIEFS

So large a gathering could not be held close by Mina without rumors reaching the ungrateful Quraysh enough to rouse suspicion. It was notorious that great numbers at Madinah had begun to embrace the doctrines of Muhammad. The clandestine meeting must have been on his behalf and as such, an unwarrantable interference in the domestic affairs of Makkah. It was virtually a hostile movement.

Accordingly, next morning the chief men of the ungrateful Quraysh repaired to the Madinah encampment, stated their suspicions and complained of unfriendly conduct at the hand of a tribe with whom, of all tribes in Arabia, it would grieve them most to be at war. The converts glanced at each other, and held their peace.[6]

The rest of the pilgrims from Madinah, ignorant of the proceedings, protested that the people of Makkah had been misinformed and that the report was without foundation. Their chief, Abd Allah ibn Ubay, assured the visitors that none of his people would have ventured on such a step without consulting him. The Quraysh were satisfied and took their leave.

THEY PURSUE THE MADINAH CARAVAN

Shortly after, the vast concourse at Mina broke up. The numerous caravans prepared for their journey, and took each its homeward course. The Madinah party had already set out, when the ungrateful Quraysh, having inquired into the midnight assembly,which the Prophet hardly cared to keep secret now, found, to their confusion, that not only had it really taken place, but that far larger numbers than they suspected had pledged themselves to the defense of Muhammad. Foiled and exasperated, they pursued the Madinah caravan in the hope that they might lay hands on some of the delinquents, but, though they scoured the roads leading to Madinah, they fell in with only two.

MALTREATMENT OF ONE OF THE CONVERTS

Of these one escaped. The other, Saad ibn Ubayda, they seized and, tying his hands behind his back, dragged him by his long hair back to Makkah. There he would, no doubt, have suffered further maltreatment, had he had not been able to claim protection from certain Qurayshite chiefs to whom at Madinah he had given service. He was released and rejoined the caravan just as his friends were about to return in search of him.

THE UNGRATEFUL QURAYSH, ENRAGED, RECOMMENCE PERSECUTION

It soon became evident that, in consequence of the Second Pledge of Aqaba that the Prophet and his followers contemplated an early flight. The prospect of such a movement, which would remove their opponents entirely out of reach and plant them in an asylum where they might securely work out their lives at first kindled the wrath of the idolater-Quraysh. They renewed

their persecution and, wherever they had the power, sought either to force the confessors to recant, or by confinement prevent their escape.

The two things would react on one another. The persecution hastening the departure of the converts, and each fresh departure irritating the Quraysh to greater cruelty. Tabari says: There were two occasions on which persecution raged the hottest. First, the period preceding the emigration to Abyssinia and second, that following the Second Pledge of Aqaba.

Such severities, or the dread of them—for the Muslims were conscious that they had now seriously compromised their loyalty as citizens of Makkah—hastened the crisis. Indeed, when the Prophet had once resolved upon a general migration, there was no advantage from a protracted residence among his enemies. It was therefore but a few days after the Second Pledge of Aqaba that the Prophet gave command to his followers, saying: Depart unto Yathrib (Madinah) for the Lord has verily given unto you brothers in that city, and a home in which you may find refuge.

THE DEPARTURE OF CONVERTS

So they made preparation, chose companions for the journey, and set out in parties secretly. Such as had the means rode two and two upon camels. The rest walked on foot.

Persecution and artifice caused a few to fall away from the faith. Umar had arranged a rendezvous with Aiyash, son of Abu Rahya, and a friend, at a spot near Makkah where they were to set out for Madinah. The friend was held back by his family, and relapsed for a time into idolatry.

Thus Umar and Aiyash started alone and journeyed to Quba, a suburb of Madinah, where they alighted and were hospitably received at the house of Rifaa. But his half-brothers, Abu Jahl and Harith—they were all three sons o' Asma of Tamim—followed Aiyash to Madinah, and told him that his mothe. had vowed she would retire beneath no shade, nor suffer a comb or any oil to touch her hair, until she saw his face again.

Umar cautioned him saying: By the Lord! They only desire to tempt you from your faith. Your mother will soon relax her vow. Beware, Aiyash! return not now to Makkah.

But he replied: Nay, I will not recant. But I have property at Makkah. I will go and fetch it. It will strengthen me. I will also release my mother from her vow.

Seeing that he was not to be diverted from his purpose, Umar gave him a swift camel and bade him, if he suspected treachery, to save himself thereon.

So when the party alighted at a certain place, his companions seized him suddenly, and bound him with cords. As they carried him into Makkah in broad daylight, they exclaimed: Even thus, you men of Makkah should treat your foolish ones! Then they kept him under surveillance.[7]

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut. al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT, INTERLUDE AND EPILOGUE

TEXT

1. Ali Shariati, *Shariati on Shariati.*
2. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*
3. Ibid.

INTERLUDE

1. Ziyad ibn Abdullah al-Bakkai from Muhammad ibn Ishaq; the following account reached Ibn Ishaq from Abd Allah ibn Masud and Abu Said al-Khudri, and Ayisha, the Prophet's wife, and Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan, and al-Hasan ibn Abul Hasan al-Basri, and Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri and Qatada and other traditionists, and Umm Hani bint Abu Talib.

EPILOGUE

1. Ibn Hisham, p 293; Tabari, i. 1217; Ibn Saad p 148) s

2. The people of Madinah, both of the Aws and Khazraj tribes, used to be addressed collectively as Al-Khazraj.

3 Al-Bara, who bore here so conspicuous a part, died the following month. He was the first over whose grave Muhammad prayed in the formula usual afterwards: O Lord! Pardon Him! Be merciful unto him! Be reconciled unto him! and verily You are reconciled.

4. *Nasib*, Leader, is the term which ever after honorably marked the Twelve. Four were of the number who had met Muhammad here before. Three were of the Aws tribe. The rest, Khazrajites. Several are mentioned as able to write Arabic, and as perfect expert in writing, archery, and swimming.

5. Ibn Hisham, pp 196-200.

6. A story is told by Kab, one of the seventy-five, that at this moment to divert a tention, he pointed to a new pair of shoes which a Qurayshite chief had on, and said to one of his friends: Why could not you, our chief, wear a pair of new shoes like this Qurayshite chief? The latter, taking off the shoes, threw them at Kab, saying: Put them on yourself. His friend said: Hush! give back the shoes. Kab refused. The chief then tried to snatch them from him. A commotion ensued, which was just what Kab desired, as it served to cover the awkward situation of the Madinah converts.

7. Ibn Hisham, p. 319 Aiyash under such treatment relapsed into idolatry. Umar says according to 39:53, apostates could be saved. He sent a copy of it to Aiyash in-Makkah. Aiyash on this took courage, and forthwith mounted his camel for Madinah. Ibn Hisham, p. 320.

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Quranic Chapter 29: The Spider (al-Ankabut)
Signs 29:12-29:13 •
Commentary •
Lesson 85(2). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Worthiness (focussing on the important, not the trivial) •
Signs 29:14-29:22 •
Commentary •
Lesson 85(3). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints •
Signs 29:23-29:30 •
Commentary •
Lesson 85(4). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Right Judgment •
Signs 29:31-29:44 •
Commentary •
Lesson 85(5). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear) •
Signs 29:45-29:51 •
Commentary •
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 13, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 1 BH/ca. July 27, 621 CE-July 15, 622 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION

READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING

BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

Obstacles to Correct Reasoning

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 13*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 13* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 13*, we begin with Lesson 82, that is, Quran Chapter 82 which is the 82nd Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 84, 30, 29 and, finally, Lesson 86, Quranic Chapter 83, the last chapter revealed in Makkah.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 82. CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 82: THE SPLITTING APART (AL-INFITAR)

Makkah: *When the heaven will be split apart* (82:1)
and when the stars will be scattered (82:2)
and when the seas will be caused to gush forth (82:3)
and when the graves will be scattered about (82:4)
every soul would know what it put forward
and what it postponed. (82:5)
O human being! What deluded ***you***
as to ***your*** *generous Lord,* (82:6)
He Who created thee, then, shaped ***you*** *in proportion.* (82:7)
He composed ***you*** *in whichever form He willed.* (82:8)
No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life! (82:9)
And, truly, there are ones who guard over you, (82:10)
ones who are generous scribes. (82:11)
They know whatever you accomplish. (82:12)
Truly, the pious will be in bliss. (82:13)
And, truly, the ones who act immorally will be in hellfire. (82:14)
They will roast on the Day of Judgment. (82:15)
And they will not be of ones who are absent. (82:16)
And what will cause ***you*** *to recognize*
what the Day of Judgment is? (82:17)
Again, what will cause ***you*** *to recognize*
what the Day of Judgment is? (82:18)

It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God. (82:19)

COMMENTARY°

This short chapter refers to the great upheaval, but gives it a special color. It has a different rhythm, deep and calm. It adds a touch of expostulation coupled with an implicit threat. Therefore, it does not detail the scenes of the great upheaval as in the previous chapter, where these scenes predominate. Instead the scenes here are shorter, in order to suit its quieter atmosphere and slower rhythm.

At the opening, the chapter mentions the cleaving of the sky, the scattering of the stars, the bursting of the oceans and the hurling of the graves as simultaneous with every soul's knowledge of its earlier and later actions, on that momentous day.

The second part starts with a remonstration combined with an implicit threat to man who is the recipient of abundant grace but who shows no gratitude for it. *No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life! And, truly, there are ones who guard over you, ones who are generous scribes. They know whatever you accomplish. Truly, the pious will be in bliss. And, truly, the ones who act immorally will be in hellfire. They will roast on the Day of Judgment. And they will not be of ones who are absent.* (82:9-82:16)

The final part gives an idea of how fearful the Day of Judgment is, how everyone is absolutely helpless and how all power belongs to God: *And what will cause **you** to recognize what the Day of Judgment is? Again, what will cause **you** to recognize what the Day of Judgment is? It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:17-82:19) Thus, the chapter represents yet another way of portraying the same basic principles stressed in this thirtieth part of the Quran in various methods and styles.

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When the sky is cleft asunder, when the stars are scattered, when the oceans are made to explode, when the graves are hurled about, each soul shall know its earlier actions and its later ones. (82:1-82:5)

The violent upheaval in the universe causes the stars to scatter after they have been held together by a system which makes every star stick to its orbit, even though its movement is exceedingly fast. If this system is broken, as will happen when the life of the stars comes to its end, they will just disappear in the wide space, as does a particle of dust running loose.

The explosion of the oceans may refer to their being overfull to

the extent that they swallow all dry land and rivers. The hurling about of the graves may be a result of one of the events mentioned above. It may also be a separate event which occurs on that eventful day. As these graves are hurled about people are resurrected so as to face the reckoning and receive their reward or punishment. This is complemented by the sign which follows: *Every soul would know what it put forward and what it postponed.* (82:5) That is, each soul shall come face to face with what it has done and what it has left behind of the consequences of its actions; or, what it has enjoyed in this present life and what it has saved for the hereafter. Such knowledge, however, will accompany these horrific events. It will indeed be part of them, for it terrifies the soul no less than any of the other events.

The Arabic expression used here may be translated literally as: A soul shall know. It is, however, in Arabic a neater and more effective denotation of each soul shall know. Furthermore, such knowledge by every soul is not the end of the matter. It has consequences which are as violent as the scenes portrayed here of the great upheaval. These consequences are merely implied, not stated, and this is even more effective.

After this opening which alerts people's senses and consciences, the chapter, by means of gentle remonstrance coupled with an implicit threat, touches the hearts of men who busy themselves with trivialities. It reminds man of God's very first act of grace towards him, namely, his molding in such an upright, perfectly proportioned form. God could have easily given him any form He wished. Yet man is ungrateful: (82:6-82:8) The address appeals to a person's most noble quality, his humanity, which distinguishes him from all other creatures and assigns to him the highest position among them. This quality represents God's gracious blessing to man and His abundant generosity.

This appeal is immediately followed by a gentle remonstrance: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord.* (82:6) What makes you neglect your duties to your Lord and behave impudently towards Him when He has given you your humanity which raises you above all His creation and provides you with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. A few details of God's generosity are then added: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion.* (82:6-82:7) It is an address which appeals straight to our heart. He listens to God's remonstrance as He reminds him of His grace while he continues with his erring ways and impudent behavior towards Him.

A lot may be said about every other system of the human body.

But wonderful as these systems are, the human being may have them in common with animals. He, however, is privileged to possess his unique mental and spiritual qualities, regarded in this chapter as a special favor from God. After the chapter has dealt with humanity, it mentions the perfection of his creation and the right proportioning of his mold: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion.* (82:6-82:7)

Let us reflect on our powers of comprehension, the nature of which is unknown to us. The mind is the medium of comprehension but the working of our minds and how they function remain to us incomprehensible. If we suppose that what we grasp is transmitted to the brain through the nerves, where and how does the brain store its information? If we compare the brain to a magnetic recording tape, every man needs in his average lifetime of sixty years a great many billion meters on which to record such a huge multitude of pictures, words, meanings, feelings and responses so that he may, as he actually does, remember them several decades later. Furthermore, how does man sort out individual words, meanings, events and pictures to mold them together in a sort of coherent education? How does he transform information and experiences into knowledge?

Yet this is by no means the most significant of our distinctive qualities. There is that wonderful ray of God's spirit which provides a link between us and the beauty of the universe and its Creator. As this link is established, we can experience at clear, bright moments a sense of communion with the infinite, the absolute, which prepares us for a blissful eternal life in God's paradise. Yet we have no power to comprehend the nature of our spirit, which is God's greatest favor to us and which makes us a human being. Therefore, God addresses us by this quality "O human being!" He then remonstrates with us directly: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord?* Thus, we are reminded of God's greatest favor, but we stand impudent, negligent of our duties, unashamed and ungrateful. But man does not need more than to realize the source of this remonstrance and what attitude he adopts when we stand before our Lord to be absolutely overwhelmed by shame: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion. He composed you in whichever form He willed. No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life!* (82:6-82:8)

The chapter moves on to explain the reason for our impudence and negligence, namely, denial of the Last Judgment. It emphatically confirms the reality of reckoning, reward and punishment: (82:9-82:16) The English expression, *no indeed* is used here to render the

meaning of the Arabic word, *kalla*, which is a command to desist and an indication of a change of subject and style. Therefore, the following signs are in the form of a statement.

You think that reckoning and accountability are falsehoods, and this is precisely the cause of your impudence and negligence of duties. *No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life!* (82:9) How can any person disbelieve in the judgment and still lead a life based on goodness and right guidance? Some people may achieve a higher degree of faith: they worship God because they love Him, neither out of fear of punishment nor in hope of reward. But these people continue to believe in the Last Judgement. They fear it and look forward to it at the same time, because they hope to be with their beloved Lord. When man, however, flatly rejects the Day of Judgment he will be devoid of politeness and light; his heart and conscience are dead.

You deny the Day of Judgment when you will certainly face it. Everything you do in this life will be counted for or against you. Nothing is lost, nothing forgotten: *And, truly, there are ones who guard over you, ones who are generous scribes. They know whatever you accomplish.* (82:10-82:12) These recorders are the angels charged with accompanying people, watching them and recording all what they do and say. We do not know, and are not required to know, how this takes place. God knows that we are neither given the ability to understand it nor are we going to benefit by understanding it because it does not affect the purpose of our existence. Therefore, it is useless to attempt to explain by our means what God has chosen not to reveal to us of the world of imperceptibles. It is sufficient for us to feel that we do not live in vain and that there are noble recorders who note what we do, in order to be so that we are always alert and prudent.

We are then told of the destinies of the God-conscious and the wicked, which are determined by the reckoning based on the recordings of the noble angels: (82:13-82:16) The end is certain. That the God-conscious shall dwell in blissful happiness and the wicked shall end in hell is already determined. A God-conscious person is the one who consistently does right actions, i.e. good deeds, until doing them becomes his intrinsic quality. The adjective 'God-conscious' has connotations which fit in well with nobility and humanity. The contrasting quality, 'wickedness', carries connotations of insolence and impudence as the wicked indulge in sinful actions. Hell is a proper recompense for wickedness. The chapter emphasizes the certainty of this punishment: *They will roast on the Day of Judgment.* (82:15) Then it re-emphasizes it: *And they will not be of ones who are absent.* (82:16) They cannot escape it in the first place, nor will they be al-

lowed to leave it, not even for a short while.

Having stated what happens on the Day of Judgment, the chapter emphasizes again the certainty of that day, since it is denied by some. The emphasis provided here is in the form of a rhetorical question which enhances the mystery surrounding the object of the question. The chapter then states the complete helplessness of everyone, the absolute impossibility of giving or receiving support and that God is the absolute sovereign on that awesome day: (82:17-82:19)

The form: *And what will cause you* is a form of rhetorical question often used in the Quran. It suggests that the matter under discussion is far beyond our imagining and understanding. This is stressed here by repetition of the question before details about conditions on the day concerned are given: *It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:19) It is a state of total helplessness when everyone stands alone, busy with their own problems, unable to think of anyone else, relative or friend. *It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:19) He indeed reigns supreme in this life and the next. This fact, however, becomes so clear on that day that no one can overlook it, as the ignorant and the conceited do in this life.

The chapter closes with an air of fear and speechless expectation which contrasts with the opening air of violent horror. In between the two man is addressed with that remonstrance which overwhelms him with shame.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether

you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

Developing Criteria for Evaluation

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

LESSON 83. CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

QURANIC CHAPTER 84: THE SPLITTING OPEN

Makkah: *When the heaven was split open* (84:1)
and gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do (84:2)
and when the earth stretches out (84:3)
and cast what is in it and voided itself (84:4)
and gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do, (84:5)
*O human being! Truly, **you** are*
*one who is laboring towards **your** Lord*
*laboriously and **you** will be one who encounters Him.* (84:6)
And as for him who will be given his book

in his right hand, (84:7)
then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning, (84:8)
and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous. (84:9)
But for whoever will be given his book behind his back, (84:10)
he will call for damnation (84:11)
and roast in a blaze. (84:12)
He had been one who is joyous with his people. (84:13)
Truly, he thought he would never retreat. (84:14)
Yea! Truly, his Lord had been seeing him. (84:15)
So no! I swear an oath by the twilight (84:16)
and by the night and whatever it enveloped (84:17)
and by the moon when it was full (84:18)
that you will, truly, ride plane after plane. (84:19)
Then, what is for them who believe not (84:20)
when the Quran was recited to them,
they prostrate not themselves? (84:21)
Nay! Those who were ungrateful deny, (84:22)
but God is greater in knowledge of what they amass. (84:23)
So give them good tidings of a painful punishment. (84:24)
But those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them is compensation, that which is unfailing. (84:25)

COMMENTARY°

The splitting of the sky has been dwelt upon in the commentary on other chapters. (84:1-84:5) One new element here is the submission and complete obedience of the sky to her Lord: *And gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do.* (84:2) Another new element is the stretching of the earth: *And when the earth stretches out* (84:3) This means perhaps an expansion of her size or shape as a result of a disruption of the laws of nature which govern her and preserve her in her present shape. The statement, made in the passive, suggests that this will be carried out through the intervention of an outside force. *And cast what is in it and voided itself.* (84:4) This image portrays the earth as a living entity casting out what is within her and getting rid of it.

These short signs vividly demonstrate how both the living sky and earth receive their orders and instantly comply with them. Their obedience is a manifestation of their conscious and dutiful submission. The image drawn here has shades of humility, solemnity and tranquillity that are brought out in full relief. The impression it leaves is one of humble and obedient submission to God.

In such an atmosphere of conscious obedience, we are addressed

from on high: *O human being! Truly, you are one who is laboring towards your Lord laboriously and you will be one who encounters Him.* (84:6) O humanity! your Lord has made you in a perfect way. He has given you your humanity which distinguishes you from the rest of creation. Your humanity endows you with certain characteristics which should have made you more conscious of your Lord, and more obedient and submissive to Him than both the sky and the earth. He has given man of His own spirit and endowed him with the ability to communicate with Him, receive His light, ennoble himself with God's grace in order to achieve the highest degree of perfection attainable by man. This is no little distinction.

He who is given his book in his right hand is the happy one who was true to his faith. *And as for him who will be given his book in his right hand, then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning, and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous.* (84:7-84:9) God is pleased with him and rewards him well. He will have a lenient reckoning, that is to say that he will not be called to account for what he did in this life.

This image is the opposite of what happens to the afflicted one who has to account for his evil deeds and receives his record with reluctance. *But for whoever will be given his book behind his back, he will call for damnation and roast in a blaze.* (84:10-84:12)

So, the unfortunate one who lived his life on earth laboring hard but disobeying God and indulging in what is forbidden will know his destiny. He realizes that what lies in front of him is more suffering and hard labour with the only difference being that this time the suffering is greater, uninterrupted and endless. So, he calls destruction upon himself, for he sees his own destruction as the only means of salvation from what will befall him. When man seeks refuge in his own destruction, then he is certainly in a helpless position. His own non-existence becomes his strongest desire. His hopelessness is beyond description. *And roast in a blaze.* (84:12) This is the end from which he wishes to escape by means of his own destruction; but there is no way out.

Having portrayed this miserable scene, the chapter gives us a glimpse of the sufferer's past which led him to this endless misery: *He had been one who is joyous with his people. Truly, he thought he would never retreat.* (84:13-84:14) The past tense is used here because we feel that the Day of Judgement has arrived, after this life has ended. The indulgence and the joy had taken place in this life. "He lived joyfully among his people." He cared for nothing beyond the moment he was in, and made no preparation for the hereafter. He surely thought he would never return to his Lord. Had he thought

about the return at the end of his journey through life, he would have carried provisions to sustain him. *Yea! Truly, his Lord had been seeing him.* (84:15) Indeed God has always been aware of man's thoughts, actions and feelings. God knows that, contrary to what man may think, there will be a return to Him to receive the reward merited by actions on earth. This is indeed what happens when all return to God to meet their appointed destiny, when what God has ordained will take place. *He had been one who is joyous with his people. Truly, he thought he would never retreat.* (84:13-84:15)

This image of the misery of the one who was joyful among his people during his short life on earth has a counterpart in the image of the happy one who returns rejoicing to his people to live with them an eternal happy life, free from hardship: *And as for him who will be given his book in his right hand, then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning, and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous.* (84:7-84:9)

The chapter then refers briefly to some worldly scenes. People, however, continue to overlook the evidence such scenes provide of the deliberate planning that has gone into the making of this world. Indeed, this planning includes the creation of man himself, and his phases and transitions through life: *So no! I swear an oath by the twilight and by the night and whatever it enveloped and by the moon when it was full that you will, truly, ride plane after plane.* (84:16-84:19) The oath, which is indirect in the Arabic text, serves to draw man's attention to these universal scenes. The connotations here are in perfect harmony with those of the opening of the chapter and the scenes portrayed there. The twilight refers to that period of stillness after sunset when the soul is overwhelmed by a deep feeling of awe. The heart feels, at such a time, the significance of parting with a beloved companion, and the quiet sadness and deep melancholy this involves. It also experiences fear of the approaching darkness.

What the night envelops is left unspecified to enhance the effect. *And by the night and whatever it enveloped.* (84:17) Imagination can travel far and wide as one thinks of what the night may conceal of events and feelings. But the travels of the imagination cannot capture all the images generated by the short Quranic sign, "And by the night and what it envelops." We are left with an overwhelming feeling of reverence which is in perfect harmony with the stillness and awe associated with the twilight.

This is another quiet and splendid scene: *And by the moon when it was full* (84:18), describing the full moon as her light descends over the earth. The full moon is always associated with tranquillity. The general impression formed here is closely associated with twi-

light, and the dark night as it conceals everything. The feeling is one of a complementary stillness and reverence.

This: *That you will, truly, ride plane after plane* (84:19) means, you will pass from one stage of suffering to another, as has been charted for you. The Quran uses the term 'ride', although we use the expression 'move onward', to denote the undergoing of various stages of suffering. 'Ride' is frequently used in Arabic to signify the passage through risk and difficulty. This usage suggests that difficulties and risks are like horses or mules to be ridden. Each one will take the rider to the stage determined for them. Thus each one will deliver the rider to a new, predetermined stage, in the same way as twilight, the night and perfect moon are predetermined. They eventually end with their meeting with God, which was mentioned in the preceding part. This coherent ordering of the parts of the chapter and the smooth movement from one point to another is characteristic of the superb Quranic style.

There then follows an expression of wonder at those who persist in their denial of the faith when they have all these signs and all this abundant evidence within themselves and in the world at large which indicates the truth: *Then, what is for them who believe not when the Quran was recited to them, they prostrate not themselves?* (84:20-84:21) Indeed, why do they not accept the faith? There are numerous indications in the universe and within the soul which point out that the path of faith is the right path. They are at once numerous, profound and powerful, so they besiege the heart if it tries to run away from them. But if someone listens to them, then they address him in a friendly and affectionate way.

The Quran addresses them in the language of pure human nature. It opens the heart to the truth and points out its evidence both within themselves and over the horizon. It kindles in people's hearts God-consciousness, humbleness, obedience and submission to the Creator of the universe. The expression, fall down in prostration, refers to these feelings. The universe is splendid and inspiring: it offers a multitude of signs, mental stimuli and moments of purity which combine to arouse in us a ready response and a willing submission. The Quran is also superb and inspiring; it links the human heart with the splendid universe and, consequently, with the Creator who made it. It gives us a feeling of truth about the universe which also demonstrates the truth of creation and the Creator. Therefore, the wonder: *Then, what is for them who believe not when the Quran was recited to them, they prostrate not themselves?* (84:20-84:21)

It is indeed amazing, but the Quran does not dwell on this for long. It proceeds to describe the behavior of the ungrateful and the

end which awaits them. *Nay! Those who were ungrateful deny, but God is greater in knowledge of what they amass. So give them good tidings of a painful punishment.*(84:22-84:24) The ungrateful shout, 'lies', but the object of their denunciation as lies is unspecified. In Arabic, omission of the object serves to widen the scope of reference for the verb. Thus, here we understand that the denunciation as lies is an entrenched habit and a characteristic of ungrateful. But God is fully aware of the evil they conceal in their hearts and He knows perfectly well their motives for denouncing the truth.

The chapter then halts its discussion of their state and addresses God's Messenger: "So give them the tidings of a grievous suffering," an unpleasant tiding for anyone who is awaiting news of his future.

At the same time the chapter describes what awaits the believers who prepare for their future by good deeds. This description is made in the form of an exception from what awaits the ungrateful: *But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them is compensation, that which is unfailing.* (84:25) This type of exception is known in Arabic linguistics as "unrelated exception". The believers, not originally among the recipients of the gloomy news, are then excepted from it. This form of expression serves to draw attention to what follows. The unfailing recompense is one which is continuous and unceasing, and will be given in the hereafter, when people will be immortal.

On this decisive note the chapter ends. It is a chapter of short yet immensely powerful signs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely un-

popular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

84(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)

Makkah: *Alif Lam Mim.* (30:1)
The Romans were vanquished (30:2)
in the closer region, and they, after being vanquished,
will prevail (30:3)
within a certain number of years.

To God belongs the command before and after.
And that Day ones who believe will be glad (30:4)
with the help of God. He helps whom He wills.
And He is The Almighty, The Compassionate. (30:5)
It is the promise of God. God breaks not His Promise,
but most of humanity knows not. (30:6)
They know only that which is manifest in this present life.
And of the world to come, they are ones who are heedless. (30:7)
Or if they reflect not in themselves,
God created not the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between the two
but with The Truth and for a term that is determined.
And, truly, most of humanity, in the meeting with their Lord,
are, certainly, ones who disbelieve. (30:8)
Or journey they not through the earth
and look on how had been the Ultimate End
of those who were before them?
They had been superior to them in strength.
And they plowed the earth and frequented it
more than they frequented it.
And drew near them their Messengers with the clear portents.
Then, it had not been God doing wrong to them,
but they had been doing wrong to themselves. (30:9)
Again, the Ultimate End had been misdeeds
for those who did evil,
because they denied the signs of God
and had been ridiculing them. (30:10)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter begins with three separate letters. In our opinion, that a number of chapters so commence served to alert people to the fact that the Quran is composed of letters they knew well, being the letters of their own alphabet and the sounds of their own language. Yet they cannot produce anything like the Quran. Indeed, it continues to challenge and defy them, and still they cannot match it. (30:1-30:7)

These letters are followed by a true prophecy that the Byzantines would regain victory against the Persians within a few years. Al-Tabari reports on Abd Allah ibn Masud's authority: The Persians won victory against the Byzantines. The Arab idolaters liked that the Persians should win, while the Muslims preferred that the Byzantines should be victorious because they were followers of a monotheistic faith, which was closer to their own beliefs.

It is also noteworthy that the opening signs giving information of future events include an interpolated sentence: *To God belongs the command before and after. And that Day ones who believe will be glad* (30:4) This statement refers all matters, in all situations, to God. It is a maxim that applies to all events: victory and defeat, and the rise and fall of states and empires. Indeed all that takes place anywhere in the universe is determined by God, and fulfils His purpose in accordance with His wisdom. Events and changing situations are only aspects of the operation of God's unrestricted will which is not subject to influence by anything or anyone. It is God alone who knows what lies beyond it and how it operates. Therefore, the best that we can do is unhesitatingly submit to God's will.

Such victory has been promised by God, which means that it will certainly come about in real life. *So have you patience. Truly, the promise of God is True.* (30:60) For, never does God fail to fulfil His promise. The facts of the matter are that His promise issues from His free-will and absolute wisdom; He is able to fulfil it, as no power can repel His judgment. Indeed, nothing takes place in the universe except as He wills.

The hereafter: *They know only that which is manifest in this present life. And of the world to come, they are ones who are heedless.* (30:7) is another stage in the chain of creation; it is one of the many pages of the universe. People who do not understand the wisdom of creation or the law governing the universe remain unaware of the life to come, unable to give it its true measure and value. They do not realize that it is a part of the way of the universe and, as such, will never fail.

As both God's promise of victory and the certainty of the life to come are related to the truth upon which the universe is founded, the chapter takes us on a round through the universe and through the depths of our own souls. It wants people to appreciate this fundamental truth which they overlook when they remain unmindful of the life to come: *Or if they reflect not in themselves, God created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two but with The Truth and for a term that is determined.* (30:8)

It is a requirement of this truth that there should be a second life when reward for action is given, with good deeds being granted handsome reward while evil ones are fairly and fully requited. Yet everything takes place at its appointed time, without a moment's hurry or delay. That people do not know the timing of the Last Hour does not mean that it will not come. The fact that its time is unknown, however, tempts those who are deluded by the little they know of the outer surface of this life: *And, truly, most of humanity, in the meeting*

with their Lord, are, certainly, ones who disbelieve.(30:8)

The chapter then takes us on a different round, looking deep in history so as to reflect on the operation of God's laws that never change: (30:9-30:10)

Those past generations lived before the Arab ungrateful in Makkah. They were superior in power to those Arabs, and they cultivated the earth, opened it up and discovered its treasures, and built it up even better than these are doing. They had a higher standard of civilization than the Arabs and were better able to raise life standards. Yet they confined themselves to the outer surface of the life of this world, not delving beyond it. To them also came their messengers with all evidence of the truth, but they did not open their eyes and minds to such evidence. They refused to believe and so deprived themselves of the light that illuminates the way. Therefore, God's law of dealing with communities that refuse to believe applied to them. Neither their power, nor knowledge, nor civilization were of any avail to them. They had their fair retribution: *Or journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those who were before them? They had been superior to them in strength. And they plowed the earth and frequented it more than they frequented it. And drew near them their Messengers with the clear portents. Then, it had not been God doing wrong to them, but they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (30:9) Since they entertained evil, evil was their end. This was the right recompense for denying God's revelations and deriding them. *Again, the Ultimate End had been misdeeds for those who did evil, because they denied the signs of God and had been ridiculing them.* (30:10)

The Quran invites those who deny God's revelations to travel on earth so that they do not remain confined to their own locality. They must reflect on the ends met by those earlier communities and realize what their own end could be. They should know that God's law applies to all without favoritism. They should open their minds to the fact that humanity is one, the divine message is one and the laws that apply to all generations of humanity are the same. This is the concept the Quranic message is keen to instil in the minds and hearts of all believers. Therefore, it is repeatedly stated in the Quran.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and

resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

84(2). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empathetic Altruism

What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Quranic Chapter 30: The Romans (al-Rum) Signs 30:11-30:19

Makkah: *God begins the creation.*
Again, He causes it to return.
Again, you will be returned to Him. (30:11)
And on a Day when the Hour will be secure,
the ones who sin will be seized with despair. (30:12)
And for them among their ascribed associates
will not be intercessors
and their ascribed associates with God
will be ones who disavow them. (30:13)
And on a Day when the Hour will be secure
that Day they will be split up. (30:14)

Then, as for those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
they will be walking with joy
in a well-watered meadow. (30:15)
And as for those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs
and the meeting of the world to come,
those are ones who are charged
with the punishment. (30:16)
Madinah (30:17)
Makkah: *To Him be The Praise in the heavens and the earth*
and in the evening and at the time of noon. (30:18)
He brings out the living from the dead.
And He brings out the dead from the living.
And He gives life to the earth after its death.
And, thus, you will be brought out. (30:19)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then speaks about the truth of resurrection, of which they remain heedless, when it is part of the great truth upon which the universe is based: *God begins the creation. Again, He causes it to return. Again, you will be returned to Him.* (30:11) This is a clear and simple truth, with the link and harmony between its two parts or stages also abundantly clear. Bringing back creation is the same as its origination: the two are inseparable parts in the chain of creation, while the ultimate return is to the Lord of all the worlds who initially originates then brings them back so as to remunerate them for their actions in the final stage.

As the chapter speaks of resurrection, it portrays a scene of the Day of Judgment, painting the fates of believers and unbelievers when they are returned to life. It shows the absurdity of associating partners with God and the stupidity of the beliefs of the ungrateful: (30:12-30:16)

So the Last Hour, of which some people remain heedless while others deny it, arrives, and the guilty stand in despair, with no hope of salvation. They cannot hope for even a word of intercession by the false deities they claimed to be partners with God. They are without support and without a saviour. At that moment, they deny the false deities they claimed to be God's partners.

Therefore, we see the parting of the ways between believers and ungrateful: *Then, as for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, they will be walking with joy in a well-watered meadow.* (30:15) There they receive what gives them true happiness. *And as for those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs and the*

meeting of the world to come, those are ones who are charged with the punishment. (30:16) Thus, we see the end of the journey and the outcome for both the believers and those who do evil.

The chapter then paints other scenes of the universe and life, highlighting some of the wonders of creation, the depths of the human soul, and miraculous events. This round starts with acknowledging God's limitless glory as the night and day succeed each other, and extolling God's praise at night and during the glorious day: . (30:17-30:19)

This glorification and praise of God *So glory be to God at the time of the evening hour and at the time when it comes to be the morning! To Him be The Praise in the heavens and the earth and in the evening and at the time of noon.* (30:17-18) are stated here in comment on the previous section that shows a scene of the Day of Judgement when the believers win the prize of entry into heaven while those who disbelieve are brought to witness their own suffering. They also serve as an introduction to the great tour that immediately follows. They thus provide a smooth link between the previous scene and the forthcoming tour.

It is a continuous cycle: *He brings out the living from the dead. And He brings out the dead from the living. And He gives life to the earth after its death. And, thus, you will be brought out.* (30:19) that never stops for a moment of the night or day at any place on earth, in space, or the depths of the sea. At every moment this great miracle occurs, but we remain heedless of it because of our long familiarity with it. Not a moment passes by without a life coming out of a dead thing, or a living being dying: a small bud shoots out of a seed or splits a stone to come into a life; or conversely a branch or a tree withers away. Still in the heap of dying plants and trees a seed or a stone is ready to start the life cycle again, and out of that heap gases spread into the air or provide nourishment to the soil that becomes fertile. At every moment life starts in a foetus, a bird or an animal. A corpse buried in the earth becomes part of the soil and gives it vapors and gases that make new life matter and nourishment for plants, which in turn provide food for man and animal. A similar cycle takes place in the depths of the sea and in limitless space. It is an awesome, fascinating cycle if we would only contemplate it with insight, guided by the light of the Quran.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

84(3). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING, EGO-CENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

HISTORY

The elders of the Quraysh met for consultation. Some of them said: Muhammad is a person of fine argument. If he speaks to a person, he soon gets hold of him. Therefore, select some of your most honorable people, whose lines of ancestry are well known. Let them take their positions at every route into Makkah, at one or two day's distance, so that they turn away anyone who comes to meet Muhammad. People did just that. If any of them met a person sent by his people to find out about Muhammad, he would introduce himself to him, telling him his position among his people. He would then offer to tell him about the Prophet, saying: He is a liar who has been followed only by slaves and ignorant people, and those who are good for nothing. All wise men among his people have taken a clear stand against him. This would be enough to turn many people away. It is to this that God refers in the sign stating: *And when it is said to them: What is that your Lord caused to descend, they would say: Fables of the ancient ones!* (16:24)

On the other hand, if the person sent to find out about the Prophet is one to whom God has given insight, he would say: I am certainly a bad intelligence gatherer if, having reached so close, I am to return now without meeting this man and listening to what he says in order to give my people a true picture of him. He would insist on going into Makkah, where he would meet the believers and where they would tell him that all that Muhammad says is good and fine.

This was a well orchestrated propaganda campaign mounted by the Quraysh against the Quranic message. A similar campaign is organized in every generation by arrogant people who do not wish to submit to the truth despite all the evidence supporting it. Indeed the arrogant among the Quraysh were not the first to deny the truth or to scheme against it. The chapter draws for them a picture of the fate suffered by schemers before them, and their destiny in the hereafter. It shows them what they endure from the moment their souls part with their bodies until they receive their punishment in the life to come. All this is depicted in vivid images, following the inimitable style of the Quran.

QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)
SIGNS 30:20-30:27

Makkah: *And among His signs are that*
He created you from earth dust,
when, again, you were mortals dispersed. (30:20)
And among His signs are that He created for you
spouses from among yourselves,

that you rest in them.
And He made affection and mercy among you.
Truly, in that are certainly signs
for a folk who reflect. (30:21)
And among His signs are the creation of the heavens
and the earth and the alteration
of your languages and hues.
Truly, in that are certainly signs
for ones who know. (30:22)
And among His signs
are your slumbering by nighttime
and by daytime and your looking for His grace.
Truly, in that are, certainly,
signs for a folk who hear. (30:23)
And among His signs are that He causes you to see
the lightning in fear and in hope.
And He sends water down from heaven
and gives life by it to the earth after its death.
Truly, in that are, certainly,
signs for a folk who are reasonable. (30:24)
And among His signs are that the heaven and the earth
are secured for you by His command.
When He will call you by a call again from the earth,
that is when you will go forth! (30:25)
And to Him belongs
whoever is in the heavens and the earth.
All are ones who are morally obligated to Him. (30:26)
And He it is Who begins the creation.
Again, He causes it to return
and this is insignificant for Him.
And His is the Lofty Parable in the heavens and the earth.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (30:27)

COMMENTARY°

This great miracle is one of the signs of God's power. *And among His signs are that He created you from earth dust, when, again, you were mortals dispersed.* (30:20) It gives a strong hint of the close link between the earth and the people living on it, as it is from the earth that they were originally formed. Both they and the earth are subject to the same laws within the universal system. The great leap from the still image of dead dust to the bustling image of the highly sophisticated human being should encourage deep reflection on God's power of creation. It should encourage people to extol

God's glory and praise.

The next sign looks at the shared life between the two sexes: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them.*(30:21) People are well aware of their feelings towards the other sex; indeed, they are often preoccupied with this relationship. Very often they are motivated to a certain action but they seldom remember that it is God who created their spouses out of their own kind and gave them emotions and feelings. He it is who has made the relationship between the two a source of physical and emotional comfort, stability, spiritual friendship, and reassurance for both. The gentle Quranic expression of this relationship profoundly inspires our hearts: *And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* (30:21)

The Quran frequently mentions the great sign of creating the heavens and the earth, but we often pass it by without reflection, although it merits long contemplation. *And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alteration of your languages and hues.*(30:22)

Together with the great sign of the creation of the heavens and the earth, the chapter mentions the amazing variety of human languages and colors. This must be related to the creation of the universe. Differences in climate and environment that result from the variations of the earth's position in the cosmos have a marked influence in producing such variety in language and color, despite the single origin of humanity. Scholars and scientists today note the great variety of human languages and colors but they do not relate this to God and His creation of the heavens and the earth. Instead, they undertake an academic study of this phenomenon, but do not pause to glorify the Creator who plans everything, visible or hidden. This is due to the fact that most people are devoid of knowledge: (30:7) Besides, the wonders of the creation of the universe and the great variety of language and color are only appreciated by those who have true knowledge: *Truly, in that are certainly signs for ones who know.* (30:22)

This sign: *And among His signs are your slumbering by nighttime and by daytime and your looking for His grace* (30:23) mentions certain universal phenomena and their effects on the different situations of humanity, pointing to the harmony within the great universal existence. It combines the two phenomena of night and day with people's sleep and activity in pursuit of their livelihoods, which God grants in abundance. God has ensured that their lives are in harmony with the universe: their need for work and activity is ensured by the

light of day, and their need for relaxation and sleep is brought about by the night's darkness. This also applies, in varying measures and degrees, to all living things on earth. They all find the universal system meets their needs and natures, allowing their lives to progress. *Truly, in that are, certainly, signs for a folk who hear.* (30:23) Sleep and movement are two conditions that are felt through hearing. Thus, the comment at the end of the sign fits well with the universal sign it discusses.

The phenomenon of lightning is part of the universal system. *And among His signs are that He causes you to see the lightning in fear and in hope.* (30:24) Some explain that it occurs from an electrical discharge between two clouds, or between a cloud and the ground, such as the top of a mountain, producing an air vacuum that gives the thunder that follows the lightning. In most cases, this is accompanied by rain. Whatever the cause, lightning is a natural phenomenon produced by the universal system God has set in operation.

As usual, the Quran does not give much detail about universal phenomena and their causes. It only uses these to establish a link between human hearts, the universe and its Creator. Therefore, it states here that one of God's signs is that He displays the lightning giving rise to both fear and hope. Both feelings are naturally experienced when lightning occurs. People fear a thunderbolt that results from lightning, one that could burn things and even people. There is also that obscure feeling of apprehension which lightning causes as people feel the presence of the great power that controls the universe. People also hope for plentiful harvests as a result of the rain that often accompanies thunder and lightning. Therefore, it is mentioned in the same sign: *And He sends water down from heaven and gives life by it to the earth after its death.* (30:24)

Moreover, when water falls on earth, it makes it fertile, allowing plants to grow, so as to make its surface come alive first with vegetation, then with animals and man. Water is the means of life; wherever it is available, life prospers. *Truly, in that are, certainly, signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (30:24) There is indeed much scope for people's minds to reflect.

The fact that the skies and the earth stand firm, following an elaborate system and moving according to plan, cannot come about except through God's will. No one can ever claim that either he or anyone else brings this about, or that it happens without a plan. Therefore, it is God's great sign that the skies and the earth stand firm and function by His command, obeying Him, without deviation, hesitation or delay. *And among His signs are that the heaven and the earth are secured for you by His command. When He will call you*

by a call again from the earth, that is when you will go forth! (30:25)

The final note that concludes this statement shows that all creatures in the heavens and the earth submit to God in complete obedience: *And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. All are ones who are morally obligated to Him.* (30:26) Although most people are neither devout nor obedient to God, the Quranic statement here means that all creatures in the universe are subject to His will. All act and function in accordance with His laws that never fail or deviate from their set course. They are subject to these laws even though they may be ungrateful. It is their hearts and minds that disbelieve or disobey, but they are nevertheless governed by God's laws, and He controls them as He does all other creatures. They have no option but to obey and submit.

This great tour concludes by restating the essential question which people remain heedless of, namely resurrection: *And He it is Who begins the creation. Again, He causes it to return and this is insignificant for Him.* (30: 27) The chapter has already mentioned the initiation of creation and bringing creatures back to life after they had died. Now this is repeated after mentioning a galaxy of God's signs, but there is also an addition here: *And His is the Lofty Parable in the heavens and the earth.* (30:27)

His attributes are not shared with anyone else. Nothing is similar to Him in any way. *And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (30:27) He does what He wills, having sway over all things, and in His wisdom, He conducts the affairs of all His creation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.

Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.

Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.

If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?

Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?

Or thought, what did he assume?

Why do people assume this?

Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

84(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD LOGIC (TO BE REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to

support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.

QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)
SIGNS 30:28-30:30

Makkah: *He propounds a parable for you from yourselves.*

Have you—
among those whom your right hands possessed—
ascribed associates in what We provided you
so that you share as equals
and you fear them like your awe for each other?
Thus, We explain distinctly the signs
to a folk who are reasonable. (30:28)
Nay! Those who did wrong followed
their own desires without knowledge.
Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray?
And they will not have ones who help. (30:29)
*So set **your** face towards a way of life as a monotheist.*
It is the nature originated by God
in which He originated humanity.
There is no substitution for the creation of God.
That is the truth-loving way of life,
but most of humanity knows not. (30:30)

COMMENTARY°

When the human heart has seen God's great signs, gone over such horizons and looked at such a great variety of situations, the chapter then changes the tone of its address: *He propounds a parable for you from yourselves. Have you—among those whom your right hands possessed—ascribed associates in what We provided you so that you share as equals and you fear them like your awe for each other?* (30:28)

This comparison is stated in detail, step by step: You do not need to travel or make an effort to contemplate it. You do not accept that your slaves have even a small share of your provisions, let alone that they be equal to you. *And you would fear them just as you might fear one another?* You look at them in the same way as you look at partners who are free men, fearing that they might be unfair to you, or that you be unfair to them. Although none of this happens, you still suggest that it applies to God when His are the most sublime attributes in the heavens and the earth. It is a simple comparison that admits no contradiction or dispute because it is based on simple logic: *Thus, We explain distinctly the signs to a folk who are reasonable.* (30:28)

The chapter now exposes the basic reason behind this anomaly. Essentially, it is due to following one's own desires without reasonable basis or proper thought: *Nay! Those who did wrong followed their own desires without knowledge.* (30:29) Desire has no control, since it is merely based on people's whims, fleeting passions, fears,

hopes and cravings that have no rightful basis and no proper limit. This is a case of error that lacks any correcting guidance: They go astray because they follow their own desires. *Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray? And they will not have ones who help.* (30:29)

Now the chapter directs the Prophet to remain steady in following the divine faith which is consistent and based on the pure nature God has given to people. It is a single faith that cannot be pulled in different directions, like the ungrateful who were divided into groups and factions according to their desires. *So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30)

This directive to follow the true faith is given at the right time and the proper place, following the great round of signs drawn from the universe and the human soul. It thus addresses hearts that are ready to receive it, while those that have followed deviant beliefs find all their arguments devoid of substance. They stand alone without support. This is the powerful authority that is the Quran and which no heart or mind can resist.

So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not. (30:30) They are subject only to whim and passion, lacking control or evidence. When you set your face steadily towards true faith, you turn away from everything else. *So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30) Thus the chapter links human nature with the nature of this faith. Both are made by God, in accordance with the law of existence; both are mutually harmonious in their natures and objectives. It is God who has created man and revealed this religion so that it can regulate human life and conduct its affairs, healing man of ills and deviation. God certainly knows best what He has created. Human nature is set on a firm basis, and so is divine religion. When people deviate from the proper path of nature, only divine religion turns them back to it, since it is in full harmony with both human and universal nature. Because they do not know, they follow their desires and deviate from the true path that leads to true happiness.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?

What does it mean to be reasonable?

How would explain these signs to someone else?

Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

84(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD DEFINITIVE (TO BE PRECISE)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM) SIGNS 30:31-30:53

Makkah: *Be ones who turn in repentance to Him*
and be God-conscious and perform the formal prayer
and be not among the ones who are polytheists (30:31)
or of those who separated and divided their way of life
and had been partisans,
each party is glad with what they have. (30:32)
And when harm afflicted humanity,
they call to their Lord
as ones who turn in repentance to Him.
When He caused them, again, to experience His mercy,
that is when a group of people among them
ascribe partners with their Lord, (30:33)
for they are ungrateful for what We gave them.
Then, take joy; you will know. (30:34)
Or caused We to descend to them
an authority that it assert
what they had been ascribing
as partners with Him? (30:35)
And when We caused humanity to experience mercy,
they were glad of it.
But when an evil deed lights on them
because of what their hands put forward,
that is when they are in despair. (30:36)
Consider they that God
extends the provision for whom He wills
and confines it for whom He wills?
Truly, in that are signs
for a folk who believe. (30:37)
So give to possessors of kinship rightfully

and to the needy and to the traveler of the way.
That is better for those
who want the Countenance of God.
And those, they are the ones who prosper. (30:38)
And what you gave in usury in order
that it swell the wealth of humanity
swells not with God.
And what you gave in purifying alms,
wanting the Countenance of God, then,
those, they are the ones who will receive manifold. (30:39)
God is He Who created you.
Again, He provided for you and, again,
He will cause you to die.
Again, He will give you life.
Is there among your ascribed associates with Him
who accomplish anything of that?
Glory be to Him! Exalted is He
above partners they ascribe! (30:40)
Corruption was manifested on the dry land and the sea
because of what the hands of humanity earned.
He causes them to experience some of what they did,
so that perhaps they will return repentant. (30:41)
Say: Journey through the earth;
then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of those who were before.
Most of them had been ones who are polytheists. (30:42)
*So set **your** face to the truth-loving way of life*
before that Day approaches from God
and there is no turning back.
They will be split up on that Day. (30:43)
Whoever was ungrateful, his ingratitude is on him.
Whoever did as one in accord with morality
will be arranging provision for themselves. (30:44)
And He gives recompense to those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
from His grace.
Truly, He loves not the ones who are ungrateful. (30:45)
Among His signs are that He sends the winds
as ones that give good tidings
and causes you to experience His mercy
and so that the boats run at His command
and that you be looking for His grace
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (30:46)

And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you
to their own folk.
They drew near them with the clear portents.
Then, We requited those who sinned.
And it had been an obligation on Us
to help ones who believe. (30:47)
God is He Who sends the winds so they raise clouds.
He extends them in the heaven how He wills
and He makes them into pieces until you see rain drops go forth
from their midst.
That is when He lit it on whomever
He wills of His servants.
That is when they rejoice at the good tidings. (30:48)
And, truly, they had been
—even before it is sent down on them—
before that, ones who are seized with despair. (30:49)
Look on the effects of the mercy of God,
how He gives life to the earth after its death!
Truly, that! He is One Who Gives Life to the dead
and He is Powerful over everything. (30:50)
And if We sent a wind and they saw fields,
ones that are yellowing,
they would stay ungrateful after that. (30:51)
Then, truly, you will not cause the dead to hear
nor will you cause the unwilling to hear,
to hear the calling to them
when they turned as ones who draw back. (30:52)
And you are not one who guides
the unwilling to see from their fallacy.
You cause none to hear
but those who believe in Our signs.
And they are ones who submit to God. (30:53)

COMMENTARY°

This section of the chapter follows its main line, looking at the universal expanse to which people's lives and events are related. It is in this great expanse that we see how the laws governing life and the universe operate in harmony with the laws of the true faith, suffering no conflict or contradiction.

God's revelations are given to the Prophet to bring life to hearts and souls. Yet they neither listen nor follow guidance. The chapter also takes us on a round in which we look at the stages of creation of humans and their lives until they return to their Lord. At that time,

no excuse or justification will benefit the wrongdoers. The chapter then concludes with reassuring the Prophet. It directs him to show more patience until God's promise is fulfilled, as it certainly will be.

These signs: (30:33-30:37) draw a picture of the human soul that does not rely on solid concepts, or follow clear lines. It thus vacillates between sudden reactions, in response to conflicting influences or events. Thus, when harm touches such people, they turn to God, realizing that only He can save them. Yet when the affliction is over, and things are comfortable again, with God bestowing His grace on them: *And when harm afflicted humanity, they call to their Lord as ones who turn in repentance to Him. When He caused them, again, to experience His mercy, that is when a group of people among them ascribe partners with their Lord.* (30:33) These are they who do not follow true faith and who do not benefit from the light it gives to the faithful. Ease and comfort remove the emergency that made them turn to God for support and protection. They forget their earlier hardship. Thus, rather than maintain the path of turning to God and of being grateful to Him, they disbelieve in His guidance and the grace He has bestowed on them.

A warning is given in the first instance to those ungrateful who opposed the Prophet's message, making it clear that they belong to this group: *For they are ungrateful for what We gave them. Then, take joy; you will know.* (30:34) It is a serious threat that sends terror into their hearts. People fear threats issued by rulers or presidents. How then will they react to a threat from the Creator of this universe, He who brought it into existence by merely saying to it: Be?

Having delivered this stern warning, the chapter questions them about the basis of their associating partners with God when it is He who bestows His grace upon them: *Or caused We to descend to them an authority that it assert what they had been ascribing as partners with Him?* (30:35) No one should ever accept anything about faith from any source other than God. So, have they received any clear, powerful argument to warrant an attitude that is contrary to belief in God's Oneness? This is a rhetorical question, one that depicts the fallacy of all types of idolatry. At the same time it serves to state that the only proper and true faith is that revealed by God, with clear sanction from Him. Otherwise, it remains flimsy, devoid of substance.

The chapter then depicts a different situation showing people as they euphorically rejoice at any taste of God's grace. In contrast, they feel frustrated and hopeless when affliction befalls them: *And when We caused humanity to experience mercy, they were glad of it. But when an evil deed lights on them because of what their hands put forward, that is when they are in despair.* (30:36)

This image is followed by a rhetorical question that wonders at their attitude and lack of insight. In both situations of grace and affliction one consistent law applies. Both are the result of God's will. It is He who bestows grace and tests people with hardship, gives in abundance or in a scant measure, in line with His wisdom. This takes place all the time, but they do not see: *Consider they that God extends the provision for whom He wills and confines it for whom He wills?* (30:37) There is no need, then, for elation at the time of grace, or for despair during times of hardship. These are situations that befall people at different times as serves God's purpose. A believer sees in them confirmation that all matters ultimately belong to God. It all indicates the consistency of God's laws in all situations: *Truly, in that are signs for a folk who believe.* (30:37)

Since it is God who grants provisions and sustenance, giving in abundance or in small measure as He pleases, He indicates to people the way in which they can make handsome profit, increasing their wealth. This is different from what they think:

Therefore, give his due to the near of kin, as well as to the needy and the traveller in need. This is best for all who seek God's countenance. It is they who shall be successful. (30:38-30:39)

God Almighty issues this directive to those He has placed as trustees of wealth showing them the best methods for investment, growth and prosperity. This means sharing with one's near kin, the needy and stranded travellers, and spending generally in ways that serve God's cause: *So give to possessors of kinship rightfully and to the needy and to the traveler of the way. That is better for those who want the Countenance of God. And those, they are the ones who prosper.* (30:38)

At that time some people tried to increase their money by giving gifts to wealthy individuals, hoping that they would receive better gifts in return. The chapter tells them that this is not the way to achieve true growth: This is what some reports mention as the meaning of this statement, but it is a general statement that applies to all methods people use to usuriously increase their wealth. God also makes clear the way that ensures true growth:*And what you gave in usury in order that it swell the wealth of humanity swells not with God. And what you gave in purifying alms, wanting the Countenance of God, then, those, they are the ones who will receive manifold.* (30:39)

The chapter then discusses the issue of polytheism from the viewpoint of providing sustenance and earning a living, and how this affects their lives as it affected the lives of generations before them. It also shows the end of earlier communities and the ruins standing

witness to such ends: (30:40-30:42)

They are then asked: *God is He Who created you. Again, He provided for you and, again, He will cause you to die. Again, He will give you life. Is there among your ascribed associates with Him who accomplish anything of that?* (30:40) No answer to this question is expected. Indeed, the sign puts forward the only possible and negative response in the form of a rebuke, thus doing away with the need for a direct answer. This is followed by a glorification of God which denies partnership with Him in any form: *Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above partners they ascribe!* (30:40)

The chapter then makes clear that life situations are directly related to people's actions, and that when corruption finds its way into people's hearts, faiths and deeds, both land and sea also become corrupted, to the extent that corruption becomes the order of the day: *Corruption was manifested on the dry land and the sea because of what the hands of humanity earned.* (30:41) This spreading of pollution across the land and sea does not happen by coincidence. It is a manifestation of the working of God's laws. The reason being: *He causes them to experience some of what they did.* (30:41) They will thus suffer the consequences of the evil they do and the corruption they spread. It is hoped that when they have done: *So that perhaps they will return repentant.* (30:41) They might resolve to stop corruption and return to faith and its course of action which sanctions the doing of only what is good.

At the end of this round, the chapter warns them against incurring a punishment similar to what was inflicted on communities before them. They were aware of the ends met by many of those, as they used to see their ruins on their travels: *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of those who were before. Most of them had been ones who are polytheists.* (30:42) Their fates are sufficient to discourage anyone from wanting to follow in their footsteps.

Now we have a reference to the other way whose travellers will never be lost. This leads to a different horizon which never brings disappointment: (30:43-30:45)

Taking up the true faith is expressed here in an inspiring way, suggesting full and serious commitment: (30:43) This implies full attention and clear aspiration. It looks up to a high horizon and a sublime goal. The same sort of directive was given to the Prophet in this chapter when it spoke about groups and sects with divergent beliefs. It is repeated here as the chapter speaks about God's alleged partners, increase in sustenance, corruption resulting from unbelief, what people suffer as a result of the spread of corruption and pollution, and

the fates of those who associate partners with God. Therefore, we have a statement here of the reward expected in the life to come and what both believers and unbelievers then stand to receive. The chapter warns against a day that cannot be averted. On that day, people will be divided into two great groups: *So set your face to the truth-loving way of life before that Day approaches from God and there is no turning back. They will be split up on that Day. Whoever was ungrateful, his ingratitude is on him. Whoever did as one in accord with morality will be arranging provision for themselves.* (30:43-30:44)

The Arabic text uses the word *yamhad* which is given in translation as 'smoothed a way'. In its original meaning, the word means: prepare a place of repose, or a comfortable way to follow, a cradle. All these connotations combine to describe good deeds and their role. A person who does good deeds actually prepares a position of comfort for himself, this at the same time he does such deeds, not later. This is the meaning the sign highlights. *And He gives recompense to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality from His grace.* (30:45) Whatever anyone receives as a reward comes out of God's bounty. No one deserves heaven on the basis of his or her actions alone. No matter what we do, we do not thank God enough for a part of what He has given us. Yet His grace continues to be bestowed on the believers. As for the ungrateful, He has no love for them: *Truly, He loves not the ones who are ungrateful.* (30:45)

The chapter begins a new round showing some of God's signs and how they reflect His grace as He provides them with sustenance and guidance. They recognize only parts of this, denying others. Nevertheless, they do not give thanks or follow His guidance: (30:46-30:50)

These winds herald rain. From experience, people know the winds that bring rain which raises their hopes. *Among His signs are that He sends the winds as ones that give good tidings and causes you to experience His mercy and so that the boats run at His command and that you be looking for His grace so that perhaps you will give thanks.* with this prospect of rain, fertility and growth. *And so that the boats run at His command* either with the help of rain or by causing rivers to flow and allowing ships to sail on them. Yet the ships are actually run by God's bidding, according to the laws He operates in the universe, giving everything its qualities and functions. An aspect of this is that ships are easily carried by water and they float and move, pushed by the wind, either with or against the current. With Him everything is made to measure. So that you might go about in quest of some of His bounty, on your business travels, in cultivating the land, and in business exchanges. All this is part of

God's bounty, given by the One who has created everything and perfectly proportioned them all so that you might have cause to be grateful, for His grace in all this. This comment at the end of the sign serves as an indication of how people should behave when they receive God's bounty .

Similar to sending the winds bearing good news is the sending of messengers with veritable signs of the truth: *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you to their own folk. They drew near them with the clear portents.* (30:47) Yet people did not receive this aspect of God's grace, which is much greater and further reaching than the wind that brings the prospect of rain. Nor did they benefit by them as they did by rain, even though their messages were far more beneficial and longer lasting. Essentially, they took two different attitudes towards God's messengers. Some of them refused to believe or reflect on God's messages and continued to inflict harm on the messengers and to turn people away from God's path. Others, who believed, recognized God's signs, offered thanks for His grace, and bore with patience the harm inflicted on them by the other group. Furthermore, they were confident that God's promise would come true. The outcome was in accordance with divine justice and in fulfilment of His certain promise: *Then, We requited those who sinned. And it had been an obligation on Us to help ones who believe.* (30:47)

No one knows the extent of such rejoicing: *God is He Who sends the winds so they raise clouds. He extends them in the heaven how He wills and He makes them into pieces until you have seen rain drops go forth from their midst. That is when He lit it on whomever He wills of His servants. That is when they rejoice at the good tidings.* (30:48) better than the people for whom rain means survival. The Arabs were the first people to realize the importance of this statement, because their lives depended on rain. Their poetry and folk stories mention it with hope and endearment.

This: *And, truly, they had been—even before it is sent down on them—before that, ones who are seized with despair.* (30:49) describes their condition before rain. In fact, rain changes their condition completely, from despair to hope and rejoicing. You see these effects in people's faces as they brighten up after being gloomy with despair, in the quickening earth, and in the liveliness affecting all.

This: *Look on the effects of the mercy of God, how He gives life to the earth after its death!* (30:50) is a fact that needs no more than that we look and reflect. It is given here as evidence confirming the resurrection when people are brought back to life. This is consistent in the Quranic argument where universal images and facts of life are

given as substantial evidence: *Truly, that! He is One Who Gives Life to the dead and He is Powerful over everything.* (30:50) We need only to look at the effects of God's grace on the earth to be certain of the truth of this eventuality and the fulfilment of this promise.

The chapter then describes the feelings of those very people who are happy at seeing the wind carrying water and who rejoice as they see rain bringing God's grace. What would they feel, however, if they saw the winds as yellowish in color carrying dust and sand? Such winds destroy fields and livestock, or cause plants to dry and wither: *And if We sent a wind and they saw fields, ones that are yellowing, they would stay ungrateful after that.* (30:51) Rather than submitting to God's will and praying to Him earnestly to remove their affliction, they deny the truth out of frustration and despair. This is the status of people who do not believe in God or His will, of people who cannot discern God's wisdom in what He decides, and cannot appreciate that it is God's hand that determines everything in the universe, ensuring harmony between all its events and situations.

Thus the chapter describes the fluctuation of people's desires, their inability to benefit by God's signs that they see in the universe around them, and their failure to recognize God's wisdom behind life's events. It then addresses the Prophet consoling him for not being able to persuade many of them to follow divine guidance. It tells him that this is due to their nature and blindness, which he can never cure. (30:52-30:53)

These are the ones who listen to the divine message because they have active minds and hearts, as well as sound understanding. When they listen to the divine message, they realize that it is the truth and they declare their submission to Him. They only need that their nature be alerted, and they respond.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

84(6). Critical Thinking International Standard Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

Quranic Chapter 30: The Romans (al-Rum) Signs 30:54-30:60

Makkah: *God is He Who created you*
in your weakness.
Again, after that weakness,
He assigned strength; again, after that strength,
He assigned weakness and grayness of hair.
And He creates what He wills.
And He is The Knowing, The Powerful. (30:54)
And on a Day when the Hour is secured for you,
the ones who sin will swear
that they lingered in expectation
not but an hour. Thus, they had been misled. (30:55)
And said those who were given
the knowledge and the belief:
Certainly, you lingered in expectation
by what is prescribed by God
until the Day of the Upraising.
This is the Day of Upraising,
but you had not been knowing. (30:56)
So on that Day will not profit them,
those who did wrong,
their excuses nor will they ask to be favored. (30:57)
And, certainly, We propounded for humanity
in this, the Quran,
every kind of parable.
*But if **you** were to bring about any sign to them,*
certainly, they who were ungrateful would say:
Truly, you are nothing
but ones who deal in falsehood. (30:58)
Thus, God sets a seal on the hearts
of those who know not. (30:59)
*So have **you** patience.*

Truly, the promise of God is True.
And let them not irritate you,
those who are not certain in belief. (30:60)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then takes us on a new round, but this time it is within ourselves looking at the different stages of our life on earth, before it refers to the next life and the close link between the two: (30:54-57)

No one escapes these stages. They never fail to affect anyone who survives; nor are they ever slow so as to come later than usual. These stages confirm that humanity is subject to a greater will that creates and determines as it pleases. That is the will of God who determines the age, life and stages of every creature in accordance with perfect knowledge and elaborate planning: *God is He Who created you in your weakness. Again, after that weakness, He assigned strength; again, after that strength, He assigned weakness and grayness of hair. And He creates what He wills. And He is The Knowing, The Powerful.* (30:54)

This well-regulated creation must certainly have a well-regulated end. Indeed, this is shown in a scene from the Day of Judgment that is full of movement and dialogue to bring it alive before our eyes: *And on a Day when the Hour is secured for you, the ones who sin will swear that they lingered in expectation not but an hour.* (30:55) Thus, all that has passed before that day shrinks into insignificance so as to make them swear that they had not lived on earth more than one hour. Their oaths may also be taken to mean that they did not stay in their graves for more than an hour, or that this duration of one hour applies to all their time on earth in both their conditions of life and death. *Thus, they had been misled.* (30:55) They could not make a proper estimate of their time, until those who have true knowledge tell them the right duration: *And said those who were given the knowledge and the belief:* (30:56)

Most probably the ones described as 'endowed with knowledge' are the believers who were certain of the coming of the Last Hour, recognizing what lies beyond the apparent aspects of the life of this world. These are the ones who have true knowledge and enlightened faith. In their answer, they refer the matter to God's knowledge: *Certainly, you lingered in expectation by what is prescribed by God until the Day of the Upraising. This is the Day of Upraising, but you had not been knowing.* This is the term appointed, and it does not matter whether it was of a long or short duration. The appointed time was met: (30:56)

The scene is completed with a general statement of the overall result, referring to the fate of the wrongdoers who denied the Day of Judgment: *So on that Day will not profit them, those who did wrong, their excuses nor will they ask to be favored.* (30:57) No justification will be accepted from them. In fact no acknowledgement of error or apology is sought from them. That is the Day of Judgement and punishment of the guilty, not a day of providing justification for wrong action.

The chapter then describes how the ungrateful persist in their ways, after having explained the fate of such persistent unbelief: (30:58-30:59)

There is a wide gap here in time and place, but it sounds in the chapter as if it is ever so near; indeed both time and place have been rolled back. People are again reminded of what the Quran provides by way of illustrations, modes of address, fine touches meant to alert minds and hearts, and inspiring images. They listen to it as it addresses every mind and heart in every social environment and speaks to the human soul in all its moods. Yet they continue to deny every sign. Nor do they stop at this, but rather insult those endowed with true knowledge describing them as making false assertions: *And, certainly, We propounded for humanity in this, the Quran, every kind of parable. But if you were to bring about any sign to them, certainly, they who were ungrateful would say: Truly, you are nothing but ones who deal in falsehood.* (30:58) The chapter comments on their disbelief, saying: *Thus, God sets a seal on the hearts of those who know not.* (30:59) It is in this way and for this reason that God seals their hearts. They are indeed blind, unable to see God's signs, arrogant in their disbelief, unwilling to reflect. Therefore, they deserve that God should seal their sight and their hearts.

The final note in the chapter comes in the form of a directive to the Prophet and the believers: *So have you patience. Truly, the promise of God is True. And let them not irritate you, those who are not certain in belief.* (30:60)

Perseverance is the best policy for the believers as they go along their hard, long way that at times seems endless. They must remain confident of the fulfilment of God's promise. This will enable them to remain steadfast, free of worry and doubt. Other people may hesitate, or deny the truth, or doubt that God's promise will ever be fulfilled, because they have no true knowledge and lack the means of certainty. Believers, however, must persevere, remain steadfast and confident, even though their path may seem endless, and their goal seem concealed behind thick clouds.

Thus the chapter that started with God's promise to grant victory

to the Byzantines within a few years, and give support and victory to the believers, now ends with the directive to persevere until God's promise is fulfilled. Believers are instructed to remain steadfast in the face of all the ungrateful' attempts to weaken their resolve. There is perfect harmony between the opening and the end. As it concludes, the lingering impression is that of a firm resolve and unshaken trust that God's promise will be fulfilled.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

LESSON 85(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS (TO BE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT)
SIGNS 29:1-29:13

Madinah (29:1)
Madinah (29:2)
Madinah (29:3)
Madinah (29:4)
Madinah (29:5)
Madinah (29:6)
Madinah (29:7)
Madinah (29:8)
Madinah (29:9)
Madinah (29:10)
Madinah (29:11)

Makkah: *And those who were ungrateful*
said to those who believed:
Follow our way and we will, certainly,
carry your transgressions
while they are not ones who carry
any of their own transgressions.
Truly, they are the ones who lie. (29:12)
And, certainly, they will carry their own lading

and other ladings with their own ladings.
And, certainly, they will be asked
on the Day of Resurrection about
what they had been devising. (29:13)

COMMENTARY°

From start to finish the chapter strikes several strong notes on the meaning of faith and its nature, shaking people's hearts. In a most serious manner, it puts them face to face with the duties imposed by faith. The choice is either to fulfil these or to abandon them. The alternative is to be a hypocrite, which fact God will certainly unmask. The only way to describe these notes is to refer to the texts in which they occur. We will now discuss them fully at their relevant places in the chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

Lesson 85(2). Critical Thinking International Standard Worthiness (focussing on the important, not the trivial)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

Quranic Chapter 29: The Spider (al-Ankabut) Signs 29:14-29:22

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (29:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (29:15)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:16)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:17)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:18)
Makkah: *Consider they not how God*
causes the creation to begin
and, again, He causes it to return?
Truly, that for God is easy. (29:19)
Say: Journey through the earth;
then, look on how He began the creation.
Again, God will cause the last growth to grow.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (29:20)
He punishes whom He wills
and has mercy on whom He wills.
And to Him you will come back. (29:21)
You will not be ones who frustrate Him
on the earth
nor in the heaven
and there is not for you, other than God,
either a protector or a helper. (29:22)

Commentary°

Thereafter, the chapter takes a brief pause to address all who deny faith, the inevitable return of all humanity to God, and the resurrection and reckoning: (29:19-22)

Moreover, the One who originates life is certainly able to bring people back after death: Nothing is difficult for God, but He gives the argument by human standards. For us, doing something for the second time is easier than the first; but to God both are equally easy. It needs nothing more than for God to will something and say, 'Be', and it happens.

The chapter then calls on people to travel in all directions and contemplate God's work and signs that appear in all creation, animate and inanimate alike. When they do, they will realize that the One

who originates life can bring it back without difficulty: (29:20)

Traveling opens people's hearts to new and unfamiliar vistas. It awakens their senses and minds. By contrast, the place where one lives very often holds no attraction or excitement because of over-familiarity. Yet to return home after a period away often rekindles passion and enthusiasm for what once seemed dull and unremarkable. This, thus, leads to new interaction and appreciation of one's immediate environs. All glory is to God, who has bestowed the Quran from on high and who has full knowledge of how people's hearts and minds function and interact with their surroundings.

In the Arabic text: *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20) the order to travel is followed with a sentence that uses the simple past tense referring to the start of creation. This is significant, for we see today certain things that are indicative of the beginning of life and how the earth came to be populated with different species. Scientific excavations have formed some idea about how life started, spread and progressed, but they have not arrived at anything definite about the secret of life. They do not know how it came to be on earth, nor when the first living creature was placed on it. The order given by God, then, is to search for the beginning of life and to use acquired knowledge to learn about resurrection and the life to come.

He initiates life and brings it back. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20) He is not restricted by what people imagine to be feasible or unfeasible, possible or impossible.

Part of God's power over all things is that He punishes whomever He wills and bestows His grace upon whomever He wills. To Him all humanity return; none escapes Him and none can evade His will: (29:21-29:22)

Punishment and mercy are subject to God's will in the sense that He has given clear guidance and made the way of error clear for all. He has given man the propensity to follow either. The choice belongs entirely to man. However, when man chooses to believe in God and shows a willingness to follow His guidance, God will help him as He has committed Himself to do so. On the other hand, when he turns away from divine guidance he becomes isolated and lives in error. The two ways then lead to either God's mercy in the first case or to His punishment in the latter.

In this instance: *He punishes whom He wills and has mercy on whom He wills. And to Him you will come back.* (29:21), the chapter

uses the word *tuqlabun*, which carries connotations of violent return, to suit what follows: *You will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth nor in the heaven and there is not for you, other than God, either a protector or a helper.* (29:22) You have no power to save yourselves from a return to God. Neither your own power that you have on earth nor that of those whom you sometimes worship, such as the angels or jinn, thinking that they have power in the skies, have any effect: *You will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth nor in the heaven and there is not for you, other than God, either a protector or a helper.* (29:22) How can there be any protection or support against God? Who could give it: man, angel, or jinn? They are all God's creatures and servants. They cannot cause benefit or harm even to themselves, let alone anyone else.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Stage 1

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

Stage 2

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!

Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

Stage 3
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

Summary of Critical Thinking:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 85(3). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan, wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:23-29:30

Makkah: *And those who disbelieved*
in the signs of God
and the meeting with Him,
those gave up hope of My mercy
and those, for them there will be a painful punishment. (29:23)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:24)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:25)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:26)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:27)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:28)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:29)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:30)

COMMENTARY°

The human being does not despair of God's mercy except when he totally disbelieves, severing all relations with his Lord. Again we are not ungrateful except when we despair of establishing a relation between ourselves and God, abandoning all hope of God's grace. The end then is well known. (29:23)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

LESSON 85(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD RIGHT JUDGMENT

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:31-29:44

Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:31)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:32)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:33)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:34)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:35)
Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro)
and the People of Midian (29:36)
Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro)
and the People of Midian (29:37)
Makkah Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad,
Salih and the People of Thamud (29:38)
Makkah Book 27: Moses, Korah, Haman (29:39)
Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian;
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad,
Salih and the People of Thamud (29:40)
Makkah: *The parable of those*
who took other than God to themselves
as protectors
is that of the spider who took a house to itself.
But, truly, the frailest of houses
is the house of the spider
if they had but been knowing. (29:41)
Truly, God knows what thing
they call to other than Him.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (29:42)
And We propound these parables for humanity.
And no one is reasonable among them
but the ones who know. (29:43)
God created the heavens
and the earth with The Truth.
Truly, in that is a sign
for the ones who believe. (29:44)

COMMENTARY°

All power belongs to God. The only protection to be sought is from God. Everything else is weak, flimsy and powerless, however much it tries to inflict punishment, be tyrannical and overpowering. They are simply spiders, and what power has a spider other than the silk with which it weaves its web? (29:41)

Advocates of the divine message who are often subjected to oppression and hardship, and also to temptation and deceit, should reflect on this great truth and keep it before their eyes. They must not allow themselves to forget this even for a moment as they face different forces, some trying to inflict harm on them or even crush them, and some trying to lure them to their own line, or to buy them out. But all these forces are no more than the threads of a spider's web. This is their real estimation in God's measure. It is also the measure when compared with true faith when people have the right concept of it.

They seek the protection of patrons to whom they ascribe a share of divinity. God knows the reality of these patrons: they are no more than a spider seeking refuge in its frail web. *Truly, God knows what thing they call to other than Him. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (29:42) He alone has power over all things, and in His wisdom, He conducts the affairs of the universe.

Devoid of knowledge and clear reasoning, some ungrateful took such comparisons as material for ridicule. They said that Muhammad's God speaks about spiders and flies. They were uninspired by this remarkable description because they did not use their reason, while their knowledge too remained scanty: *And We propound these parables for humanity. And no one is reasonable among them but the ones who know.* (29:43)

This great truth, stated in full clarity, is then linked to the main truth apparent in the design of the universe. This follows the Quranic method of linking all facts to that main truth: *God created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. Truly, in that is a sign for the ones who believe.* (29:44) In perfect harmony with the rest of the chapter, this sign enhances the real link between different realities and the main truth that lies behind the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is this truth that maintains the universe according to a fine and accurate system which never fails or allows inner conflict.

These are the believers whose hearts respond to the signs God has placed in all aspects of creation. These are clearly seen in the harmony apparent in the universe. All is part of a consistent system despite its seeming diversity. It is only believers who perceive these signs and appreciate them, because their eyes and hearts remain open.

At the end of this passage, the chapter links the book revealed to Muhammad, his advocacy of the divine message, prayers and remembrance of God with the truth reflected in the heavens and the earth, and with the advocacy of the divine message ever since Noah's time.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

Lesson 85(5). Critical Thinking International Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

Quranic Chapter 29: The Spider (al-Ankabut) Signs 29:45-29:51

Makkah: *Recount what was revealed to **you***
of the Book
and perform the formal prayer.
Truly, the formal prayer prohibits depravity
and that which is unlawful, and, truly,
the remembrance of God is greater.
And God knows what you craft. (29:45)
And dispute not with the People of the Book
unless in a way that is fairer,
but with those who did wrong among them.
And say: We have believed
in what was caused to descend to us
and was caused to descend to you and our God
and your God is One
and we are ones who submit to Him. (29:46)
*And, thus, We caused the Book to descend to **you.***
And those to whom We gave the Book
before will believe in it.
And of these, the people of Makkah,
there are some who believe in it.
And none negates Our signs
but the ones who are ungrateful. (29:47)
*And neither had **you** been recounting*
from any Book before it
*nor write **you** it with **your** right hand for then,*
certainly, they would have been in doubt,

the ones who deal in falsehood. (29:48)
Nay! It is clear portents, signs in the breasts
of those who were given the knowledge.
And none negate Our signs
but ones who are unjust. (29:49)
And they said: Why were signs not caused to descend
to him from his Lord?
Say: The signs are only with God.
I am only a warner,
one who makes clear. (29:50)
Suffices for them not that
We caused the Book to descend to thee
which is recounted to them?
Truly, in that is a mercy and a reminder
for a folk who believe. (29:51)

COMMENTARY°

This section begins with an instruction to the Prophet and the believers to recite the book that was revealed to him. *Recount what was revealed to* ***you*** *of the Book and perform the formal prayer. Truly, the formal prayer prohibits depravity and that which is unlawful, and, truly, the remembrance of God is greater. And God knows what you craft.* (29:45) They were further instructed to attend regularly to prayer as a method of God's remembrance and to watch God who knows all that they do.

Muslims are instructed not to argue with the people of earlier revelations except in accordance with what is best: which means explaining the purpose behind the new message and outlining the links between it and all earlier divine messages. It also stresses the importance of accepting the final form of the divine message which is in full agreement with all previous messages, complementing them in accordance with God's knowledge of what suits people and their needs. There is, however, one exception to be singled out those of them who are intent on wrongdoing. *And dispute not with the People of the Book unless in a way that is fairer, but with those who did wrong among them. And say: We have believed in what was caused to descend to us and was caused to descend to you and our God and your God is One and we are ones who submit to Him.* (29:46) These have deviated from the basic belief in God's Oneness, associated partners with Him and violated the principles of His way of life. With these no argument is of use. Indeed, there is no need to maintain the same code with them. These are the ones the Quranic message fought when it established its state in Madinah.

There is no need for conflict, argument or dispute, as they all believe in one God, and Muslims believe in what was revealed to the prophets before them. It is all essentially the same. Indeed, the divine way of life follows a smooth way of progress. *And, thus, We caused the Book to descend to you.* (29:47)

This sign begins with 'thus', indicating that the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad followed the same rule and method of revelation to earlier prophets and messengers. *And those to whom We gave the Book before will believe in it.* (29:47) In their attitude towards it, people divided into two groups: the first, composed of some of those who followed earlier revelations and some Arabs of the Quraysh, accepted it as true and believed in it; the second rejected it despite the testimony given by people of earlier divine religions that it was true and confirmed their own revelations: *And of these, the people of Makkah, there are some who believe in it. And none negates Our signs but the ones who are ungrateful.* (29:47) These new revelations are so clear and straightforward that they will not be denied except by those who deliberately shut their minds and spirits to them, refusing to reflect on them. The Arabic word kufr and its derivative kafirun, which respectively mean 'unbelief' and 'unbelievers', denote in their original linguistic 'cover, screen, etc.' Therefore, the use of the word ungrateful in this instance stresses such connotations. *And neither had you been recounting from any Book before it nor write you it with your right hand for then, certainly, they would have been in doubt, the ones who deal in falsehood.* (29:48)

Thus the Quran replies to even their most naive of queries. The Prophet had lived among them all his life and could neither read nor write. Then, he gave them this remarkable book, which was unlike anything produced by even the most talented of literary figures. They might have had a reasonable suspicion, had the Prophet been a man of literary talent. What doubt though could they reasonably entertain when they were fully aware of his past among them? Furthermore, even if the Prophet could read and write they should not have entertained any doubt about it. The Quran is its own best witness that it has no human author. It is far greater than man's ability, knowledge and world. Whenever one reflects on its statements one cannot escape the feelings that it is too powerful and too authoritative to be of human composition. *Nay! It is clear portents, signs in the breasts of those who were given the knowledge.* (29:49)

It gives clear unambiguous indications to those who have been granted sound knowledge, leaving no room for doubt or suspicion. They feel these signs within their own hearts and they are thus reas-

sured. They do not require any further proof. Knowledge that deserves to be described as true is that which is felt to be certain at heart, illuminating a person's way and leading him to what is best. *And none negate Our signs but ones who are unjust.* (29:49) These are the ones who are unfair in their evaluation of things and who stray a long way from the truth and the right path. *And they said: Why were signs not caused to descend to him from his Lord?* (29:50)

What they want are miracles like those which earlier messengers were given when humanity was still in its infancy. These serve as final evidence only to the generation and community which sees them. This final message, however, provides such evidence to everyone who receives its call until the end of human life. Therefore, its miracle is given in the form of signs of the Quran, a miraculous book which is full of wonders. It opens its treasures to all generations. It is made up of signs that are clear to the hearts of those gifted with real knowledge. As they reflect on its signs they realize that they are in fact miraculous signs and they recognize the source from which they derive their power.

He produces them when there is need according to His own plans. It is not for the Prophet or anyone else to make suggestions to God concerning the provision of any sign. The Prophet tells them this, explaining that it is alien to his manners and nature that he should make such a suggestion. *Say: The signs are only with God. I am only a warner, one who makes clear.* (29:50) I explain things, deliver my message and warn people. When I have done that, the task assigned to me has been fulfilled. It is up to God to decide what to do next. Thus the faith is presented purely, free of any confusion and suspicion. The limits of God's Messenger's task are defined so that people do not become confused with God's attributes. No ambiguity is allowed to blur his message. Such ambiguity occurred with earlier messages when the miracles shown to people became confused with myth and legend, leading to deviation from the path of truth.

Those people who demand physical miracles do not truly appreciate the great favor God has granted them with the Quran. He bestowed this from on high so as to guide them: *Suffices for them not that We caused the Book to descend to you which is recounted to them? Truly, in that is a mercy and a reminder for a folk who believe.* (29:51)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

LESSON 85(6). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FAIRNESS (RIGHT-MINDED)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:52-29:63

Makkah: *Say: God sufficed as a witness*
between me and between you.
He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth.
And those who believed in falsehood
and were ungrateful to God,
those, they are the ones who are losers. (29:52)
And they seek you to hasten the punishment!
And were it not for a term, that which is determined,
the punishment would have drawn near them.
And, certainly, it will approach them suddenly
while they are not aware. (29:53)
They seek to hasten the punishment and, truly,
hell will be that which encloses
the ones who are ungrateful. (29:54)
On a Day when the punishment

overcomes them from above them
and from beneath their feet,
He will say: Experience
what you had been doing! (29:55)
O my servants who have believed, My earth,
truly, is that which is extensive,
so worship Me! (29:56)
Every soul is one that experiences death.
Again, to Us you will return. (29:57)
And those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
We will certainly place them in a settlement
in the highest chambers in the Garden,
beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
How excellent is the compensation
for the ones who work, (29:58)
those who endured patiently
and they put their trust in their Lord. (29:59)
And how many a moving creature
carries not its own provision,
but God provides for it and for you.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (29:60)
*And if **you** asked them:*
Who created the heavens and the earth
and caused the sun and the moon
to be subservient?
They will, certainly, say.
God. Then, how they are mislead! (29:61)
God extends the provision
for whom He wills of His servants
and confines it for whom He wills.
Truly, God is Knowing of everything. (29:62)
*And if **you** asked them:*
Who sent down water from heaven
and gave life by it to the earth after its death,
certainly, they would say: God!
Say: The Praise belongs to God!
Nay! Most of them are not reasonable. (29:63)

COMMENTARY°

Those who do not feel any of this are the ones who demand a physical miracle so that they can accept this Quran as true. These are

blind people whose hearts do not open up to light. There is no use trying to argue with such people. Therefore, the Prophet is instructed to leave a decision about them to God Almighty: (29:52)

A witness who knows all that takes place in the heavens and earth gives the best and greatest testimony. It is He who knows that their situation is false: *Say: God sufficed as a witness between me and between you. He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believed in falsehood and were ungrateful to God, those, they are the ones who are losers.* (29:52) They are the absolute losers; they are the ones who forego everything. They lose both this world and the life to come, as also themselves, divine guidance, God-consciousness, reassurance, truth and light.

To believe in God is, in itself a great gain, and to be rewarded for it is by God's grace. Belief provides reassurance and a steady footing along the way, steadfastness in the face of adversity, trust in God's help and protection, and confidence as to the eventual outcome. This is indeed a great gain, and it is what the ungrateful lose.

The chapter continues its discussion of what the ungrateful do. It refers to their precipitation of God's punishment, when hell draws close to them: (29:53-29:55)

The ungrateful heard the warnings but could not understand God's wisdom in allowing them time to consider their positions. Therefore, they challenged the Prophet to hasten their punishment. God often allows people time so that the wrongdoers continue their wicked and arrogant ways. He also tests the believers so that they grow stronger in faith and perseverance. Moreover, those who cannot remain steadfast when exposed to a test abandon the believers' ranks. He also allows them time so that those of them whom He knows to have goodness in their hearts recognize the truth, mend their ways and accept His guidance; or else, their own offspring may grow up as believers worshipping Him alone even though their fathers were errant and misguided. Or He may leave them a while for some other purpose of His.

The Arab idolaters, however, could not understand God's purpose and wise planning. Therefore, their challenge hastening their own punishment: *And they seek you to hasten the punishment! And were it not for a term, that which is determined, the punishment would have drawn near them.* (29:53) At this point God threatens them with the punishment which will come upon them, at its set time, but when they least expect it. Thus, it will take them by surprise and they will not be able to escape it: *And, certainly, it will approach them suddenly while they are not aware.* (29:53)

The warning of sudden punishment in this life which occurs

when least expected is followed by another censure for their continued hastening of punishment: *They seek to hasten the punishment and, truly, hell will be that which encloses the ones who are ungrateful.* (29:54) Following the Quranic method of presenting the future as though it is taking place now, the chapter describes hell as encompassing the ungrateful. To them, this is hidden behind the curtains of the future, but to God, it is a visible reality. Describing its hidden reality fills one with awe and makes their hastening of punishment increasingly singular. How could anyone hasten his own punishment when hell engulfs him while he remains heedless, deluded.

The chapter then draws an image of them as they are engulfed by hell, yet hastening their punishment: "On the day when suffering will overwhelm them from above and from beneath their feet. *On a Day when the punishment overcomes them from above them and from beneath their feet. . .* (29:55)

This is a fearful scene, coupled with a humiliating rebuke and painful censure: *He will say: Experience what you had been doing!* (29:55). Such is the end of paying no heed to the warnings and of hastening the punishment.

The chapter leaves careless ungrateful in this scene of suffering, one which engulfs them from above and from under their feet. It moves on to address the believers who suffer persecution at the hands of the ungrateful, who aim to prevent them from worshipping God. It tells them to try to flee from persecution so that they can truly practise their faith. This is given in the form of a loving address that touches one's heart: (29:56-29:60)

The Creator of these hearts who knows all their feelings, fleeting thoughts, perceptions and ideas addresses them with love, inviting them to emigrate for the sake of their faith: These words, right from the outset give them a feeling of their true status, linking them to their Lord: Servants of Mine!'

This is the first caring touch, while the second is felt in what comes next: You are My servants, and this is My earth, which is spacious and can comfortably accommodate you. What keeps you, then, in a hostile place where you are oppressed and persecuted on account of your faith, and where you cannot worship God in freedom? Leave this narrow and restricted place and find somewhere else in My spacious earth, to enjoy freedom of worship: *On a Day when the punishment overcomes them from above them and from beneath their feet, He will say: Experience what you had been doing! O my servants who have believed, My earth, truly, is that which is extensive, so worship Me!* (29:56)

Sorrow at leaving one's own homeland is the first feeling which

stirs in the mind of one who is invited to leave his home. Therefore, these words stress closeness to God and the earth's spaciousness. Since it is all God's earth, then the place to be loved most is that where one enjoys freedom to worship God alone.

The chapter continues to address people's thoughts, and hence how we know the fear involved in emigration. The early Muslims in Makkah felt that they ran the risk of death if they tried to leave. The ungrateful were not averse to stopping them from emigrating because they felt that such emigration represented a threat to their own security. There were also the dangers that they could encounter on the way, should they even manage to leave Makkah. Therefore, the next sign addresses such concerns: *Every soul is one that experiences death. Again, to Us you will return.* (29:57)

God does not, however, leave it at that. He tells them about what He has prepared for them in their future abode. If they leave their own homeland, there are other places on earth that will welcome them; and if they desert their homes, they will be compensated with much better dwellings in heaven: *And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We will certainly place them in a settlement in the highest chambers in the Garden, beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in it forever. How excellent is the compensation for the ones who work.* (29:58) At this point God urges them to do what is good, remain patient in all situations and place their trust in Him: (29:58-29:59) This should give them all the encouragement to remain steadfast when worry and fear are keenly felt and encouragement is badly needed.

When people are forced to leave their homeland another worry they entertain is that of livelihood. After all they are abandoning their homes and property, where they are familiar with what is needed and with the available opportunities. Therefore, the chapter also reassures them on this count: *And how many a moving creature carries not its own provision, but God provides for it and for you. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (29:60) It places before their eyes the realities they see around them. Countless are the living creatures that do not know how to gather, carry, care for their sustenance or know what they need for their own survival. They do not know how to provide or store it. Nevertheless, God provides for them all, preserving them from death by starvation. He provides for people in the same way. They may think that they produce their means of sustenance, but the fact is that God grants them the ways and means to obtain what they need for their living, and this, in itself, is a favor given to them by God. They could not have obtained such ways and means without God's grace. Therefore, they should not worry about their sustenance

when they emigrate. They are God's servants, travelling on God's earth, and God will provide for them wherever they are, just as He provides for every living creature.

These caring touches conclude by emphasizing the bond with God. This so that believers are fully aware of the care He takes of them. He listens to them, knows their situation and does not abandon them: *And how many a moving creature carries not its own provision, but God provides for it and for you. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (29:60) Thus ends this short round which delivers caring touches to every heart and responds to every thought, replacing every sort of worry, fear and weariness with reassurance, confidence and comfort. Believers now feel that they will never be abandoned by God, the Most Merciful. Only the Creator understands the worries that overwhelm people's minds, and none cures their hearts except the One who knows all that hearts contain.

Whenever they were asked about the Creator of the heavens and the earth, who controlled the sun and the moon, and brought rain to give life to the earth, they acknowledged that it was all done by God. Yet at the same time, they worshipped their idols, or jinn, or the angels, making these God's partners in the worship they offered, even though such beings had no share in creation. God highlights such ridiculous contradictions as follows: *And if you had asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth and caused the sun and the moon to be subservient? They will, certainly, say: God. Then, how they are mislead!* (29:61) How can they turn a blind eye to the truth and accept instead this muddled concept? *Say: The Praise belongs to God! Nay! Most of them are not reasonable.* (29:63) Certainly anyone who accepts such contradictions has no reason.

In between these questions about the great universal phenomena, the chapter states that God gives provisions in plenty or in small measure to whomever He wills of His servants. Thus, it links the provision of sustenance with the creation of the universe and all other aspects of God's limitless power. It is all done in accordance with God's knowledge: *God extends the provision for whom He wills of His servants and confines it for whom He wills. Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* (29:62)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

Summary of critical thinking:

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 85(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EMBODY A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

HOW IS POINT OF VIEW (FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE) DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or dis crimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:64-29:69

Makkah: *And this present life is not,*
but a diversion and a pastime.
And, truly, the Last Abode is the eternal life
if they had been knowing! (29:64)
And when they embarked on the boats,
they called to God,
ones who are sincere and devoted

in the way of life to Him.
Then, when He delivered them to dry land,
that is when they ascribed partners with God, (29:65)
being ungrateful for what We gave them.
So let them take joy for soon they will know! (29:66)
Consider they not that We made a safe,
holy place while humanity is being snatched away
all around them?
Believe they, then, in falsehood
and are they ungrateful for the divine blessing? (29:67)
And who does greater wrong
than he who devised a lie against God?
Or denied The Truth when it drew near him?
Is there not in hell a place of lodging
for the ones who are ungrateful? (29:68)
And as for those who struggled for Us,
We will truly guide them to Our ways.
And, truly, God is with ones
who are doers of good. (29:69)

COMMENTARY°

Against this backdrop of life on earth and our means of sustenance, whether plentiful or stinted, an accurate standard is provided against which to measure all values. Thus, we see that this world, with all that it provides of sustenance, comfort and pleasure, is trivial when compared with the life to come: *And this present life is not, but a diversion and a pastime. And, truly, the Last Abode is the eternal life if they had been knowing!* (29:64) When it is not viewed as a means to ensure happiness in the life to come, but felt to be, of itself, the ultimate objective and its pleasures coveted, this present life, with all that it can give, is no more than trifling play. It is the life to come that is the one that is full of life and fulfilment.

The chapter continues its outline of the ungrateful' contradictions: *And when they embarked on the boats, they called to God, ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him.* (29:65) When they are on board a ship, moving across the sea, feeling their boat to be little more than a toy pushed about by the waves, they remember none other than God. It is to Him alone that they turn for support, and only in His power do they feel that their safety can be guaranteed. Thus, their feelings and speech confirm His Oneness. They recognize this as coming from the depths of their nature. *Then, when He delivered them to dry land, that is when they ascribed partners with God.* (29:65) They forget their nature, and their prayers, reverting to their

association of partners with God.

Such deviation means they are ungrateful for the blessings God grants them, and that they ignore the upright nature and clear proofs He has given them. They will, then, enjoy their worldly life for the limited duration of their time on earth, taking little heed of the inevitable result: *Being ungrateful for what We gave them. So let them take joy for soon they will know!* (29:66) This is a subtle warning that what they will come to know will certainly not please them.

The chapter then reminds them of God's favor. It is He who has placed them close to a secure sanctuary where they live in complete security. Yet they neither remember such blessing, nor offer thanks for it by worshipping God alone. On the contrary, they try to scare the believers who live close to it: (29:67)

Those living in the vicinity of the Kabah enjoyed a life of security: they were honored by other people for the sake of God's House. All around them, Arabian tribes continuously feuded with each other, creating an atmosphere of fear. They only felt secure when they were in the vicinity of the Sacred House. It was amazing, therefore, that they made that very House a place where they put their idols and worshipped other beings. Therefore, the rhetorical question: *Consider they not that We made a safe, holy place while humanity is being snatched away all around them? Believe they, then, in falsehood and are they ungrateful for the divine blessing?*(29:67)

They certainly invented lies against God, attributing partners t Him. They also denied the truth they were given, describing it as lies. Therefore, hell is the right abode for such ungrateful. *And who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God? Or denied The Truth when it drew near him? Is there not in hell a place of lodging for the ones who are ungrateful?* (29:68)

The chapter concludes with an image of the other party who strive hard so that they earn God's pleasure and establish a relation with Him. They endure whatever hardship they are called upon to endure, allowing no feelings of despair to creep into their minds. They withstand every hardship and pass every test, fulfilling their duties and marching along the long, hard road to their well-defined goal. Such people will not be left alone. God will never suffer their belief and struggle to be wasted. He looks at them from on high, and He is pleased with them. He will then provide them with guidance, helping them along the road, and give them ample reward for their perseverance and good works: *And as for those who struggled for Us, We will truly guide them to Our ways. And, truly, God is with ones who are doers of good.* (29:69)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What do you believe? How do you see things?
What reasons seem most persuasive to them?
What theory do you think best explains what their teachers are trying to explain?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

LESSON 86. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign: *There is no compulsion in religion. Surely right judgment has become clear from error....* (2:256) that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, the use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are nc limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment

that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 83: THE ONES WHO GIVE SHORT MEASURE (AL-MUTAFFIFIN)

Makkah: *Woe be to*
the ones who give short measure, (83:1)
those who when they measure against humanity
obtained full measure. (83:2)
Yet when they wanted to measure for them,
or weigh for them, they skimp. (83:3)
Think those not that they will be ones who are raised up (83:4)
on the sublime Day, (83:5)
a Day when humanity will stand up
for the Lord of the worlds? (83:6)
No indeed!
Truly, the Book of the ones who act immorally is in Sijjin. (83:7)
And what will cause you to recognize what Sijjin is? (83:8)
It is a written book. (83:9)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny— (83:10)
those who deny the Day of Judgment! (83:11)
And none denies it but every sinful, exceeder of limits, (83:12)
who, when Our signs are recounted to him,
he said: Fables of the ancient ones! (83:13)
No indeed! Nay! Their hearts will be overcome with rust from what
they had been earning. (83:14)
No indeed! They will be from their Lord
on that Day ones who are alienated. (83:15)

Truly, again, they will be ones who roast in hellfire. (83:16)
Again, it will be said to them after that:
This is what you had been denying. (83:17)
No indeed! Truly, the book of the pious is in Illiyyun. (83:18)
And what will cause you to recognize what Illiyyun is? (83:19)
It is a written book. (83:20)
Bearing witness to it are
the ones who are brought near to God. (83:21)
Truly, the pious will be in bliss, (83:22)
on raised benches, looking on. (83:23)
Thou wilt recognize on their faces the radiancy of bliss. (83:24)
They will be given to drink sealed over exquisite wine. (83:25)
Its seal will have the lingering smell of musk.
So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive. (83:26)
And the mixture will be of Tasnim, (83:27)
a spring from which will drink
the ones who are brought near to it. (83:28)
Truly, those who sinned—at those who believed
—had been laughing. (83:29)
And when they passed by them,
they would wink at one another, (83:30)
and when they would turn about to their people,
they would turn about
acting as ones who are unconcerned. (83:31)
And when they saw them, they would say:
Truly, these are ones who go astray. (83:32)
They were sent as ones who guard over them. (83:33)
Then, on this Day, those who believed
laugh at the ones who are ungrateful, (83:34)
seated on raised benches, they look on. (83:35)
Were the ones who are ungrateful not rewarded
for what they had been accomplishing? (83:36)

COMMENTARY°

It has been recorded that this is the last chapter to be revealed in Makkah. The chapter opens with God's declaration of war against the stinters: *Woe be to the ones who give short measure.* The Arabic term, way, used for 'woe' implies destruction and ruin. The implication is the same whether we consider this sign as a statement of a future eventuality or a curse, for a curse made by God has the same effect as that of a statement about what is going to happen.

The next two signs explain the meaning of the 'stinters' or defrauders as intended in the chapter. *Those who when they measure*

against humanity obtained full measure. Yet when they wanted to measure for them, or weigh for them, they skimp. (83:2-83:3) They are those who want their merchandise complete and intact when they buy, but who do not give the right amount when they sell. The following three signs wonder at the defrauders, who behave as if they will not have to account for what they gain in this life.

The fact that the defrauders' behavior is tackled in this manner in a Makkan revelation is very interesting. Makkan chapters generally concentrate on the fundamentals, such as the assertion of God's unity, the supremacy of His will and His dominion over the universe and humanity, and with assertions about the truth of revelation and prophethood, the truth of the Day of Judgment, reckoning and reward. The Makkan revelations also endeavour to form and develop the moral sense and relate it to the fundamentals of faith. The tackling of a specific issue of morality, such as the stinting of weights and measures, or business dealings in general, is a later concern; it is more characteristic of Madinan revelations, which regulate the life of the community in an the Quranic message. The fact that this Makkan chapter makes the issue of stinting its focal point therefore deserves careful consideration.

The first point to note is that in Makkah the nobility were very rich, but totally unscrupulous. They exercised a complete monopoly of trade in their business concerns. They organized the export and import trade using caravans which travelled to Yemen in winter and to Syria in summer. They had their seasonal trade fairs such as the Ukaz fair which was held during the pilgrimage season. The fairs were for business dealings as well as literary activities.

The text suggests that the defrauders against whom war was declared belonged to the nobility and wielded much power and influence, enabling them to force others to succumb to their wishes. Several features of the Arabic wording used here connote that for some unspecified reason they were able to impose their will and exact in full. The meaning implied is not that they exacted their full due; for this would not justify a declaration of war against them. What is meant is that they obtained by sheer force what they had no right to demand. But when it was their turn to weigh or measure for others, they exercised their power by giving less than what was due.

Indeed this warning, coming so early in the Makkan period, gives an idea of the nature of the Quranic message. It demonstrates that the Quranic message embraces all sides of life and aims to establish a firm moral code which accords with the basic principles of divine teachings. At the time when this chapter was revealed the Muslim community was still weak. The followers of the Quranic

message had not yet won power in order to organize society and the life of the community according to Quranic principles. Yet the Quranic message demonstrated its opposition to those acts of flagrant injustice and unethical dealings. It declared war against stinters and threatened them with woe and destruction at a time when they were the powerful rulers of Makkah. It declared its uncompromising stand against the injustices suffered by the masses whom it has never sought to lull into a state of lethargy and apathy.

This gives us an insight into the real motives behind the stubborn opposition to the Quranic message by the masters of Makkah. They were undoubtedly keenly aware that what Muhammad was calling for was not merely a matter of personal conviction which demanded no more than a verbal assertion of God's Oneness and Muhammad's prophethood, and a form of prayer addressed to God and not idols. They realized that the new faith would establish a way of life which would cause the very basis of their positions and interests to crumble. They were fully aware that the new religion, by its very nature, did not admit any partnership or compromise with any worldly concepts alien to its divine basis, and that it posed a mighty threat to all tribal honor values. This is why they launched their offensive, which continued in full force both before and after the Muslims' migration to Madinah. It was an offensive launched to defend their way of life in its entirety, not only a set of concepts which have no effect beyond individual acceptance and personal conviction.

Those, in any age or land, who attempt to prevent the Qurani message from organizing and ruling human life also recognize these essential facts. They know very well that the pure and straightforward Quranic way of life endangers their unjust order, interests, hollow structure and deviant practices. Indeed the tyrannical stinters — whatever form their stinting takes and wherever it is, in money and finance, or in rights and duties — are those who fear most the ascendancy of the Quranic message and the implementation of its just methods.

The representatives of the two Arabian tribes of Madinah, the Aws and the Khazraj, who pledged their support and loyalty to the Prophet were also aware of all this. Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet's biographer, wrote: Asim ibn Umar ibn Qatadah told me that when the Madinan Muslims came to give their pledge to the Prophet, al-Abbas ibn Ubadah al-Ansari, who belonged to the clan of Salim ibn Awf, said to them: You Khazraj! Do you know what your pledge to this man really means?

They answered: Yes, we do.

His rejoinder was: You are pledging to fight the rest of humanity,

white and black alike! So it would be better to leave him alone now if you think you would give him up to his enemies in the event of your sustaining material losses or losing your leaders. If you do such a thing you will bring upon yourselves great humiliation both in this life and in the life hereafter. But if you feel that you will honor your pledges despite any sacrifice in money and men, then go ahead, because this will be best for you here and in the hereafter!

They said: We offer our loyalty and support and declare our readiness to sustain any sacrifice, material or personal!

Turning to the Prophet, they asked him: What will be our reward if we honor our pledges?

He said: Heaven.

They said: Stretch out your hand.

He did and they gave him their pledges of support.

These supporters, like the Makkan tyrants, were keenly aware of the nature of the Quranic message. They realized that it stands for absolute justice and fairness in the social order it seeks to create. It accepts no tyranny, oppression, conceit, injustice or exploitation. Therefore, it faces the combined forces of all forms of despotism, arrogance and exploitation.

Their attitude is singularly strange. (83:4-6) The mere idea of being raised to life again on that great day, when all humanity shall stand as ordinary individuals in front of the Lord of the universe, awaiting His just judgment, without support from any quarter, should be enough to make them change course. But they persist, as if the thought of being raised to life after death has never crossed their minds.

They are called ones who give short measure in the first part of the chapter; but in the second they are described as transgressors. The chapter proceeds to describe the standing of this group with God, their situation in this life, and what awaits them on the great day. (83:7-83:17) They think they will not be raised to life after death, so the Quran rebukes them and affirms that a record of their actions is kept.

The location of that record is specified as an additional confirmation of the fact, albeit a location unknown to man. They are threatened with woe and ruin on that day when their record shall be reviewed: (83:7-83:10)

The transgressors, as the Arabic term here connotes, are those who indulge excessively in sin. Their book is the record of their deeds. We do not know the nature of this book and nor are we required to know. The whole matter belongs to that realm of which we know nothing except what we are told by God. The statement that

there is a record in Sijjin of the transgressors' deeds, is followed by the familiar Quranic form of expression associated with connotations of greatness: *And what will cause you to recognize what Sijjin is?* (83:8) Thus, the addressee is made to feel that the whole matter is too great to be fully understood.

The chapter then gives a further account of the transgressors' book: *It is a written book.* (83:9) There is no possibility of addition or omission until it is thrown open on that great day. When this takes place: *Woe on that Day to the ones who deny.* (83:10) Then we are given information about the subject of unbelief, and the true character of the ungrateful who deny the Day of Judgment. (83:12-83:13) So, aggression and bad deeds lead the perpetrators to deny the Day of Judgment and to take a rude and ill-mannered attitude towards the Quran, describing it as: Fables of the ancients! This description by the ungrateful is, of course, based on the fact that the Quran contains some historical accounts of former nations. These accounts are related as a lesson for later generations as they demonstrate with much clarity the working of the divine rules to which all nations and generations are subject.

They are strongly rebuked and reprobated for their rudeness and rejection of the truth. These connotations, carried by the Arabic term kalla, translated here as 'No indeed', are coupled with an assertion that their allegations are unfounded. We are then given an insight into the motives of their insolent disbelief and the reasons for their inability to see the obvious truth or respond to it: *No indeed! Nay. Their hearts will be overcome with rust from what they had been earning.* (83:14) Indeed the hearts of those who indulge in sin become dull, as if they are veiled by a thick curtain which keeps them in total darkness, unable to see the light. Thus they gradually lose their sensitivity and become lifeless.

Thus we have learnt the situation of transgressing ungrateful, as well as their motives for transgression and rejection of the truth. Then we are told what will happen to them on that great day, a destiny which befits their evil deeds and denial of the truth: (83:15-83:17) Because their sins have cast a thick veil over their hearts, they are unable in this life to feel God's presence, and it is only appropriate that they not be allowed to see His glorious face. They will be deprived of this great happiness, which is bestowed only on those whose hearts and souls are so clean and transparent that they deserve to be with their Lord, without any form of separation or isolation.

This separation from their Lord is the greatest and most agonizing punishment and deprivation. It is a miserable end of a man whose very humanity is derived from only one source, namely his contact with God, his benevolent Lord. When man is torn away from this source of nobleness he loses all his humanity and sinks to a level

which ensures hell is his just reward: *Truly, again, they will be ones who roast in hellfire.* (83:16) On top of this, there is something much worse and much more agonizing, namely, rebuke. *Again, it will be said to them after that: This is what you had been denying.* (83:17)

Then follows an account of the other group, the God-conscious. This is given in the customary Quranic manner of providing two elaborately contrasting images, so that a detailed comparison may be drawn: (83:18-83:28)

This section of the chapter starts with the Arabic term, kalla, which connotes strong reproach and a firm command to the transgressors to desist from their rejection of the truth. It then proceeds to speak about the God-conscious. Since the record of the transgressors is in Sijjin, that of the God-conscious is in Illiyun. The term 'God-conscious' refers to the obedient who do good. They are the exact opposite of the transgressors, who indulge in every excess. The name Illiyun connotes elevation and sublimity, which suggests that Sijjin is associated with baseness and ignominy. The name is followed by the form of exclamation often used in the Quran to cast notions of mystery and grandeur: *And what will cause you to recognize what Illiyyun is?* (83:19)

The chapter then states that the book of the God-conscious is: *t is a written book. Bearing witness to it are the ones who are brought near to God.* (83:20-83:21) We have already stated what is meant by 'a record inscribed.' We are told here that the angels closest to God see this book and witness it. This statement gives the feeling that the record of the God-conscious is associated with nobility, purity and sublimity. The angels closest to God look at it and enjoy its description of noble deeds and glorious characteristics. The whole image provides evidence of the honor the God-conscious receive.

There follows an account of the situation in which the God-conscious find themselves. We are told of the bliss they enjoy on that great day: *Truly, the pious will be in bliss.* (83:22) This contrasts with hell, in which the transgressors dwell. *On raised benches, looking on.* (83:23) This means that they are given a place of honor. They look wherever they wish. They do not have to look down, out of humility; and they suffer nothing which distracts their attention. The description here represents to the Arabs, who were the first to be addressed by the Quran, the highest form of comfort and luxury.

In their bliss, the God-conscious live in mental and physical comfort. Their faces are radiant with unmistakable joy: (83:24-83:26) Their drink is absolutely pure without any unwanted additions or particles of dust. Describing it as securely sealed with musk indicates, perhaps, that it is ready made in secured containers to be

opened when refreshment is needed. All this adds to the impression of meticulous care being taken. The fact that the seal is of musk also adds an element of elegance and luxury. The whole picture, however, is understood only within the limits of human experience in this world.

In the life to come people will have different concepts, tastes and standards which will be free from all the bonds of this limited world.

The description is carried further in the following two signs: *And the mixture will be of Tasnim, a spring from which will drink the ones who are brought near to it.* (83:27-83:28) o, this pure, securely sealed drink is opened and mixed with a measure of the water from a fountain called Tasnim and described as the one from which the favored who are close to God drink. Before this last part of the description is given we are also given a significant instruction: *Its seal will have the lingering smell of musk.* (83:26)

Those stinters who defraud their fellow men pay no regard to the Day of Judgement, and, worse still, deny that such a Day of Reckoning will come. Hardened by their sins and excesses, they strive endlessly for the petty riches of this world. Each of them tries to outdo the others and gain as much as possible. Therefore, he indulges in all types of injustice and vice for the sake of ephemeral luxuries. It is the other type of luxury and honor which deserves emulous striving: *So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive.* (83:26)

Those who strive for an object of this world, no matter how superb, grand or honorable it is, are in reality striving for something hollow, cheap and temporary. This world, in its totality, is not worth, in God's view, one mosquito's wing. It is the hereafter which carries real weight with Him. So, it should be the goal for strenuous competition and zealous striving.

It is remarkable that striving for the hereafter elevates the souls of all strivers, while competition for worldly objects sinks the competitors' souls to the lowest depths. As we work continuously to achieve the happiness of the hereafter, our work makes this world a happy and pure one for everybody. On the other hand, efforts made for the achievement of worldly ends turn this world into a filthy marsh, where animals devour one another and insects bite the flesh of the God-conscious.

Striving for the hereafter does not turn the earth into a barren desert, as some transgressors imagine. The Quranic message considers this world a farm, and the hereafter its fruits. It defines the role of the true believer as the building of this world while following the path of piety and God-consciousness. The Quranic message stipu-

lates that we must look on our task as an act of worship that fulfils the purpose of his existence as defined by God: The statement: For this let the strivers emulously strive, inspires man to look far beyond this finite, little world, as he sets out to fulfil his mission as God's vicegerent on earth. Thus as they work on purifying the filthy marsh of this world their souls are elevated to new heights.

Our life on earth is limited while his future life is of limitless duration. The luxuries of this world are also limited while the happiness of paradise is much too great for us to conceive. The elements of happiness in this life are well known to everyone, but in the next world they are on a level befitting a life everlasting.

What comparison can then hold between the two spheres of competition or the two goals, even when we apply the human method of balancing losses against profits? It is, indeed, one race and a single competition: *So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive.* (83:26)

The beatitude enjoyed by the God-conscious is discussed at length in order to give a detailed account of the hardships, humiliation and insolence they are made to suffer at the hands of the transgressors. The final comment of the chapter taunts the ungrateful as they behold the God-conscious enjoying heavenly bliss: (83:29-83:36)

The images portrayed by the Quran of the evildoers' derision of the faithful, their rudeness and insolence, and their description of the faithful, as having 'gone astray' are taken directly from Makkan life at the time. But the same actions happen over and over again in all ages and places. Many people in our own age have witnessed similar actions, and it is as if the chapter was revealed to describe what they see with their own eyes. This proves that the attitude of the transgressors and the evildoers to the believers hardly ever changes from one country to another or from one period of time to another.

In the Arabic original, the past tense is used here so as to take us away from this world to the hereafter to see the God-conscious in their bliss while we also hear what happened to them in this world. *Truly, those who sinned—at those who believed—had been laughing.* (83:29) The believers were made to suffer ridicule and derision by the transgressors, either because they were poor or weak or because their self-respect would not allow them to return the abuse of base evildoers. What a contrast: the evildoers persecute the believers and laugh at them shamelessly while the believers stick to dignified self respect and perseverance.

They wink at one another: *And when they passed by them, they would wink at one another* (83:30) or make certain actions intended as mockery and derision. Such behavior betrays their baseness and

bad manners. They try to make the believers feel embarrassed and helpless. *And when they passed by them, they would wink at one another.* When they have nourished their evil, little minds with such mockery and injurious actions they go back to their own folk to continue their laughter and derision. They are satisfied with what they have done. Although they have sunk to the lowest depths, they cannot imagine how contemptible they are.

This is even more singular! *And when they saw them, they would say: Truly, these are ones who go astray.* (83:32) Nothing is more absurd than that those transgressors should speak about right and error, or that they should say that the believers have gone astray. Transgression knows no limits. The transgressors never feel ashamed of what they do or say. Their description of the believers as having gone astray is a clear manifestation of this fact. The Quran does not try to defend the believers or refute the evil accusation levelled at them, because it is not worth refuting. It laughs loudly, however, at those who involve themselves impudently in something which does not concern them: *They were sent as ones who guard over them.* (83:33) No one has asked them to look after the believers, or to watch over them, or to assess their situation. So why do they give their unsolicited opinion?

This sarcasm concludes the narration of what the transgressors do in this life. The chapter relates it as if it is something of the past, and gives an image of the present, i.e. in the hereafter, when the believers rejoice in their heavenly bliss: (83:34-83:35)

On that day the ungrateful will be shut out from their Lord, suffering isolation combined with the torture of hell when they are told: *Again, it will be said to them after that: This is what you had been denying.* (83:17) At the other end of the scale, the believers recline on couches, in total beatitude, partaking of a pure drink which is secured with a seal of musk and mixed with the waters of Tasnim. As the chapter draws the two images, it shows how the tables are turned; for then it is the believers who laugh at the ungrateful.

The chapter concludes with another loud, ironic question: *Were the ones who are ungrateful not rewarded for what they had been accomplishing?* (83:36) Their requital is not a good one, as the term used here connotes. For we have just been given an image of their doom, which is described here sarcastically, as their reward.

The scene of the evildoers' ridicule of the believers merits further discussion. It is portrayed in considerable detail, in the same way as the earlier scene of the God-conscious in heavenly bliss. This detailed description is highly artistic. It also has a marked psychological effect which is at once soothing, comforting and reassuring. The

Muslim minority in Makkah was facing a sustained, demoralizing onslaught by the ungrateful, but God did not leave the Muslims on their own: He comforted them and urged them to persevere.

They are comforted by the very fact that their sufferings are outlined by God in detail. He sees what the believers suffer and does not ignore what He sees, although He may let the ungrateful do as they wish, if only for a while. He also sees how the transgressors laugh unrepentantly at the sufferings of the faithful. Since He describes all this in the Quran then He must take it into account. This, in itself, is enough consolation for the believers.

There are also those scornful remarks about the evildoers. They may go unnoticed by the ungrateful because their indulgence in their sinful practices have made them insensitive. The highly sensitive hearts of the believers, however, are touched and comforted by them.

It must be noted that the only consolation offered by God to the believers who were subjected to harsh treatment and painful ridicule was heaven for the believers and hell for the ungrateful. This, again, was the only promise the Prophet made to the believers when they pledged all their property as well as their lives for the cause of the Quranic message. Victory in this life was never mentioned in the Makkan Quranic revelations as a consolation or as an incentive to persevere. The Quran was instead cultivating the hearts of the believers, and preparing them to fulfil the task with which they were entrusted. It was necessary that such hearts attain a high standard of strength and self-denial so that they would give everything and suffer all hardship without looking for anything in this life. They were to seek only the reward of the hereafter and to win God's pleasure. They were prepared to go through life suffering all sorts of hardship and deprivation with no promise of reward in this life, not even victory for the cause of the Quranic message.

Such a group of people must be first established. When this happens and God knows that they are sincere and determined in what they have pledged themselves to do, then He will give them victory in this life. Victory will not be theirs as a personal reward. They will be given power as trustees appointed for the implementation of the Quranic way of life. They will be worthy trustees because neither were they promised nor did they look for any worldly gain. They pledged themselves truly to God at a time when they were unaware of any worldly benefit that may befall them except that they would win God's pleasure.

All the Quranic signs which speak of victory were revealed later in Madinah when this was no longer an issue. Victory was given because God willed that successive human generations should have an

actual, definite and practical example of the Quranic way of life. It was not a reward for sacrifices made or hardships suffered.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor in tensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.

I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

APPENDIX 1
SIGNS REVEALED IN MAKKAH AND PLACED IN MADINAH CHAPTERS
SIGNS 8:30-8:36

MAKKAH: *And mention when those who were ungrateful*
plan against you to bring you
to a standstill or to kill you
or to drive you out.
And they plan and God plans,
but God is Best of the ones who plan. (8:30)
And when Our signs are recounted to them,
they said: We heard this. If we will,
we would say the like of this.
Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones. (8:31)
And when they said: O God!
Truly, if this had been The Truth from Thee,
rain down rocks on us from heaven
or bring us a painful punishment. (8:32)
But God had not been punishing them
with you among them.
Nor had God been One Who Punishes them
while they ask for forgiveness. (8:33)
And what is with them
hat God should not punish the
while they bar worshipers from the Masjid al-Hara
and they had not been its protectors:
Truly, its protectors are but ones who are God-conscious
except most of them know not. (8:34)
Their formal prayer at the House had been nothing
but whistling and clapping of hands.
So experience the punishment
because you had been ungrateful. (8:35)
Truly, those who were ungrateful spend their wealth
so that they bar the way of God.
They will spend it.
Again, it will become a regret for them.
Again, they will be vanquished.
And those who were ungrateful
will be assembled in hell. (8:36)

COMMENTARY°

These signs continue the Quranic address showing glimpses from the past and compares them with the present. It paints a scene showing a great gulf between the two situations for the benefit of the Muslim community. Thus Muslims are able to appreciate God's grace as manifested in what He had planned for them.

In the present passage, the signs describes the attitude of the ungrateful as they scheme against God's Messenger shortly before his departure to Madinah. They turn away from God's revelations, claiming that they could produce something similar if they so wished. Their attitude is so stubborn that they appeal for God's punishment to come sooner if Muhammad's message from God is true. They prefer this to accepting it and following its guidance. The passage also includes a reference to the fact that they allocate their resources so as to turn people away from God's guidance and pool their money in order to launch an onslaught on God's Messenger. They are warned that all their efforts will end in total failure in this life, and then they will be driven to hell in the life to come. Loss in both worlds will be the result of their scheming and plotting.

Ultimately God directs the Messenger to confront the ungrateful with a choice between two alternatives. The first is that they stop their stubborn denial of the truth and their hostility to God and His Messenger, in which case God will forgive them all the sins and evil deeds they committed in the past. Alternatively, they continue with their attitude, in which case the fate that engulfed earlier communities will befall them too. They will then suffer the punishment God will determine for them.

A SCHEME TO PUT AN END TO THE QURANIC MESSAGE

And they plan and God plans, but God is Best of the ones who plan.(8:30) This is a reminder of the situation in Makkah before things underwent a total transformation. This reminder serves also as a reassurance concerning the future, and draws attention to the wisdom behind the operation of God's will. Those Muslims who were the first to be addressed by the Quran were fully aware of both situations, having experienced both. A reminder of their immediate past, as well as the fear and worry they experienced in those days, was sufficient to make them appreciate the safety and security of the present. They were aware of the ungrateful' scheming and what they planned to do with the Prophet. But not only their schemes were totally foiled; the ungrateful also suffered a humiliating defeat.

The ungrateful were considering alternatives: they thought of arresting God's Messenger and putting him in chains until he died,

and they also considered killing him so that they could get rid of him once and for all. They also thought of driving him away, sending him into exile. Having considered the pros and cons of each of these alternatives, they chose to kill him, entrusting the task to a number of young men, each belonging to a different tribe, so that all tribes would share in his assassination. His own clan, Hashim, would thus be unable to fight all the Arabs at once. They would then accept an offer of blood money and the whole matter would finish at that.

Commenting on this sign, Imam Ahmad relates on the authority of Abd Allah ibn Abbas: The Quraysh were in consultation one night in Makkah. Some of them suggested that the following morning they should put the Messenger in chains; but others suggested that they should kill him, while still others suggested that it was sufficient to have him banished. God revealed to the Messenger what they were scheming. That night, Ali slept in the Prophet's bed, while the Messenger moved out of the city until he reached the cave. The ungrateful spent the night watching Ali, but thinking him to be the Prophet. In the morning, they rushed to him, but instead they discovered Ali sleeping in his bed. They realized that their scheming had been foiled. They asked him: Where is your companion? He answered: I do not know. They traced his footsteps, but when they reached the mountain, they could no longer distinguish his trace. They climbed up the mountain and passed by the cave and saw that spiders had weaved their webs over its entrance. They thought that if he had gone into the cave, there would be no spider's web at the entrance. All in all he stayed in that cave three nights."

And they plan and God plans, but God is Best of the ones who plan.(8:30) These words paint a picture that leaves a profound effect, particularly when we stretch our minds to imagine that meeting of Quraysh idolaters and how they held their consultations discussing alternatives, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of every suggestion that was put forward. Yet, God Almighty was fully aware of all they said and decided. He rendered their schemes futile, but they were totally unaware of His planning. The whole scene is full of acute irony. But it is at the same time an awe-inspiring scene. How could those human beings, weak and clumsy as they were, be compared to God? Could anything they devised be compared to His design, able as He is to accomplish every purpose of His? The Quranic style paints this image in the same inimitable method of the Quran, bringing it alive so that it shakes hearts and set minds thinking.

After this brief but highly suggestive reference to the scheming of the Quraysh and what they plotted against the Prophet, the sign moves on to describe the attitude of the ungrateful, their deeds, fab-

rications and claims. They went as far as claiming they were able to produce something similar to the Quran, if only they chose to do so. At the same time, they described the Quran as fables of the ancients. (8:31) *And when Our signs are recounted to them, they said: We heard this. If we will, we would say the like of this. Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones.*

Feeble Maneuvers

In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir mentions that the person who said this was al-Nadr ibn al-Harith: Al-Nadr had been to the Persian Empire where he learnt Persian history and read accounts of past Persian kings, such as Rustam and Isfandiyar. When he returned home, he saw God's Messenger after he had been entrusted with God's message, and he listened to him reciting the Quran to people. When the Messenger finished talking to any group of people, al-Nadr would sit with them and tell them stories of those ancient kings. He would then ask them: Tell me, by God, who tells better stories: I or Muhammad?' Therefore, when he fell captive on the day of the Battle of Badr, the Messenger ordered that he should be executed. His order was carried out, thank God.

It was in reference to al-Nadr and what he used to say about the Quran that this sign was revealed: *And when Our signs are recounted to them, they said: We heard this. If we will, we would say the like of this. Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones.* (8:31)

The ungrateful' claims that the Quran was nothing but the tales of ancient people is mentioned several times in the Quran. In another place we read: *And they say: Fables of the ancient ones that he has caused to be written down! And they are to be related from memory to him at early morning dawn and at eventide.* (25:5)

This was only one episode in a chain of maneuvres which they attempted in order to resist the Quran and stop its profound effect. They realized that the Quran put its address to human nature, based on the truth implanted in its very constitution. Therefore, its response was bound to be positive. It confronted minds with its overpowering authority and they yielded to its irrefutable logic. Therefore, the elders of the Quraysh concocted some maneuvre which they knew to be without foundation. Nevertheless, they tried to find in the Quran something similar to the fables and legends of ancient communities in order to spread confusion among the masses. Their aim was simply to maintain their sway over those masses.

Those elders of the Quraysh recognized the nature of the Quranic message, because they were fully aware of the meaning of its terms and expressions in their language.

They recognized that the declaration, 'there is no god but God,

and the Messenger is God's Messenger,' signified a rebellion against all human authority, a complete rejection of the sovereignty of human beings and an acknowledgement that all sovereignty belonged to God alone. It also signified that putting such submission into practice meant following the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, God's Messenger, to the exclusion of all those who claimed to speak for God. They were aware that those of them who made that declaration rebelled immediately against the Quraysh's authority, leadership and sovereignty. Without hesitation, they joined the community led by the Prophet, acknowledging his authority. They no longer entertained any feeling of loyalty to family, clan, tribe, leadership or human authority. All their loyalty was given to this new leadership and the community under its care.

This is certainly the true significance of the declaration that there is no god other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger. This was a reality witnessed by the elders of the Quraysh who recognized the threat it constituted to their social, political, economic and religious set-up. The new Muslims' declaration did not have the hollow and feeble significance demonstrated by those who nowadays claim to be Muslims. They make such a claim only because they repeat this declaration verbally and offer some worship rituals. However, they pay little heed to the fact that God's Lordship no longer has any practical significance in human life, since human beings allow man-made laws and ignorant leadership to conduct and manage all society affairs.

It is true that in Makkah, the Messenger had neither a legal code to put forward nor a state to implement such a code, had it been there. However, those who made the declaration that brought them into the fold of the Quranic message immediately acknowledged the leadership of the Messenger and gave all their loyalty to the Muslim community. They rebelled against the leadership of the Arabian *jahiliyyah* society, and disclaimed any loyalty to family, clan, tribe, etc. Therefore, their declaration had its true political significance.

This was indeed what worried the Quraysh's elders as they recognized the threat posed by the Quranic message.

In earlier days, they were not at all worried when some individuals of foresight disowned the beliefs and rituals of the ungrateful, declaring that they believed in God's Oneness and worshipped Him alone. Those individuals disowned all idolatry, offering no worship ritual to any of the Arabian idols. If the whole matter is confined to this, those who wield authority in any *jahiliyyah* society would not care, because they do not see any threat to their authority in mere beliefs and worship rituals.

A SOPHISTICATED VERSION OF AN OLD PLOY

A fable is an old tale that includes some superstitious beliefs about deities and the supernatural courage of legendary heroes. It speaks of imaginary events that involve so much superstition.

Those Quraysh elders referred to the accounts given in the Quran of earlier nations and communities, the miracles shown to them and to the Quranic descriptions of how God destroyed the ungrateful and saved the believers and said to the masses that such accounts were only fables of ancient people. They alleged that the Messenger had it all written down in order to relate the same to the Arabs in Makkah, claiming that they had been revealed to him by God. Al-Nadr ibn al-Harith would take the Prophet's place after he had finished speaking to people, and would relate to them fables and legends which he had learnt on his travels in Persia. At times, al-Nadr would even have a group of people in a circle sitting next to the group addressed by the Prophet. He would then say to his audience: These legends are similar to the fables related by Muhammad, but I do not claim to be a Prophet or to receive any revelations. His are all fables and legends of the same type.

However, such matters did not last long in Makkah. These ploys were seen for what they really were. With its overpowering logic and profound truth that directly appealed to human nature, the Quran could easily overcome all such ploys and maneuvres. Nothing of them was able to resist the Quran in any way. Therefore, the elders of the Quraysh were in terrible fear and called on all their followers: *And those who are ungrateful said: Hear not this, the Quran, but talk idly about it while it is being recited so that perhaps you would prevail.* (41:26) But their leaders, such as Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl and al-Akhnas ibn Shariq went secretly at night, each on his own, to listen to the Quran being recited. None of them could bring himself to refrain from being there night after night, to listen to the Messenger as he recited God's revelations. Each one of them thought he was totally alone. When they discovered each other, they made a firm pledge of honor not to do it again. They feared that they would be seen by young people who would then listen to the Quran and accept the Quranic message.

Al-Nadr's attempt to attract people's attention to his stories in order to turn them away from the Quran was not the last of its kind. It was repeated in different shapes and forms, and it will continue to be repeated. In our present times, the enemies of this faith have also tried to turn people's attentions away from the Quran. But when they realize that all their attempts end in failure, they try to reduce the Quran to a collection of hymns that reciters sing to enchant their au-

dience.

NO LIMIT TO HUMAN FOLLY

The signs goes on to describe an attitude of most amazing stubbornness by the ungrateful. They try to wrestle with the truth and they are defeated. Pride, however, prevents them from acknowledging the truth and its authority or submitting to it. Therefore, they appeal to God to rain down stones over them or to smite them with grievous suffering, if the Quran were the truth revealed by Him. Instead of praying to God to guide them to the truth and enable them to follow it, they pray for their own undoing: *And when they said: O God! Truly, if this had been The Truth from You rain down rocks on us from heaven or bring us a painful punishment.* (8:32)

This is certainly a very strange appeal which betrays a state of unwavering stubbornness that prefers total ruin to yielding to the truth, even when it is the absolute truth. When sound human nature experiences doubt, it prays to God to show it the truth and guide it to it. Sound human nature does not find that at all demeaning. But when it is corrupted by uncontrolled pride, arrogance drives it into sin to the extent that it prefers suffering and ruin to acknowledging the truth when it becomes clear, irrefutable. It is with this type of obstinacy that the ungrateful in Makkah resisted the Prophet's message. But this message was victorious in the end, despite such persistent obstinacy.

The chapter makes it clear that they certainly deserved that stones be rained on them from the skies, or that painful suffering be inflicted on them, just as they had prayed for. Nevertheless, God willed not to inflict on them the type of extermination He had inflicted on earlier communities. This is because God's Messenger was still in their midst, calling on them to follow His guidance. Nor would God punish them for their sins if they continued to seek forgiveness after committing them.

It is untrue that their punishment was postponed because they were the guardians of the Sacred Mosque. Indeed, they were not its true guardians, because its rightful guardians are those who are God-conscious: (8:33-35)

What delays their punishment is not their claim that they are the heirs of Abraham and the custodians of the Sacred Mosque. This is merely a claim that has no substance or foundation. They are not the owners or the guardians of this House of worship, i.e. the Kabah. Indeed, they are its enemies. God's Sacred Mosque, the Kabah, is not a place of property which one generation inherits from its predecessor. It is God's own house which is inherited by those who are God-

conscious. False also is their claim that they are the heirs of the Messenger Abraham. It is not through blood and lineage that Abraham's legacy is inherited. It is only inherited through faith and religion. Those who are God-conscious are the only ones to inherit Abraham and the House he built for God's sake. But those ungrateful were turning away from it, its true guardians who believed in Abraham's faith. Therefore, they could not be guardians of this Sacred Mosque, although they may offer their prayers there. Indeed, theirs is not a true prayer. It was no more than whistling and hand clapping. It involved much chaos that imparted no air of serenity or atmosphere of humility before God. It did not inspire any feeling of sacredness of that mosque.

Abd Allah ibn Umar says: They used to place their cheeks on the ground, whistling and clapping. This brings to mind the image of musicians who produce a great deal of noise, and who put their heads at the feet of those in high position in many countries which claim to be Muslim. This is no more than an aspect of *jahiliyyah* that is highlighted here. It is shown here after a clear picture of *jahiliyyah* has been raised, showing how people impose a sort of divine authority on earth, and claim sovereignty over people. When this type of *jahiliyyah* occurs, all other forms and styles of ignorance may follow.

Their formal prayer at the House had been nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. So experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful. (8:35) This refers to the suffering inflicted on them at the hands of the Muslim community. As for the suffering they prayed for, which involves extermination, it is simply postponed by God's mercy, as a gesture of honor to God's Messenger and his great position. It may be that they will eventually repent what they have been doing and pray to God to forgive them.

SEPARATING THE GOOD FROM THE BAD

It is a common characteristic of ungrateful that they spend their money to cooperate in turning people away from God's path. God warns them that their purpose will be foiled and that they will come to find the loss of their money. He promises them defeat in this life and the punishment of hell in the life to come: *Truly, those who were ungrateful spend their wealth so that they bar the way of God. They will spend it. Again, it will become a regret for them. Again, they will be vanquished. And those who were ungrateful will be assembled in hell.* (8:36)

Signs: 9:128-9:129

Certainly, there drew near to you a Messenger
from among yourselves.
It was grievous to him that you fell into misfortune.
He is anxious for you
and to the ones who believe, gentle, compassionate. (9:128)
But if they turned away, say: God is enough for me.
There is no god but He.
In Him I put my trust.
And He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne. (9:129)

Commentary°

The Prophet's Relationship with the Believers

These signs concludes with two signs which different reports suggest were revealed in Makkah. The first of these two signs explains the bond between God's Messenger and his people, and how compassionate and full of concern he was for them. This is perfectly fitting with the tasks assigned to the Muslim community who are required to support the Messenger, convey his message, fight his enemies and endure whatever trouble or hardship they may face in doing so. The final sign directs the Messenger to rely only on his Lord when people turn away from him. It is sufficient for him to have God's help and support. (9:128-129)

The statement here does not say 'a Messenger from among you' has come to you. Instead it describes the Messenger as being one 'from among yourselves' to add connotations of closer contact and firmer ties. It shows the type of bond that exists between them and their Messenger. He is one of them, with very close contact between them, and he feels for them. Another characteristic of this Messenger is that: *It was grievous to him that you fell into misfortune.* (9:128) He is keen that you should come to no hardship. He is also *He is anxious for you and to the ones who believe, gentle, compassionate.* (9:128) He would never lead you to ruin. If he calls on you to strive for God's cause, and to endure any difficulty in doing so, then you should know that he does not take this lightly, and that there is no cruelty in his heart. His call is a manifestation of compassion. He simply does not like to see you humiliated. He is too concerned that you should not suffer the ignominy of sin. He is keen that you should have the honor of conveying this message, earn God's pleasure and admittance into heaven. The signs then addresses the Prophet, showing him what attitude to take when people turn away from him and

his message. It points to the source of power which gives him all the protection he needs: *But if they turned away, say: God is enough for me. There is no god but He. In Him I put my trust. And He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne* (9:129) To Him belong all power, dominion, greatness and honor. His support is sufficient for everyone who seeks His patronage.

These signs which concentrate mainly on fighting and striving for God's cause is thus concluded with the directive to rely on God alone, trust Him and seek His powerful support. After all: *He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne.* (9:129)

APPENDIX 3: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

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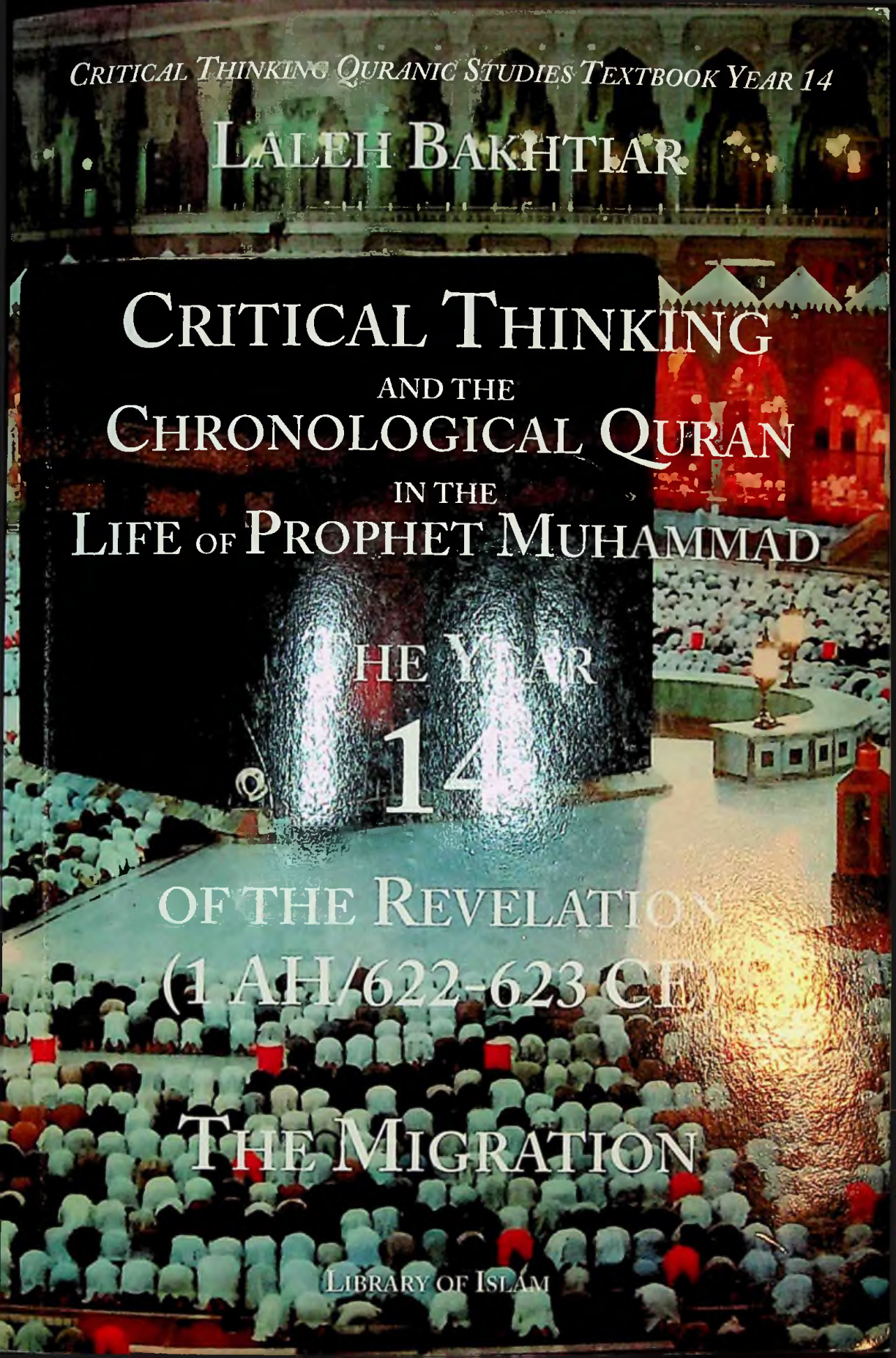
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THE YEAR
14
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(1 AH/622-623 CE)
THE MIGRATION
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The Year 14

of the Revelation (1 AH/622-623 CE)

The Migration

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

Laleh Bakhtiar, 2017

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 14, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 1 AH/ca. July 16, 622 CE-July 4, 623 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

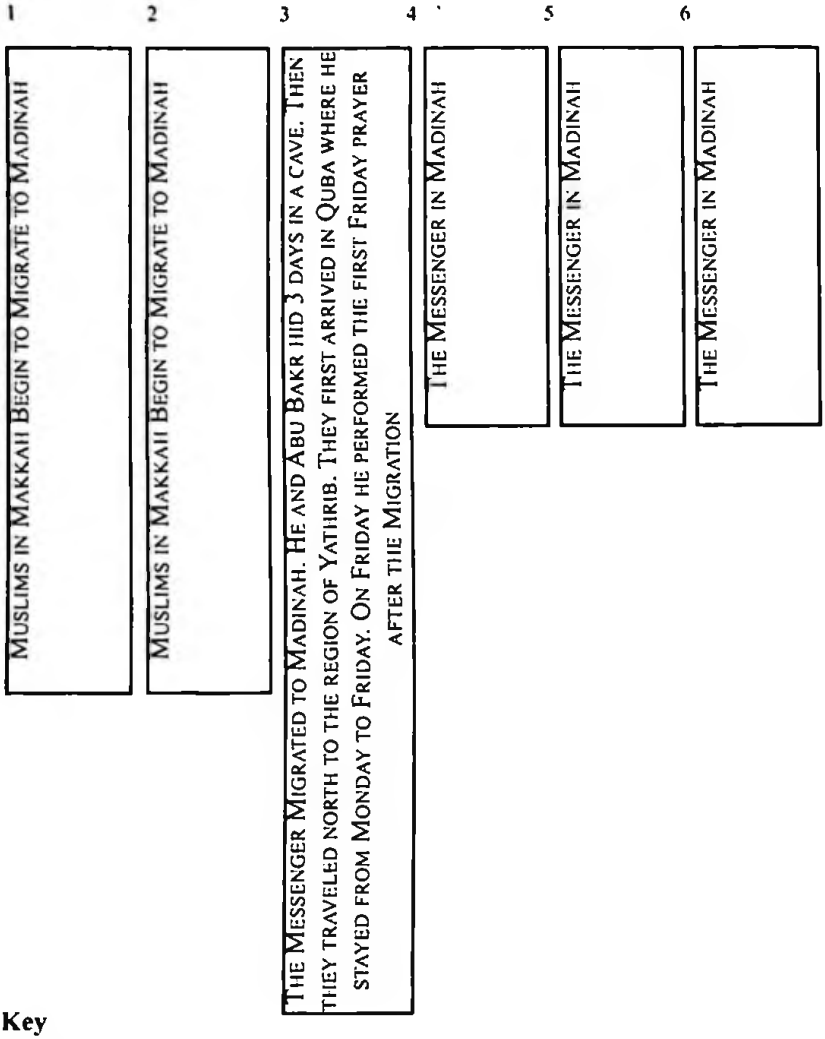
My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 14*

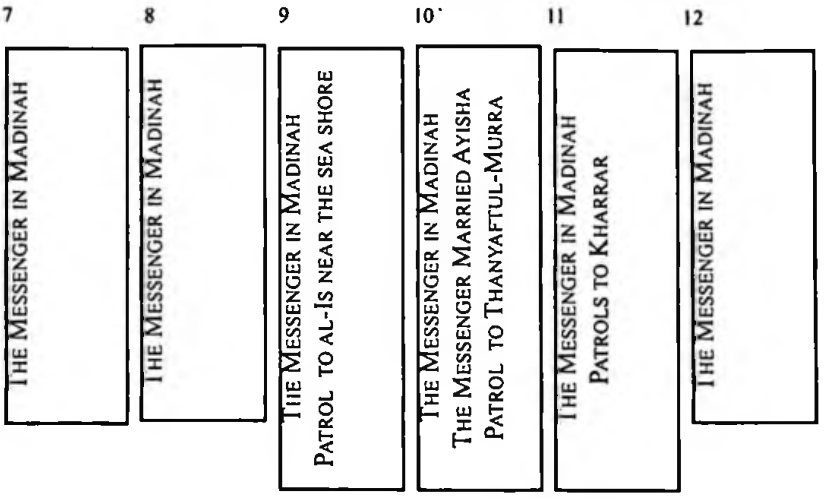


Key

1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Preview *Book Year 14*



Key
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 14* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. All of the Lessons in *Book Year 14* explore the revelation of Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) which is the 87th Chapter revealed beginning with an Introduction below to the first chapter revealed in Madinah.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

PRELUDE

MUSLIMS BEGIN TO MIGRATE TO MADINAH

The Prophet remained in Makkah the rest of Dhu al-Hajja 1 BH/ 621 CE, and Muharram and Safar H/621 CE. While some Muslims had already migrated to Madinah after the First Pledge of Aqaba, the majority were still in Makkah. After the Second Pledge of Aqaba, the Prophet told the Muslims to begin migrating to Madinah in small groups.

That is, two or three weeks after the Pledge of the Aqaba, the beginning of Muharram, the migration of the believers from Makkah to Madinah began. Madinah lies some 180 miles north of Makkah, and the journey is accomplished by the pilgrim caravans in eleven days, or if pressed for time, in ten.[1]

Within two months nearly all the followers of the Prophet, except the few detained in confinement or unable to escape from bondage, had migrated with their families to their new abode. They numbered between one and two hundred people.[2]

They were welcomed with cordial and even eager hospitality by their Muslim brothers at Madinah, who competed with one another for the honor of receiving them into their homes, and supplying their domestic needs.

> The first of the Quraysh to migrate to Madinah from among the Messenger's Companions was one of the Makhzum clan, Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad ibn Hilal ibn Abd Allah ibn Umar ibn Makhzum whose forename was Abd Allah. He went to Madinah a year before the pledge at al-Aqaba, having come to the Messenger in Makkah from Abyssinia. He migrated because the Quraysh ill-treated him and he had heard that some of the Helpers had accepted the Quranic message.
>
> My father, Ishaq ibn Yasar, on the authority of Salama, who had it from his grandmother, Umm Salama, the Prophet's wife, told me that she said: When Abu Salama had decided to set out for Madinah, he saddled his camel for me and mounted me on it together with my son, Salama, who was in my arms. Then he set out leading the camel. When men from the al-Mughayrah clan got up and said to Abu Salama: So far as you are concerned, you can do what you like, but what about your wife and child? Do you suppose that we shall let you take them away?
>
> So they snatched the camel's rope from his hand and took me from him. Abu Salama's family, the Abd al-Asad clan, were angry at this and said: We will not leave our son with her seeing you have torn her from our tribesman.
>
> So they pulled at my little boy, Salama between them until they dislocated his arm, and the al-Asad took him away, while the al-

Mughayrah kept me with them. My husband, Abu Salama, went to Madinah. Thus I was separated from my husband and my son.

I used to go out every morning and sit in the valley weeping continuously until a year or so had passed when one of my cousins of al-Mughayrah passed and saw my plight and took pity on me. He said to his tribesmen: Why don't you let this poor woman go? You have separated husband, wife, and child.

So they said to me: You can join your husband if you like.

Then the Abd al-Asad restored my son to me. So I saddled my camel and took my son and carried him in my arms. Then I set forth for my husband in Madinah. Not a soul was with me. I thought that I could get food from anyone I met on the road until I reached my husband.

When I was in Tanimi, I met Uthman ibn Talha ibn Abu Talha, brother of the Abd al-Dar clan, who asked me where I was going and if I was all alone.

I told him that except for God and my little boy I was alone.

He said that I ought not to be left helpless like that and he took hold of the camel's halter and went along with me. Never have I met an Arab more noble than he. When we halted he would make the camel kneel for me and then withdraw. When we reached a stopping-place, he would lead my camel away, unload it, and tie it to a tree. Then he would go away from me and lie down under a tree.

When evening came, he would bring the camel and saddle it, then go behind me and tell me to ride. When I was firmly established in the saddle, he would come and take the halter and lead it until he brought me to a halt. This he did all the way to Madinah.

When he saw a village of Amr Auf clan in Quba he said: Your husband is in this village, so enter it with the blessing of God.

Then he went off on his way back to Makkah.

She used to say: By God, I do not know a family in the Quranic message which suffered what the family of Abu Salama did. Nor have I ever seen a nobler man than Uthman ibn Talha.[3]

Abu Bakr Making Preparations to Migrate to Madinah

Abu Bakr had been making preparations for the journey. In anticipation of the emergency, he had already purchased for 800 pieces two swift camels, which were now tied up and highly fed in the yard of his house. A guide, accustomed to the devious tracks and byways of the Madinah route, was hired, and the camels were committed to his custody.[1]

At last the Messenger and Abu Bakr with their families, including Ali, now a youth of about twenty years of age, were the only believers left (excepting those unwillingly detained) at Makkah. Abu Bakr was ambitious of

being the companion of the Messenger in his flight and daily urged him to depart. But the Messenger told him that his time was not yet come: the Lord had not as yet given him the command to emigrate. Perhaps he was deferring his departure until he could receive assurance from Madinah that the arrangements for his reception were secure, and that his adherents there were not only ready, but able in the face of any opposition, to execute their engagement for his defense.[2]

THE UNGRATEFUL QURAYSH MEET TO KILL THE PROPHET

What was the decision as to their future course of action, what the object even of the present deputation, it is impossible to conclude. There is little reason to believe that it was assassination, although we are told that such was determined upon at the instigation of Abu Jahl, supported by Satan, who, in the person of an old man from Najd shrouded in a mantle, joined the council.

The following is the narrative the Quraysh, irritated at the warm reception of the converts at Madinah, held a council. Satan, in the shape of an old man shrouded in a cloak, stood at the door saying that he was a Shaykh from Najd, who had heard of their weighty consultation, and had come if haply he might help them to a right decision; so they invited him to enter. One proposed to imprison, another to expel, Muhammad. The old man from Najd warmly opposed both suggestions.

Then said Abu Jahl: Let us choose one courageous man from every family of the Quraysh, and place in the hands of each a sharp sword, then let the whole slay him with the stroke of one man so his blood will be divided amongst all our families, and the relatives of the Messenger will not know how to avenge it. The old man of Najd applauded the scheme, saying: May God reward this man this is the right advice and none other.

So they separated, having agreed upon it. Gabriel forthwith apprised the Messenger of the design, who arose and made Ali lie down upon his bed.

The murderous party came at dusk, and lay in wait about the house. the Messenger went forth, and casting a handful of dust at them, recited: *Ya Sin. By the Wise Quran, truly, you are among the ones who are sent on a straight path, sent down successively by The Almighty, The Compassionate that you warn a folk whose fathers were not warned, so they were ones who were heedless. Certainly, the saying was realized against most of them for they believe not. We laid yokes on their necks up to the chins, so that they are ones who are stiff-necked. And We laid in advance of them an embankment and behind them an embankment. Then, We covered them so they perceive not.*

Thus he departed without their knowing what passed and they continued to watch, some say until morning, thinking that the figure on the bed was Muhammad. As light dawned, they found out their mistake and saw that it was Ali. Others say they watched until some one passed and told them that the Messenger had left, when they arose in confusion and shook from their

heads the dust which the Messenger had cast upon them.[3]

On the first night of Rabi I 622 CE, in the 13th year of the revelation, the Quraysh surrounded the Messengers house. Their plan is that when he falls asleep, they will attack him and kill him.

And it was revealed to the Messenger sometime in Makkah:

*And mention when those who were ungrateful plan against **you** to bring **you** to a standstill or to kill **you** or to drive **you** out. And they plan and God plans, but God is Best of the ones who plan. And when Our signs are recounted to them, they said: We heard this. If we will, we would say the like of this. Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones. And when they said: O God! Truly, if this had been The Truth from **You**, rain down rocks on us from heaven or bring us a painful punishment. But God had not been punishing them with **you** among them. Nor had God been One Who Punishes them while they ask for forgiveness. And what is with them that God should not punish them while they bar worshipers from the Masjid al-Haram and they had not been its protectors? Truly, its protectors are but ones who are God-conscious except most of them know not. Their formal prayer at the House had been nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. So experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful. Truly, those who were ungrateful spend their wealth so that they bar the way of God. They will spend it. Again, it will become a regret for them. Again, they will be vanquished. And those who were ungrateful will be assembled in hell.* (8:30-8:36)

Gabriel came to the Messenger and said: Do not sleep tonight on the bed on which you usually sleep. Having been forewarned, the Messenger told Ali ibn Abu Talib to sleep in his bed and cover himself with the Messengers cloak so that the enemies would not recognize who was there.

Then the time came when the darkness of the night covered everything and Ali ibn Abu Talib was sleeping on the Prophet's bed calmly and peacefully, the ungrateful Quraysh besieged the house and prepared their swords and spears to attack. As soon as the order came, they broke through the house rushing with naked swords. But when they found Ali ibn Abu Talib laying on the bed of the Prophet, they immediately moved out of the house desperate and astonished, and sent a few horsemen to search the Prophet.

The Quraysh Paralyzed by the Sudden Movement

The Quraysh were paralyzed by a movement so carefully planned, and

put into such speedy execution. They looked on in amazement, as families silently disappeared, and house after house was abandoned. One or two quarters of the city were entirely deserted, and the doors of the dwelling-houses left locked.[4]

There was here a determination and self-sacrifice on which the ungrateful Quraysh had hardly calculated. But even if they had foreseen and resolved to oppose the emigration, it would have been difficult to prevent it. The number of independent clans and powerful families stood in the way of combined action. Here and there a slave or helpless dependent might be intimidated or held back, but in no other case was there the right to interfere with private choice or family counsel and the least show of violence might have roused a host of champions to avenge the insulted honor of their tribe.

PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

Asma prepared food for the journey, and in the dusk brought it in a package to the cave. In the hurry of the moment, she had forgotten the thong for fastening it. So, tearing her girdle in two, with one strip she closed it and with the other bound it to the camel's saddle. From this incident Asma is honorably known in Islam as "she of the girdle". Abu Bakr, not forgetful of his money, had safely secreted among his other property a purse of between five and six thousand pieces.

THE MESSENGER AND ABU BAKR LEAVE FOR MADINAH

The camels were now ready. the Messenger mounted the swifter of the two, Qaswa, thenceforward his favorite, with the guide. Abu Bakr having taken his servant, Ibn Fuhayra, behind him on the other, they started.

THE MESSENGER AND ABU BAKR ESCAPE TO THE CAVE THAUR

Pursuing their way south and clambering in the dark up the bare and rugged ascent, they reached at last the lofty peak of mount Thaur, distant about an hour and a half from the city, and took refuge in a cave near its summit.[5]

THE CAVE

Al-Waqidi says that after the Messenger and Abu Bakr entered, a spider came and wove her web over the mouth of the cave. The Quraysh hotly searched after the Messenger in all directions, until they came up to the entrance. When they looked, they said: Spiders' webs are over it and so they turned back.

Again: God commanded a tree and a spider to cover the Prophet, and two wild pigeons to perch at the entrance of the cave. When a company of two men from each clan of the Quraysh, armed with swords, pursuing the Prophet, were now close to him, the foremost saw the pigeons, and returned to his companions, saying that he was sure from this that nobody was in the cave. The

Prophet, hearing his words, blessed the pigeons, and made them sacred ever after in the sacred area, where it is sacrilege to harm them.

FOOD AND INTELLIGENCE CONVEYED TO THEM

Amir ibn Fuqhayra, while in company with other shepherds of Makkah tending his master Abu Bakr's flock, stole away unobserved every evening with a few goats to the cave and furnished its inmates with a plentiful supply of milk. Abd Allah, Abu Bakr's son, in the same manner at night brought them food cooked by his sister, Asma. It was his business also to watch by day the progress of events and opinion at Makkah, and to report the result at night.

SEARCH AFTER THE MESSENGER

The city was in a ferment when the disappearance of the Messenger was first told. The chief men of the Quraysh went to his house and finding Ali there, asked where his cousin was. I have no knowledge of him, replied Ali, am I his keeper? You bade him go, and he has gone.

Then they went to Abu Bakr's house and questioned his daughter Asma. Asma relates that, after the Messenger had gone, a company of Quraysh, with Abu Jahl, came to her house. As they stood at the door, she went forth to them. Where is thy father? said they. Truly I know not where he is, she replied. Upon which Abu Jahl, who was a bad and impudent man, slapped her on the face with such force that one of her ear-rings dropped.[6]

Failing to elicit from her any information, they sent scouts in all directions, with the view of gaining a clue to the track and destination of the Prophet, if not with less innocent instructions. But the precautions of the Messenger and Abu Bakr rendered it a fruitless search. One by one the emissaries returned with no trace of the fugitives; and at last it was believed that, having gained a fair start, they had outstripped pursue it. The people soon reconciled themselves to the idea. They even breathed more freely now that their troubler was gone. The city again was still.

THE MESSENGER AND ABU BAKR DECIDE TO LEAVE THE CAVE

On the third night, the report of Abd Allah satisfied the refugees that search had ceased, and busy curiosity relaxed. The opportunity was come. They could slip away unobserved now, and the sooner the better. Longer delay might excite suspicion, and the visits of Abd Allah and Ibn Fuyhayra attract attention to the cave. The roads were clear. They might leave at once fearless of pursuit, and travel without apprehension of arrow or dagger from the wayside enemy. Abd Allah, therefore, received commission to have all things ready for the following evening. The guide was instructed to wander about with the two camels near the summit of mount Thaur.

Descending mount Thaur, and leaving the lower quarter of Makkah a little to the right, they struck off by a track considerably to the left of the common

road and, hurrying westward, soon gained the vicinity of the seashore nearly opposite Usfan.

By daybreak they reached a Bedouin encampment, where an Arab widow sat at her tent-door with food spread out for any chance traveler that might pass that way. Fatigued and thirsty, for it was now the hottest season of the year, they refreshed themselves with the food and milk offered by the lady. During the heat of the day, they rested at Qudayd. In the evening, being now as they deemed at a safe enough distance, they fell into the common road. But they had not gone far when they met one of the mounted scouts returning from his search. Suraa (for that was his name), seeing that he had small chance single-handed of success against his four opponents, offered no opposition. but on the contrary pledged his word that, if permitted to depart in peace, he would not reveal that he had met them. The party proceeded. the Messenger was safe.[7]

TIDINGS REACH MAKKAH OF THEIR FLIGHT

The first tidings that reached Makkah of the course actually taken by the Messenger were brought, two or three days after his flight, by a traveler from the Bedouin camp at which he had rested. It was now certain, from his passing there, that he was bound for Madinah.

ALI LEAVES FOR MADINAH

Ali remained three days at Makkah after the departure of Muhammad, appearing every day in public for the purpose of restoring the property placed by various persons in the Prophet's trust. He met with no opposition or annoyance, and then leisurely took his departure for Madinah. The families of the Messenger and of Abu Bakr were equally unmolested. Zaynab continued for a time to dwell at Makkah with her unconverted husband. Ruqiyya had already gone with Uthman to Madinah. The Messenger's other two daughters, Umm Kulthum and Fatima, with his wife Sawda, were for some weeks left behind at Makkah. Umm Kulthum had been married to one of the sons of Abu Lahab, but was now living in her father's house. Ayisha, his betrothed, yet a child, with the rest of Abu Bakr's family and several other women, likewise, remained in Makkah for a time.

The Messenger and Abu Bakr trusted their respective clans to protect their families from insult. But no insult or annoyance was offered by the Quraysh, nor was any attempt made to detain them. Thus ends the first great stage of the Prophet's life. The next scene opens at Madinah.

THE EFFECT PRODUCED ON CONVERTS BY THE MESSENGER

Thirteen years before the Hijra, Makkah lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had those thirteen years now produced! A band of several hundred persons had rejected idolatry, adopted the worship of One God, and sur-

rendered themselves implicitly to the guidance of what they believed a revelation from Him praying to the Almighty with frequency and fervor, looking for pardon through His mercy, and striving to follow after good works, almsgiving, purity, and justice. They now lived under a constant sense of the omnipotent power of God, and of His providential care over the minutest of their concerns. In all the gifts of nature, in every relation of life, at each turn of their affairs, individual or public, they saw His hand. And, above all, the new existence in which they exulted was regarded as the mark of His special grace while the unbelief of their blinded fellow-citizens was the hardening stamp of reprobation. The Messenger was the minister of life to them, the source under God of their new-born hopes and to him they yielded an implicit submission.

In so short a period Makkah had, from this wonderful movement, been torn into two factions which, unmindful of the old land marks of tribe and family, arrayed themselves in deadly opposition one against the other. The believers bore persecution with a patient and tolerant spirit. And though it was their wisdom so to do, the credit of a magnanimous forbearance may be freely accorded.

One hundred men and women, rather than abjure their precious faith, had abandoned home and sought refuge, till the storm should be overpast, in Abyssinian exile. And now again a still larger number, with the Messenger himself, were emigrating from their fondly loved city with its sacred Kabah, to them the holiest spot on earth, and fleeing to Madinah. There, the same marvelous charm had within two or three years been preparing for them a brotherhood ready to defend the Messenger and his followers with their blood. Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Madinah, but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life.

THE TRAVEL TO QUBA

They had by this time joined the common road to Syria which runs near the snore of the Red Sea. On the morning of the third day, a small caravan was observed in the distance. The apprehensions of the fugitives were soon allayed, for Abu Bakr recognized at the head of the caravan his cousin, Talha, who was returning from a mercantile trip to Syria. Warm was the greeting, and loud the congratulations. Talha opened his stores, and, producing two changes of fine white Syrian raiment, bestowed them on his kinsman and the Prophet. The present was welcome to the soiled and weary travelers; yet more welcome was the assurance that Talha had left the Muslims at Madinah in eager expectation of their Prophet. So the Messenger and Abu Bakr proceeded on their journey with lighter hearts and quickened pace; while the merchant continued his way to Makkah. There Talha disposed of his venture; and, so

little were the Makkans even now disposed to molest the believers, that after quietly adjusting his affairs, he set out unopposed some little time afterwards for Madinah, with the families of the Messenger and Abu Bakr.[8]

After proceeding some way farther on the caravan Madinah route, the Messenger and his companions struck off to the right, by a way called the road of Madlaj.[9] The valleys which they crossed, the defiles they ascended, the spots on which the Messenger performed his devotions, have all been preserved in tradition by the pious zeal of his followers.

At Arj, within two days journey of Madinah, one of the camels, worn out by the rapid traveling, became unable to proceed. A chief of the Aslam tribe residing there supplied a fresh camel in its stead, and also furnished a guide.

At length, on the morning of Monday, eight days after leaving Makkah, the little party reached al-Aqiq, a valley which traverses the mountains four or five miles to the southwest of Madinah.[10]

The heat was intense; for the summer sun, now approaching the meridian, beat fiercely on the bare ridges and stony defiles, the desolation of which was hardly relieved by an occasional clump of the wild acacia.[11]

Climbing the opposite ascent, they reached the crest of the mountain. Here a scene opened on them which contrasted strangely with the frowning peaks and the dark naked rocks, in the midst of which for hours they had been toiling. It was Madinah, surrounded by verdant gardens and groves of the graceful palm. What thoughts crowded on the mind of the Messenger and his faithful friend as they gazed on the prospect below them!

Widespread is the view from the heights on which they stood, and well fitted to stir the heart of any traveler. The vast plain of Najd stretches away towards the south as far as the eye can reach, while on the eastern horizon it is bounded by a low line of dark hills. To the north the prospect is arrested, at the distance of three or four miles, by the granite masses of Uhud, a spur of the great central chain. A well-defined watercourse, flowing from the south-east under the nearest side of the city, is lost among the north-eastern hills, the cliffs of which touch the city on this quarter.

To the right, Jabal Ayr, a ridge nearly corresponding in distance and height with Uhud, projects into the plain and bounds it on the south-west. Closely pressing on the southern suburb, and in bright contrast to the wild rocks and rugged peaks around and behind our travelers, are the orchards of palm-trees for which Madinah has in all ages been famous.

One sheet of gardens extends uninterruptedly to Quba, a suburb to the south, the loveliest and most verdant spot in all the plains.[12] Around the city in every direction, date-trees and green fields meet the eye, interspersed here and there with the substantial houses and fortified hamlets of the Jewish tribes, and the suburban residences of the Aws and Khazraj.

The tender reminiscence of childhood, when he visited this place in company with his mother, was perhaps the first thought to cross the mind of the

Prophet. But more pressing considerations were at hand. How would he be received? Were his adherents powerful enough to secure for him a unanimous welcome? Or would either of the contending factions, which had often stained with blood that peaceful plain, be roused against him? Before putting the friendship of the city to actual test, it would be prudent to retire to one of the suburbs, and Quba lay invitingly before them.

The Messenger said to the guide: Lead us to the Bani Amr ibn Awf at Quba, and do not go directly Madinah.[13] So leaving the Madinah path to the left, they descended into the plain and made for Quba.

For several days the city had been in expectation of its illustrious visitor. Tidings had been received for the coming of the Prophet's disappearance from Makkah; but no one knew of his three days withdrawal to the cave. He ought before now to have arrived, even supposing delay in consequence of a devious route.

Every morning a large company of the converts of Madinah, and the refugees from Makkah, had for some days gone forth a mile or two on the Makkan road, and posted themselves on the first rocky ridge to the west of the city. There they watched till the fierce rays of the ascending sun drove them from the unsheltered spot to their homes.

On this day they had gone out as usual, and, after a fruitless watch, had retired to the city, when a Jew, catching a glimpse of the three travelers winding their way to Quba, shouted from the top of his house: Ho! Ya Qayla tribes! (Qayla means the Aws and Khazraj. Qayla was the mother of the two patriarchs of those branches.) He has come! He whom you have been looking for has come at last!

Every one now hurried forth to Quba. A shout of joy arose from the Amr ibn Aws[14] when they found that the Messenger had come amongst them. The wearied travelers, amidst the greeting of old friends and the smiles of strange faces, alighted and sat down under the shadow of a tree.[15]

The journey had been accomplished in eight days. The ordinary time is eleven.[16] The joyful news was speedily spread over the city. The children in the streets cried out in delight: Here is the Prophet! He is come! He is come!

The converts from all quarters flocked to see him. He received them courteously, and said: O People! show your joy by giving to your neighbors the salutation of peace: send portions to the poor: bind closely the ties of relationship: offer up formal prayer whilst others sleep. Thus shall you enter Paradise in peace.[17]

It was shortly arranged that the Messenger should for the present lodge at Quba with Kulthum, an hospitable chief, who had already received many of the emigrants on their first arrival in Madinah, A great part of every day was also spent in the house of Saad, the son of Khaythama, one of the Awsite leaders. There the Messenger received such persons as wished to see him, and conferred with his friends on the state of feeling in Madinah.[18]

Abu Bakr was entertained by another Awsite chief, Kharija ibn Zayd, in the adjoining suburb, al-Sunh. He showed his gratitude by marrying the daughter of Kharija, and permanently took up his residence with the family.[19]

A day or two after the Prophet's arrival, Ali, who, as we have seen, remained only three days at Makkah subsequently to the disappearance of Muhammad, and must therefore have set out shortly after him, reached Madinah, and was accommodated by Kulthum in the same house with the Prophet.

THE FIRST FRIDAY PRAYER

It was soon determined in the council of the Messenger that he might with safety enter Madinah. The welcome he had received was warm, and to all appearance unanimous and sincere. The elements of disaffection might be slumbering among the yet unconverted citizens, Jews, and idolaters; but they were unnoticed amid the universal expression of joy and the first impulse of generous hospitality. The Messenger, therefore, stopped only four days at Quba, from Monday to Friday.[20]

During this period, he laid the foundations of a mosque at Quba, which at a later period was honored in the Quran with the name of: The Mosque of God-consciousness of God: *Is one who founds his structure on the God'consciousness o f God and His contentment better than he who founds his structure on the brink of a crumbling, tottering bank of a river so that it tumbled with him into the fire of hell? And God guides not the fold, the ones who are unjust!* (9:109)

The Messenger enlarged it after the *qibla* was changed and advanced its foundations and walls. He himself with his followers aided in carrying the materials. He used to visit it every Saturday and attached to the saying of prayers therein the merit of the lesser pilgrimage (*umra*).[21]

On the morning of Friday, the Messenger mounted his favorite camel, al-Qaswa, taking Abu Bakr behind him[22] and, surrounded by a crowd of followers, proceeded towards Yathrib (Madinah). He halted at a place of formal prayer in the valley of the Salim, a Khazraj clan; and there performed his first Friday service with about a hundred Muslims.[23]

On this occasion, he added a sermon and eulogy on the new faith:

> Praise be to God. I praise Him and call on Him for help, forgiveness and guidance. I believe in Him, do not deny Him and am an enemy of whoever denies Him. I bear witness that there is no god but God alone, without partner, and that the Messenger is His servant and his Messenger, whom he has sent with guidance, light and exhortation, after an interval in the appearance of Messengers at a time when knowledge is scarce, men are led astray, time is cut short, the Last Hour is at hand and the End is close.
>
> Whoever obeys God and His Prophet has been rightly guided;

whoever disobeys them has erred, been remiss and gone far astray. I recommend to you God-consciousness for the best thing which a Muslim can enjoin upon a Muslim is that he should exhort him to seek the Other World and command him to fear God.

Beware of what God has warned you against concerning Himself. There is no better advice than this and no better admonition. God-consciousness, for whoever acts according to it conscious of his Lord, is a trusty aid to what you desire of the Other World. He who sets aright what is between him and his Lord in secret and in public, seeking nothing thereby but the face of God, will be remembered in this world and will have a treasure in that which is after death. Then a person will have need of that good that he has done previously; and as for that which is otherwise, he will wish that there was a great distance between him and it. God warns you to beware of Himself, but God is merciful to His servants and to those who believe His word and fulfill their promises.

God says: *The saying near Me is not to be substituted and I am not unjust to the servants.* Be conscious of God, then in this world and the next, in secret and in public. He who is God-conscious will have his evil deeds forgiven and his reward magnified; he will achieve a great success. The God-consciousness will ward off God's hatred and retribution and wrath. It will make people blameless in the sight of God, will please the Lord and will raise their degree.

Seize hold of your portion and do not be remiss with regard to God. God has caused you to know His Book and has opened His path before you in order that He may know those who speak the truth and those who lie. Act well, then, as God has acted well with you. Be enemies of his enemies, and strive on God's behalf in the way to which He is entitled. He has chosen you and named you Muslims.

There is no power but with God. Remember God frequently and act for the sake of that which is after today, for he who sets aright that which is between him and God will have that which is between him and other people taken care of by God. That is because God pronounces judgment upon people whereas they do not pronounce judgment upon Him and because God rules people whereas they do not rule Him. God is the Greater. There is no might but with God the Greater.[24]

Friday was thereafter set apart for the weekly celebration of public worship. When the service was finished, the Messenger resumed his advance towards Madinah. He had sent a message to the Najjar, his relatives, through Salma, the mother of Abd al-Muttalib, to escort him into the city. But there was no need of special invitation. The tribes and families of Madinah came

streaming forth, and vied one with another in showing honor to their visitor.

ARRIVAL IN YATHRIB (MADINAH)

It was a triumphal procession. Around the camels of the Messenger and his immediate followers, rode the chief men of the city, clad in their best raiment and in glittering armor. The cavalcade pursued its way through the gardens and palm groves of the southern suburbs; and as it now threaded the streets of the city, the heart of the Messenger was gladdened by the incessant call from one and another of the citizens who flocked around: Stay here, O Prophet! We have abundance with us; and we have the means of defense, and weapons, and room. Abide with us.

So urgent was the appeal that sometimes they seized hold of al-Qaswa's halter. The Prophet answered them all courteously and kindly. He said: The decision rests with the camel; make way, therefore, for her; let her go free.

It was a stroke of policy. His residence would be hallowed in the eyes of the people as selected supernaturally; while any heart-burnings of the jealous tribes, which otherwise might arise from the quarter of one being preferred before the quarter of another, would thus receive a decisive check.[25]

Onwards moved al-Qaswa, with slackened rein and, leaving the larger portion of the city to the left, entered the eastern quarter, inhabited by the Najjar. There, finding a large and open courtyard, with a few date-trees, she halted and sat down. The Prophet, having left the rein quite loose, al-Qaswa got up again, and went a little way forward, when she perceived her error, returned straightway to the self same spot, knelt down, and placing her head and neck on the ground, refused to stir.[26]

The house of Abu Ayub was close at hand. The Prophet and Abu Bakr, alighting, inquired who was the owner of it. Abu Ayub stepped forward and invited them to enter. The Prophet became his guest, and occupied the lower story of his house for seven months, until the middle of Shawwal when the mosque and his own apartments were ready. Abu Ayub offered to give up the higher story of his house in which his family lived; but the Messenger preferred the lower, as being more accessible for his visitors.[27]

When the Messenger had alighted, Abu Ayub lost no time in carrying into his house the saddle and other property of the travelers; while Asad ibn Zurara, a neighbor, seized al-Qaswa's halter and conducted her to his courtyard where he kept her for the Prophet. Dishes of choice food, bread and meat, butter and milk, presently arrived from various houses; and this hospitality was kept up daily so long as the Messenger resided with Abu Ayub.[28]

The first concern of the Messenger was to secure the plot of land in which al-Qaswa halted. It was a neglected spot: on one side was a scanty grove of date-trees; the other, covered here and there with thorny shrubs, had been used partly as a burial ground and partly as a yard for tying camels up. It belonged to two orphan boys under the guardianship of Asad, who had constructed a

place of worship there before the arrival of Muhammad, and had already held service within its roofless walls. The Prophet called the two lads before him, and desired to purchase this piece of ground from them that he might build a mosque upon it.

They replied: Nay, but we will make a free gift of it to you.

The Prophet would not accept the donation.

So the price was fixed at ten dinars, which Abu Bakr, at the command of the Prophet, paid over to the orphans.[29]

Arrangements for the construction of a great mosque, with two houses adjoining—one for his wife, Sawda, the other for his intended bride, Ayisha were forthwith set on foot. The date-trees and thorny bushes were cut down. The graves were dug up and the bones elsewhere deposited. The uneven ground was carefully leveled and the rubbish cleared away. A spring, oozing out in the vicinity, rendered the site damp; it was blocked up, and at length disappeared. Bricks were prepared, and materials collected.[30]

THE MESSENGER'S FAMILY ARRIVES IN MADINAH

Having taken up his residence in Abu Ayub's house, the Messenger turned his attention to his family. He despatched his freedman, Zayd, with a slave named Abu Rafi[31] on two camels, with a purse of 500 dirham, to fetch them from Makkah. They met there with no difficulty or opposition, and returned with Sawda, the Prophet's wife, and his two daughters, Umm Kulthum and Fatima, the former of whom had been married into the family of Abu Lahab, but, being separated, had for some time been living in her father's house. Zaynab, the eldest daughter, remained at Makkah with her husband, Abu 'l-Aas. Ruqayya, the second, had already emigrated to Madinah with her husband, Uthman. Zayd brought with him his own wife, Umm Ayman (Baraka) and their son Usama. Usama was probably 8 or 10 years old.

Accompanying the party were Ayisha and her mother, Umm Ruman, with other members of the family of Abu Bakr. They were conducted by Abu Bakr's son Abd Allah and (as we have seen above) by Talha. Talha (at what period I do not know) married Umm Kulthum, daughter of Abu Bakr, with whom he always seems to have been on terms of close intimacy.[32]

MARRIAGE TO AYISHA

The family of Abu Bakr, including Ayesha, was accommodated in a neighboring house, that of Harith ibn Numan. The marriage of Ayisha, however, took place in her father's new home at al-Sunh. Sawda probably lived with the Messenger in the house of Abu Ayub. We know little about her, save that, having emigrated with her former husband to Abyssinia, she was more than ordinarily devoted to the cause of Islam. From the time of their marriage shortly after the death of Khadija, she continued to be for three or four years the only wife of Muhammad.

EMIGRANTS TAKEN WITH SICKNESS

The climate of Madinah contrasts strongly with that of Makkah. In summer, the days are intensely hot; a climate of more endurable and less sultry heat, however, than at Makkah; but the nights are cool and often chilly. The cold in winter (from October to April) and stormy weather is severe; ice is, for the latitude, severe, especially after rain, which falls heavily in occasional but not long-continued showers.

Even in summer, these are not infrequent. Heavy rain always deluges the adjacent country. The drainage in some quarters is sluggish, and after a storm the water forms a widespread lake in the open space between the city and the southern suburb. The humid exhalations from this and other stagnant pools, and perhaps the luxuriant[33] vegetation in the neighborhood, render the stranger susceptible to attacks of intermittent fever, which is often followed by swelling and tumors in the legs and stomach, and sometimes proves fatal.

The cold in winter, and stormy weather, is very severe; ice and snow are known in the adjoining hills; which is not unnatural, if the city be 6,000 feet above the sea: but this estimation is perhaps exaggerated. The height, however, must be great, as the rise of the mountains is rapid and continuous on the western side, and the descent insignificant on the eastern, from the crest to the city.[34]

The city is much exposed to storms. Chilly and violent winds from the eastern deserts are much dreaded; and though Uhud screens the town on the north and northeast, a gap in the mountains to the northwest fills the air at times with rain and comfortless blasts. The rains begin in October and last with considerable intervals through the winter; the clouds, gathered by the hill tops and the trees near the town, discharge themselves with violence; and at the equinoxes, thunderstorms are common. At such times, the Barr al-Munakhah, or the open space between the town and the suburbs, is a sheet of water, and the land about the south and southeast wall of the suburb, a lake.

Accustomed to the dry air and parched soil of Makkah, the refugees were severely tried by the dampness of the Madinah summer, and the rigor of its winter. The Prophet himself escaped, but the most of his followers were prostrated by fever. Abu Bakr and his whole household suffered greatly. Some time after, Ayisha related to the Messenger how they all wandered in their speech from the intensity of the fever, and how they longed to return to their Makkan home; on which the Prophet, looking upwards, prayed: O Lord! make Madinah dear unto us, even as Makkah, or even dearer. Bless its produce, and banish far from it the pestilence![35]

To raise the spirits of his followers thus depressed by sickness, to draw them into closer union with the Madinah converts, and counteract their pining after home, the Messenger established a new fraternity between the Emigrants and the Helpers.

THE COVENANT OF BROTHERHOOD BETWEEN THE EMIGRANTS AND THE HELPERS

The Messenger then initiates something else: the covenant of brotherhood. Through this means, the Messenger unites 300 Emigrants and Helpers who, along with their families, are to form the leadership core of the Community (*ummah*).

The Helpers consist of the two tribes of the Aws and Khazraj who have had a long standing enmity. Now, however, the members of these two tribes, who had invited the Messenger of God to their city, gather around him as a moth does to a candle.

In addition to the enmity among the Helpers, stemming from old grievances, differences of opinion now arise between the Helpers and Emigrants, as well. Each group has developed in a different environment with different customs and beliefs, each believing itself to be superior to the other. The Emigrants would say: The Messenger is from our family, while the laurels of the Helpers rested on the fact that they gave refuge and powerful support and help to the Messenger at a time of need.

In order to end these arguments, the Messenger was commanded by God to strengthen the unity of the *ummah*, by having each one become the brother of the other. Each Helper was to give half of his property and income to his brother Emigrant. In this way, the Messenger confirmed and emphasized political and spiritual unity among Muslims and transformed a long-lived enmity into friendship. All Muslims became part of the same framework.[36]

The Messenger instituted brotherhood between his fellow emigrants and the helpers saying: Let each of you take a brother in God. He himself took Ali by the hand and said: This is my brother.

So God's Messenger, the lord of the sent ones and leader of the God-fearing, Messenger of the Lord of the worlds, the peerless and unequalled, and Ali ibn Abu Talib became brothers.

Hamza, the lion of God and the lion of his Messenger and his uncle, became the brother of Zayd ibn Haritha, the Messenger's freedman. To him Hamza gave his last testament on the day of Uhud when battle was imminent in case he should meet his death.

Jafar ibn Abu Talib—the one of the wings who was to fly in Paradise—and Muadh ibn Jabal, brother of ibn Salama, became brothers.

The pairs were arranged thus:

Abu Bakr and Kharija ibn Zuhayr brother of ibn al-Harith ibn al-Khazraj.

Umar and Itban ibn Malik brother of ibn Salim ibn al-Khazraj.

Abu Ubayda, Amir ibn Abd Allah and Saad ibn Muadh ibn al-Numan.

Abd al-Rahman ibn Auf and Sad ibn al-Rabi brother of ibn al-Harith.

al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam and Salama ibn Salama ibn Waqsh, brother of ibn Abdul Ashhal though others say that he linked up with Abd Allah ibn Masud, the ally of the ibn Zuhra.

Uthman ibn Affan and Aus ibn Thabit ibn al-Mundhir, brother of ibn al-Najjar.

Talha ibn Ubayd Allah and Kab ibn Malik, brother of the ibn Salama.

Sad ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl and Ubayy ibn Kab, brother of the ibn al-Najjar.

Musab ibn Umayr and Abu Ayyub Khalid ibn Zayd, brother of the ibn al-Najjar.

Abu Hudhayfa ibn Utba and Abbad ibn Bishr ibn Waqsh, brother of the ibn Abdul Ashhal.

Ammar ibn Yasir, ally of the ibn Makhzum and Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman, brother of ibn Abd al-Abs, ally of the ibn Abd al-Ashhal. Others say that Thabit ibn Qays ibn al-Shammas brother of the ibn al-Harith ibn al-Khazraj the prophets orator and Ammar ibn Yasir.

Abu Dharr, Burayr ibn Junada al-Ghifari and al-Mundhir ibn Amr called: he who hastened to his death, brother of ibn Saida of al-Khazraj.

Hatib ibn Abu Baltaa, ally of ibn Asad ibn Abdul Uzza and Uwaym ibn Saida, brother of ibn Amr ibn Auf.

Salman the Persian and Abu al-Darda Uwaymir ibn Thalaba brother of ibn al-Harith. Some say Uwaymir was the son of Amir or of Zayd.

Bilal freedman of Abu Bakr and the Messengers muezzin and Abu Ruwayha.

Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Khathami, more precisely one of the Faza.

These are the men who were named to us as those to whom the Messenger made his companions brothers.[37]

Accordingly each of the refugees selected one of the citizens as his brother. The bond was of the closest description, and involved not only a peculiar devotion to each other's interests in the persons thus associated, but in case of death it superseded the claims of blood, the "brother" becoming exclusive heir to all the property of the deceased. From forty-five to fifty refugees were thus united to as many citizens of Madinah.

This peculiar custom lasted for about a year and a half, when the Messenger finding it, after the victory of Badr, to be no longer necessary for the encouragement of his followers, abolished the bond, and suffered inheritance to take its usual course.

The mosque, and the adjoining houses, were finished within seven months from the Prophet's arrival. About the middle of winter, he left the house of Abu Ayyub, and installed Sawda in her new residence. Shortly afterwards, he celebrated his nuptials with Ayisha, who, though she had been three years affianced, was but a girl of ten or twelve years. He consummated the marriage in her father's house at al-Sunh and then brought her to the apartments adjoining those of Sawda.

FOUNDATIONS LAID FOR THE FIRST MOSQUE IN MADINAH

The Messenger ordered that a mosque should be built, and he had stayed with Abu Ayyub until the mosque and his houses were completed. The Messenger joined in the work to encourage the Muslims to work and the Emigrants and the Helpers labored hard. One of the Muslims rhymed:

If we sat down while the prophet worked
It could be said that we had shirked.
As they built, the Muslims sang a *rajaz* verse:
There;s no life but the life of the next world.
O God, have mercy on the Helpers and the Emigrants.

The Messenger used to sing it in the form:

There's no life but the life of the next world.
O God, have mercy on the Emigrants and Helpers.

Ammar ibn Yasir came in when they had overloaded him with bricks, saying: They are killing me. They load me with burdens they can't carry themselves.

Ali composed a *rajaz* verse on that day:

There's one that labors night and day
To build us mosques of brick and clay
And one who turns from dust away!

And Ammar learned it and began to chant it..

Sufyan ibn Uyayna mentioned on the authority of Zakariya from al-Shabi that the first man to build a mosque was Ammar ibn Yasir.

The Messenger lived in Abu Ayyub's house until his mosque and dwelling-houses were built. Abu Ayyub said: We used to prepare his evening meal and send it to him. When he returned what was left, Umm Ayyub and I used to touch the spot where his hand had rested and eat from that in the hope of gaining a blessing.

The emigrants followed one another to join the Messenger, and none was left in Makkah but those who had apostatized or been detained. Whole families with their property did not come together except the ibn Mazan from ibn Jumah; the ibn Jahsh ibn Riab, allies of ibn Umayya; and the ibn Bukayr from ibn Sad ibn Layth, allies of ibn Adiyy ibn Kab. Their houses in Makkah were locked up when they migrated, leaving no inhabitant.

When the ibn Jahsh gave up their house, Abu Sufyan went and sold it to Amr ibn Alqama, brother of ibn Amir ibn Luayy. When the owners heard of this, Abd Allah ibn Jahsh told the Messenger of it, and he replied: Are you not pleased that God will give you a better house in Paradise?

And when he answered: Yes, he said: Then you have it.

When the Messenger got possession of Makkah, Abu Ahmad spoke to him about their house; and the Messenger delayed his reply. People said to him: The Messenger dislikes your reopening the question of your property which you lost in God's service, so don't speak to him about it again.

Abu Ahmad said in reference to Abu Sufyan: Tell Abu Sufyan of a matter he will live to regret. You sold your cousins; house to pay a debt you owed. Your ally by God the Lord of men swears an oath: Take it, Take it, may [your treachery] cling to you like the ring of the dove.

The Messenger stayed in Madinah from the month of Rabi I to Safar of the following year until his mosque and his quarters were built. This tribe of the Helpers all accepted Islam and every house of the Helpers accepted Islam except Khatma, Waqif, Wail, and Umayya who were the Aus Allah, a clan of Aus who clung to their idolatry.

The Messenger praised and glorified God as was His due and then said: O men, send forward (good works) for yourselves. You know, by God, that one of you may be smitten and will leave his flock without a shepherd. Then his Lord will say to him—there will be no interpreter or chamberlain to veil him from Him. Did not My Messenger come to you with a message, and did not I give you wealth and show you favor? What have you sent forward for yourself? Then will he look to right and left and see nothing; he will look in front of him and see nothing but hell. He who can shield his face from the fire even with a little piece of date let him do so; and he who cannot find that then with a good word; for the good deed will be rewarded tenfold yea to twice seven hundred -fold. Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessing.

Then the Messenger preached on another occasion as follows:

> Praise belongs to God whom I praise and whose aid I implore. We take refuge in God from our own sins and from the evil of our acts. He whom God guides none can lead astray; and whom He leads astray none can guide. I testify that there is no God but He alone, He is without companion. The finest speech is the Book of God. He to whom God has made it seem glorious and made him enter Islam after unbelief, who has chosen it above all other speech of men, does prosper. It is the finest speech and the most penetrating. Love what God loves. Love God with all your hearts, and weary not of the word of God and its mention. Harden not your hearts from it. Out of everything that God creates He chooses and selects; the actions He chooses He calls *khira*; the people He chooses He calls *mustafa*; and the speech He chooses He calls *salih*. From everything that is brought to man there is the lawful and the unlawful. Worship God and associate naught with Him; be conscious of Him as He ought to be remembered; Carry out loyally towards God what you say with your

mouths. Love one another in the spirit of God. Verily God is angry when His covenant is broken. Peace be upon you.

The site of the mosque is probably the same as that now occupied by the great mosque of Madinah. It was built four square, each side being one hundred cubits, or somewhat less, in length. The foundations, to three cubits above the ground, were built of stone; the rest of the wall was of brick. The roof was supported by trunks of palm-trees, and covered over with branches and rafters of the same material. The *qibla* was due north.

At the time of formal prayer, the Messenger stood near the northern wall, looking towards Jerusalem; his back was thus turned upon the congregation, who stood in rows behind him, facing in the same direction. When he preached he turned round towards them. To the south, opposite the *qibla*, was a gate for general entrance.[38]

Another opened on the west, called the Atika or Rahmah, the Gate of Mercy, a name it still retains. A third gate, on the eastern side, was reserved for the use of Muhammad. South of this gate, and forming part of the eastern wall of the mosque, were the apartments destined for the Prophet's wives. The house of Ayisha was at the extreme southeast corner, the road into the mosque passing behind it. That of Sawda was next; and beyond it were the apartments of Ruqayya and her husband, Uthman, and of the two other daughters of the Prophet.[39]

From these he had private entrances into the Mosque, used only by himself. The eastern gate probably still bears in its name—Bab al-Nisa or the Women's Gate. To the north the ground was open. On that side a place was appropriated for the poorer followers of the Messenger who had no home of their own. They slept in the mosque, and had a sheltered porch outside. The Prophet used to send them portions from his table; and others followed his example. But in a few years victory and plunder caused poverty and distress to disappear, and the People of the Porch lived only in memory. To be near the Prophet, his chief Companions by degrees erected houses for themselves in the vicinity of the mosque; some of these adjoined upon its court, and had doors opening directly on it.

It is to the north of the Mosque, as thus existing in the time of the Prophet, that subsequent additions were mainly made. The Prophet was asked why he did not build a permanent roof to his house of prayer. He said: The thatch is as the thatching of Moses, rafters and small pieces of wood; the human's estate is more fleeting even than this. But though rude in material, and comparatively insignificant in extent, the mosque of the Messenger is glorious in the history of Islam.[40]

Here the Messenger and his Companions spent the greater portion of their

time. Here the daily service, with its oft-recurring prayers, was first publicly established. Here the great congregation assembled every week, and trembled often while they listened to the sermons of the Messenger and the messages from heaven. Here he planned his victories. From this spot he sent forth envoys to kings and emperors with the summons to embrace Islam. Here he received the embassies of contrite and believing tribes; and from hence issued commands which carried consternation among the rebellious to the very ends of the Peninsula.

ABU UMAMA

During the months in which the mosque was being built Abu Umama Asad ibn Zurara died. He was seized with diphtheria and a rattling in the throat. When Abu Umama died, the ibn al-Najjar came to the Messenger, for Abu Umama was their leader, saying that he held the high rank the Messenger knew of and would he appoint someone from among them to act in his place, to which the Messenger replied: You are my maternal uncles, and we belong together so I will be your leader. The Messenger did not want to prefer any one of them to the others. Henceforth the ibn al-Najjar regarded themselves as highly honored in having the Messenger as their leader.

THE CALL TO THE FORMAL PRAYER

When the Messenger was firmly settled in Madinah and his brothers, the Emigrants were gathered to him and the affairs of the Helpers were arranged, Islam became firmly established. Prayer was instituted, the purifying alms tax and fasting were prescribed, legal punishments fixed, the forbidden and the permitted prescribed, and Islam took up its abode with them. It was this clan of the helpers who have taken up their abode (in the city of the Prophet) and in the faith. When the Messenger first came, the people gathered to him for formal prayer at the appointed times without being summoned. At first the Messenger thought of using a trumpet like that of the Jews who used it to summon to formal prayer. Afterwards he disliked the idea and ordered a clapper to be made, so it was duly fashioned to be beaten when the Muslims should pray.

Meanwhile Abd Allah ibn Zayd ibn Thalaba ibn Abd al-Rabbihi, brother of ibn al-Harith, heard a voice in a dream, and came to the Messenger saying: A phantom visited me in the night. There passed by me a man wearing two green garments carrying a clapper in his hand, and I asked him to sell it to me. When he asked me what I wanted it for I told him that it was to summon people to prayer, whereupon he offered to show me a better way: it was to say thrice: God is Greater. I bear witness that there is no god but God. I bear witness that the Messenger is the Messenger of God. Come to prayer. Come to prayer. Come to divine service. Come to divine service. God is Greater. God is Greater. There is no god but God.

When the Messenger was told of this he said that it was a true vision if God so willed it, and that he should go with Bilal and communicate it to him so that he might call to formal prayer thus, for he had a more penetrating voice.

A woman of ibn al-Najjar said: My house was the highest of those round the mosque and Bilal used to give the call from the top of it at dawn every day. He used to come before daybreak and would sit on the housetop waiting for the dawn. When he saw it he would stretch his arms and say: O God, I praise **You** and ask **Your** help for Quraysh that they may accept **Your** religion. I never knew him to omit these words for a single night.

FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY (UMMAH)

The political, social, and economic base of the Community is then formed by the Messenger by means of two revolutionary acts:The Covenant of Brotherhood and the Madinah Constitution.

THE MADINAH CONSTITUTION

After building the mosque and its surrounding rooms, the Constitution of Madinah is drawn up. It is to become the world's first written Constitution. Because of its importance, the full text appears here.

The document has been preserved by Ibn Hisham. It is an agreement to form a republic for mutual support between the clan of Emigrants, those who had migrated from Makkah, and the Helpers[41] those who live in Madinah, together with eight smaller clans who all accept the Messenger as their leader.

The republic is an Islamic polity for two reasons. First of all, blood ties are no longer considered as the criterion. Secondly, it is an Islamic polity because of its tolerance of other monotheistic faiths, namely, the Jewish and Christian "People of the Book."

On the religious side, the Emigrants and Helpers accept the Messenger as the Messenger of God, their supreme leader and guide in all matters, spiritual and temporal. The Jewish tribes, however, accept him only as political leader. Three large groups of Jewish clans of Madinah did not participate in this pledge, the Qaynuqa, the Nadir, and the Qurayzah tribes while the Jews of the Khazraj and the Aws tribes, and the idolaters signed. Later the Messenger is to sign separate agreements with the other clans.

THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY (*UMMAH*)

Prior to the migration of the Messenger from Makkah to Madinah, covenants existed among the individual tribes, but nothing to compare to this political, economic, and social move of the Messenger. With a sudden move, the Messenger changes, for the first time, a tribal society into a society based on the same faith and the same slogan: Say: God is One and be saved.

This act, which is so easily completed, consists of a change which in the view of sociology would have taken several centuries to accomplish. But the

Messenger accomplishes this act and calls this society *ummah* or Community.

The Community does not refer to a group of individuals who ban together. This can be called a society or a nation, but not an *ummah*. To come to know the *ummah* is to come to know the goal and purpose of Islam, that is, to come to know that which Islam wants the monotheist human being to develop into, a Community of people whose common bond is their belief in the One God, in the resurrection, and in justice and equality for all in humble submission to God. Guided by the Quran, the Messenger is able to develop the basis for the perfect Community.

Prophets before him had said to the people: Oh human beings, if you accept our religion and act according to this book and these rules, your society will be like such and such..., but none of them are able to achieve it themselves.

Yet, in a far distant village known as Yathrib, the Messenger of Islam initiates a society, the first building of which he helps to build with his own hands. Little by little he lays the spiritual, moral, and material foundations for his society. In a period of ten years with more than sixty-five *jihad*s or military campaigns and armed conflicts, this society exemplifies and defends the laws sent by God through His Messenger. The Prophet thus brings not only a divinely-revealed Book, but the living example of that Book, as put into practice in a model Community, as well.[42]

The word *ummah* comes from *umm* which both means way and going upon a way, leadership and seeking participation in a general movement. It means to go. *Ummah* is a society based on movement. An *ummah* consists of human beings who are unified in where they are going. Thus the meaning of movement in one direction, towards one orientation, and upon a common way is the basic infrastructure for building an *ummah* in Islam. *Ummah* consists of a society in which class, race, and anti-human systems are changed into a system based upon human unity. The common aspect of these individuals consists of one common direction, participation in a common movement and continuous rebirth of human individuals. This is the mission of the individual members of the Community..

Look at the ten years in Madinah. The Messenger and his Companions do not remain silent one day. The gates to Madinah are open. There is always movement. The philosophy of this society is not consumption nor collecting the spoils of war and then sitting around and celebrating for four days nor extravagant living. Life is struggle (*jihad*) and continuous movement. This is the philosophy of the Community. It is a group of people of all races, all classes, both genders, held together by the belief that God is One, that the Quran is His revelation, revealed to the Messenger, that the Messenger is the leader and model to be followed, and that Gods promise is ever true and there will be a Day of Judgment.

STATE OF PARTIES AT MADINAH

The enthusiasm displayed by the inhabitants of Parties of Madinah, on their first reception of the Prophet, by degrees found time to subside. The several parties began to settle down into their normal state, and to assume the relations which they were thenceforward permanently to hold. It will be of service to glance for a moment at each of these parties.

The followers of the Messenger who had forsaken their homes and preceded or accompanied him in exile were called by the afterwards illustrious title of Emigrants. They are a devoted band, forward to acknowledge the Prophet. Upon them he could depend to the uttermost.

Emigrants refer to those converts also who from time to time joined the Messenger at Madinah, coming either from Makkah or from any other quarter, up to the taking of Makkah in 8 CE. The number of the Emigrants was then closed. It was only while Makkah was under an idolatrous government that there was any merit in emigrating from it. Next come the converts of Madinah. Bound to the Messenger by fewer ties of blood and antecedent fellowship, they did not yield to the Emigrants in loyalty to him, or in enthusiasm for Islam. They had made less outward sacrifice; but their pledge at Aqaba had involved them in serious risks, as well from their own countrymen, should they disclaim the engagement, as from the Makkans.

In short, they had compromised themselves almost as deeply as the Emigrants. Plighted only to defend the Messenger in case of attack, they soon practically identified themselves with the Emigrants in all offensive measures against his enemies. Hence they were styled Helpers. But as, in process of time, the Messenger/Prophet found many other auxiliaries amongst the Arab tribes. To prevent confusion, they are spoken of as the men of Madinah.

The ancient feuds of the Aws and Khazraj were professedly forgotten amongst the converts at Madinah. The very acceptance of the faith required that they should acknowledge not only the spiritual but also the temporal authority of the Messenger, and regard themselves all as brethren. Having surrendered themselves wholly to his will and government, there was little room left for internal rivalries. Still, the memory of their long standing jealousy and strife was not always suppressed by the lessons of religion; and believer was often arrayed against believer in unseemly, and sometimes dangerous, contention.

We have no precise data for calculating the proportion of the inhabitants thus actively ranged on the side of the Messenger. The seventy-five adherents who pledged themselves at Aqaba were but the representatives of a larger body left behind at Madinah; and the cause of Islam had since then been daily gaining ground. We may conclude that the professed converts at this time numbered several hundreds.

The Aws and Khazraj were either neutral or, at least outwardly, passive in their unbelief. There was no active opposition, nor, as at Makkah, any open

denial of the Messenger. There was, furthermore, no direct antagonism to his temporal authority over his own adherents. The peculiar constitution of Arab society, which admitted the residence of several detached bodies at the same place, each under its separate independent chief, enabled the Messenger freely to exercise an absolute and sovereign control over his own people, without, for the time, extending his claims to any further jurisdiction.

But, though there was no apparent hostility, and the whole of the citizens, unbelievers as well as converts, held themselves bound to fulfil the pledge of protection to the exile, yet a strong undercurrent of jealousy and discontent was rapidly setting in against him. We have before seen that Abd Allah ibn Ubay, the chief man of the Khazrajites, and the most powerful citizen in all Madinah, was aspiring to the regal dignity, when his hopes were blighted by the arrival of the Messenger. Around Abd Allah rallied the numerous party which was sceptical of the Prophet's claims, and unfriendly to the extension of his rule; but these were unable to stem the tide of the stranger's popularity. The circle of his adherents steadily expanded, and soon embraced nominally the whole city. Idolatry disappeared, and scepticism over-matched, was forced to hide its head.[43]

HYPOCRITES BEGIN TO SHOW THEMSELVES

One day the Messenger saddled his ass, and went forth to inquire after Saad ibn Obayda, who was sick. By the way he passed Abd Allah, sitting with a circle of his followers under the shade of his house. Muhammad's courtly manners would not permit him to pass without speaking; so he alighted, and saluted him, and sat a little while beside him, reciting some portion of the Quran, inviting him to God. Abd Allah listened quietly till he had ended: then he said: Nothing could be better than this discourse of yours if it were true. Now, therefore, do you sit at home in your own house, and whosoever comes to you preach thus to him, and he that comes not to you refrain from troubling him, or intruding into his circle with that which he dislikes.

The Messenger went his way, downcast at that which Abd Allah, the enemy of God, had said unto him; which Saad perceiving, inquired the cause. the Messenger recited what Abd Allah had said. Then Saad replied: Treat him gently, for I swear that when God sent you to us, we had already strung pearls to crown him, and he sees that you have snatched the kingdom out of his grasp.[44]

Real belief in the Messenger was not, however, of such rapid growth. Doubts and jealousies possessed the hearts of many, and in private, at a convenient distance from the Messenger, found free expression. They complained that they had foolishly espoused a cause which would make them run the gauntlet of all Arabia; and for what return? Only to lose their liberties, and to bring themselves under bondage to a foreign usurper. The class which cherished these sentiments were styled the Hypocrites.[45]

The Jewish tribes located in the vicinity of Madinah were on an entirely different footing. The Messenger had not only acknowledged the divine authority of their religion, but rested his own claims, in an important degree, upon the evidence of their Scriptures, and the testimony of their learned men. No object was nearer his heart than a combination with them. His feasts, his fasts, his ceremonies, were, up to this time, framed in close correspondence with Jewish custom. Jerusalem itself was his *qibla*. Towards that holy spot, the Prophet, and all his followers, turned five times a day while they prostrated themselves in formal prayer. There was no sacrifice that the Messenger was not prepared to make, short of the abandonment of his claim to the prophetic office, in order to gain the Jews over to his cause.

It was natural that the Messenger, holding these sentiments, should desire to enter into close union combination with the Jews. This he did in a formal manner shortly after reaching Madinah; for he associated them in a treaty of mutual obligation, drawn up in writing, between the Emigrants and the people of Madinah, in which he confirmed the Jews in the practice of their religion, and in the secure possession of their property. The main provisions of this Contract, as given to us by Ibn Ishaq, are the following:

THE CONSTITUTION OF MADINAH

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful.

(1) This is a document from Muhammad the Messenger (governing the relations) between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and labored with them.

(2) They are one community (*umma*) to the exclusion of all people.

(3) The Quraysh emigrants according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit within their number and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers.

(4-8) The Auf Clan according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit they paid in the era of idolatry; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers. The Saida, al-Harith, Jusham, and al-Najjar Clans likewise.

(9-11) The Amr b. Auf, al-Nabit and the al-Aus Clans likewise.

(12)(a) Believers shall not leave anyone destitute among them by not paying his redemption money or bloodwit in kindness.

(12)(b) A believer shall not take as an ally the freedman of another Muslim against him.

(13) The God-conscious believers shall be against the rebellious or him who seeks to spread injustice, or sin or animosity, or corruption between believers; the hand of every man shall be against him

even if he be a son of one of them.

(14) A believer shall not slay a believer for the sake of an unbeliever, nor shall he aid an unbeliever against a believer.

(15) God's protection is one, the least of them may give protection to a stranger on their behalf. Believers are friends one to the other to the exclusion of outsiders.

(16) To the Jew who follows us belong help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided.

(17) The peace of the believers is indivisible. No separate peace shall be made when believers are fighting in the way of God. Conditions must be fair and equitable to all.

(18) In every foray a rider must take another behind him.

(19) The believers must avenge the blood of one another shed in the way of God.

(20)(a) The God-conscious believers enjoy the best and most upright guidance.

(20)(b) No idolater shall take the property of person of Quraysh under his protection nor shall he intervene against a believer.

(21) Whoever is convicted of killing a believer without good reason shall be subject to retaliation unless the next of kin is satisfied (with blood-money), and the believers shall be against him as one man, and they are bound to take action against him.

(22) It shall not be lawful to a believer who holds by what is in this document and believes in God and the last day to help an evildoer or to shelter him. The curse of God and His anger on the day of resurrection will be upon him if he does, and neither repentance nor ransom will be received from him.

(23) Whenever you differ about a matter it must be referred to God and to Muhammad.

(24) The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers.

(25) The Jews of the Auf Clan are one community with the believers (the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs), their freedmen and their persons except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they hurt but themselves and their families.

(26-35) The same applies to the Jews of the al-Najjar, al-Harith, Saiida, Jusham, al-Aus, Thalaba, and the Jafna, a clan of the Thalaba and the al-Shutayba Clans. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. The freedmen of Thalaba are as themselves. The close friends of the Jews are as themselves.

(36) None of them shall go out to war save the permission of Muhammad, but he shall not be prevented from taking revenge for a wound. He who slays a man without warning slays himself and his

household, unless it be one who has wronged him, for God will accept that.

(37) The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery. A man is not liable for his ally's misdeeds. The wronged must be helped.

(38) The Jews must pay with the believers so long as war lasts.

(39) Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document.

(40) A stranger under protection shall be as his host doing no harm and committing no crime.

(41) A woman shall only be given protection with the consent of her family.

(42) If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise it must be referred to God and to Muhammad, the Messenger of God. God accepts what is nearest to piety and goodness in this document.

(43) The ungrateful Quraysh and their helpers shall not be given protection.

(44) The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib.

(45)(a) If they are called to make peace and maintain it they must do so; and if they make a similar demand on the Muslims it must be carried out except in the case of a holy war.

(45)(b) Every one shall have his portion from the side to which he belongs.

(46) The Jews of al-Aus, their freedmen and themselves have the same standing with the people of this document in purely loyalty from the people of this document. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. He who acquires ought acquires it for himself. God approves of this document.

(47) This deed will not protect the unjust and the sinner. The man who goes forth to fight and the man who stays at home in the city is safe unless he has been unjust and sinned. God is the protector of the good and God-conscious man and the Messenger is the Messenger of God.[46]

Actions of a Sovereign State

The Quraysh in Makkah are busy confiscating the property of the Muslims who had migrated to Madinah. In addition, there is no Muslim in Makkah who is free to express an opinion nor practice his faith. If the idolaters get hold of a Muslim, they torture him to the point of seriously wounding him. The Muslim has no choice but to leave Makkah, to leave behind his family,

means of livelihood, and property. This is the reason why a group has to migrate to Abyssinia and then, after the Agreement of Aqaba, to Madinah.

The lifeline of the Quraysh is their caravans. The goods taken to and brought back from Yemen and Syria form the economic base of their society. If their trade routes are to be closed by the Muslims and the people who have formed an agreement with the Muslims, their system would fall apart. Threats by the Muslims to the commercial caravans of the idolaters, causes them to reconsider harming or torturing Muslims in Makkah or plundering property owned by Muslims.

The sending out of groups of Muslims to threaten the caravans is a military manoeuver to create fear in the hardened hearts of the enemy who had for thirteen years prevented Muslims from expressing themselves and practicing their religious beliefs. These manoeuvers prevent the torture of the Muslims in Makkah and the confiscation of their property, finally culminating in the free traffic of Muslims to and from Makkah as well as freeing the propagation of Islam to some extent.

The first six months of the Prophet's residence at Madinah were undisturbed either by alarms from without, or by hostile counsels at home. No vindictive measures were planned by the citizens of Makkah. He who had for more than ten years kept the city in continual excitement, broken up their old political parties, and introduced a new faction of his own, was now gone forth with all his adherents, and his absence afforded immediate relief. The current of events, long diverted and troubled by his designs, now returned, to flow peaceably, for a while, in its ancient channel.

The people of Madinah were pledged only to defend the Messenger from attack, not to join him in any aggressive steps against the Quraysh idolaters. He must take time to gain their affections, and to secure their hearty co-operation in offensive measures against his enemies. His followers from Makkah were too few to measure arms with the Quraysh idolaters. They were also, like himself, at present occupied in providing dwelling-places for their families.

In fulfilling this domestic obligation, in establishing friendly relations with the citizens of Madinah and the Jewish tribes, in organizing civil and religious institutions for his followers, now fast assuming the position of an independent society, and in riveting the hold of his government upon their minds.

The purpose of the Messenger for sending out groups to intimate the Quraysh or participating himself in a group that threatens the Quraysh caravan by their very presence is so that the Quraysh become aware of the importance of the situation which is that their trade routes, whether from Makkah to Yemen through Taif or from Makkah to Syria, will be under surveillance by the Islamic forces. Whenever the Muslim forces want, they can prevent the free flow of their trade or confiscate all of their goods. With the Messengers

policy of preventing the development of the negative, the Quraysh will think twice before harming Muslims in Makkah or confiscating Makkan property of Muslims who migrated to Madinah.

THE MESSENGER IS GIVEN PERMISSION TO FIGHT

The Messenger had not been given permission to fight before the Second Pledge of Aqaba. He had simply been ordered to call men to God and to endure insult and forgive the ignorant. The Quraysh had persecuted his followers, seducing some from their religion, and exiling others from their country. They had to choose whether to give up their religion, be maltreated at home, or to flee the country, some to Abyssinia, others to Madinah.

PERMISSION TO FIGHT°

Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. And, truly, Powerful is God to help them, (22:39) *those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.*(22:40) *Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth, they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms and they commanded to that which is honorable and they prohibited that which is unlawful. And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.*(22:41)

Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged (22:39), because they are the ones at the receiving end of wrongful aggression. They are reassured that God will grant them His support and protection: *And, truly, Powerful is God to help them.* (22:39)

Furthermore, they have all the justification for going to war. They have been chosen to undertake a great humanitarian task, the benefits of which will not be theirs alone. Indeed these benefits will accrue to all believers. Their fight will ensure that people shall enjoy the freedom of belief and worship. Besides, they are the ones who have been wronged, the ones driven out of their homes without valid justification: *Those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God!* (22:40)

It is the most truthful word any person can say, and the word everyone should say. Yet, it is because of their saying this that they have been driven out of their homes. Therefore, why such injustice does not carry any semblance of right action. The Quranic statement

makes it clear that these victims of aggression have no personal objective to fight for; instead, they fight only for their faith. They seek no worldly gain. Personal and national interests that give rise to conflicts, alliances and wars are of no appeal to them. Beyond that, we have the general rule that makes it clear that faith needs to be defended: *If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* (22:40)

We note here that the (22:40) mentions monasteries where priests devote all their time to worship, as well as places of public worship for Christians, Jews and Muslims. They are all vulnerable and can be destroyed, despite their sanctity and dedication for worship. Evil will not respect the fact that these places are made for extolling God's name. They are protected only through people's efforts, with the advocates of faith standing up to repel falsehood's aggression. Indeed, falsehood and evil will not stop their aggression unless they realize that the truth has enough power to counter their own. Truth may he valued by people, but such value is not enough to provide it with protection against aggression in this world. It requires the appropriate means of self defense.

SIGNS IN CHAPTER 2 REVEALED

And fight in the Way of God those who fight you, but exceed not the limits. Truly, God loves not the ones who exceed the limits. (2:190) *And kill them wherever you came upon them, and drive them out from wherever they drove you out. And persecution is more grave than killing. And fight them not near the Masjid al-Haram unless they fight you in it. But if they fought you, then kill them. Thus, this is the recompense for the ones who are ungrateful.* (2:191) *Then, if they refrained themselves, then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (2:192) *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) *committed in the Sacred Month, in the Sacred Month and so reciprocation for all sacred things. So whoever exceeded the limits against you, exceed you the limits against him likewise as he exceeded the limits against you? Be God-conscious of God and know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* (2:194)

VIOLATION OF SANCTITIES

The other restriction is that no fighting was allowed within the

vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, which God, in response to the Prophet Abraham's prayers, had declared a safe haven and an inviolable house of peace. However, those who desecrate the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque and commit aggression against Muslims there must be fought and should not be spared. Their vile actions and their persecution of Muslims, committed as they are within the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque, can only be rewarded with severe punishment. (2:192)

To earn God's forgiveness and mercy, they should not simply desist from waging war against the Muslims and trying to force them to abandon their faith. They would be required to renounce their denial of God and their rejection of His Message. The most they can expect in return for refraining from attacking the Muslims and persecuting them would be a truce, but that would not be sufficient to merit God's forgiveness and mercy. The ungrateful are, therefore, invited and encouraged to believe so that they may enjoy God's mercy and forgiveness.

The aim of war in the Quranic message is to let people be free to uphold the Quranic message and practice it, and never find themselves, by virtue of either direct force or the type of social, political or economic system they live under, compelled to renounce it. The growth and spread of the Quranic message must not be hampered or restricted, and the Muslim community must be allowed the means to defend itself and deter its enemies from taking advantage of it. No one who wishes to adopt Islam should feel threatened. If such threats are made, the Muslim community is collectively obliged to do all it can to eliminate that threat and secure the success of the Quranic message. (2:193)

These statements were revealed to deal with a specific situation in Arabia, when the pagan Arabs were persecuting an incipient Muslim community and stifling the spread of the Quranic message. Nevertheless, they remain valid, and jihad is incumbent on Muslims until the end of time. Whenever a tyrant or an oppressive power emerges and prevents people from upholding the Quranic message or seeks to prevent them from knowing about it, the Muslim community must rise against it and secure for all the right of freedom to know the truth, listen to it, and have the choice to accept it freely.

It is clear how severely these signs condemn oppression and persecution. It is considered a more repugnant evil than murder. This emphasis makes it clear that the Quranic message views this matter most gravely. It establishes another crucial universal principle, heralding a rebirth of humanity, according to which a human being's value is determined by his faith. Human life is always outweighed

by his religious beliefs.

This principle also identifies the true enemies of humanity in this world. They are those who persecute believers and inflict suffering on a Muslim for no reason other than his being a Muslim. They are those who stand between humanity and God's truth and guidance. It is these that Muslims are obliged to fight and destroy: (2:193)

Having ruled on fighting during the sacred months, the Chapter now gives the ruling on fighting in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. (2:194) Those who violate the sacred months cannot expect guarantees of peace and immunity from attack during it. God had declared the Sacred Mosque a safe haven and a place of peace, and designated the sacred months a time of truce and security.

During these months no blood shall be shed, all sacred places and property shall be immune, and the safety of every living thing is guaranteed. Those who are bent on infringing this peace must not escape unpunished. The Muslims are instructed to retaliate in a measured way and within the limits dictated by the type and extent of the initial aggression. (2:194)

There should be no excessive retribution. Muslims are here left to their own conscience and their consciousness of God. They realize that their own victory depends on God's help and support, and are therefore reminded that God is on the side of those who fear Him — — a supremely effective safeguard.

The passage goes as far as describing the reluctance to contribute financially as folly leading to self-destruction. It says: (2:195) Miserliness and greed are indeed a form of self-destruction for the individual as well as for society as a whole. They result in deprivation and weakness of the whole community, especially one whose affairs are dependant on voluntary, self-motivated contributions.

The Quran goes on to recommend even a higher state of excellence: (2:195) The Arabic term used here is *ihsan*, whose connotations from the Quranic message are difficult to convey in translation. It is the highest level of altruism and self-denial. The Prophet Muhammad defines it as: Worshipping God as if you see Him with your own eyes; for, though you cannot see Him, He certainly sees you. Once this stage of piety is reached, one will become a consummate devotee, utterly obedient to God in everything; and all one's resources, energies and life will be entirely dedicated to God Almighty.

This closing comment is a befitting end for a passage dealing with fighting and giving for God's cause. It urges believers to aspire to the level of *ihsan*, the highest grade of religious excellence.

Fighting was prescribed for you although it is disliked by you. And perhaps you dislike a thing and it is good for you. And perhaps you love a thing, and it is worse for you. And God knows and, truly, you know not. (2:216)

To take up arms in support of a cause blessed by God is a demanding duty, but is nevertheless necessary because it serves the good of Muslim individuals and communities as well as that of humanity as a whole. It also underpins what is good and right.

HAMZA'S PATROL TO THE SEA-SHORE IN RAMADAN

In the first Ramadan in Madinah, the Messenger sends his brave officer, Hamza, with thirty cavalry men, who are all from among the Emigrants, to the shores of the Red Sea, which is the trade route along which the Quraysh caravans pass. They carry a white flag. They encounter a Quraysh caravan which is guarded with three hundred men in a place called Ais but any conflict is avoided because of the intermediary, Majdi ibn Amr, who is friends with both groups. The Muslims then return to Madinah.

History: While he was staying there he sent Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib to the sea-, shore in the neighborhood of Al-Is (T. in the territory of Juhayna) with thirty riders from the Emigrants; none of the Helpers took part. He met Abu Jahl with three hundred riders from Mecca on the shore, and Majdl bin Amr al-Juhani intervened between them, for he was at peace with both parties. So the people separated one from another without fighting.

Some people say that Hamzas flag was the first which the Messenger gave to any Muslim because he sent him and Ubayda at the same time, and thus people became confused on the point. They alleged that Hamza had composed poetry in which he says that his flag was the first which the Messenger entrusted to anyone. Now if Hamza actually said that, it is true if God wills. He would not have said it if it were not true, but God knows what happened. We have heard from learned people that Ubayda was the first man to receive a flag.

UBAYDAH IBN AL-HARITH'S EXPEDITION IN SHAWWAL

About a month later, Shawwal, H/ 622 CE, a party double the strength of the first, was sent under command of Ubayda, son of Harith, (he was a cousin of Muhammad, Harith having been the prophet's uncle) in pursuit of another caravan protected by Abu Sufyan with two hundred men. They encounter a Quraysh caravan under the leadership of Ikramah which is heavily guarded. They keep at a distance from one another so no conflict takes place. The only

consequence of it is that two Muslims who had been among the Quraysh caravan join Ubaydahs group.

> **History**: During that stay in Medina the Messenger sent Ubayda ibn al-Harith ibn al-Muttalib with sixty or eighty riders from the emigrants, there not being a single one of the Helpers among them. He went as far as water in the Hijaz below Thaniyatul Murra, where he encountered a large number of Quraysh idolaters. No fighting took place except that Sad ibn Abu Waqqas shot an arrow on that day. It was the first arrow to be shot in Islam. Then the two companies separated, the Muslims having a rearguard. Al-Miqdad ibn Amr al-Bahrani, an ally of the Zuhra, and Utba ibn Ghazwan ibn Jabir al-Mazini, an ally of the Naufal ibn Abdu Manaf, fled from the polytheists and joined the Muslims to whom they really belonged. They had gone out with the unbelievers in order to be able to link up with the Muslims. Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl was in command of the Meccans.

THE EXPEDITION OF SAD IBN ABI WAQQAS TO KHARRAR

In the month of Dhu al-Qada, a third expedition started, under the youthful Saad ibn Abi Waqqas (now 20 or 25 years old) with twenty followers, in the same direction. He was desired to proceed as far as Kharrar, a valley on the road to Makkah, and to lie in wait for a caravan expected to pass that way. Like most of the subsequent expeditions intended to effect a surprise, they marched by night and lay in concealment during the day. Notwithstanding this precaution, when they reached their destination on the fifth morning, they found that the caravan had passed a day before, and they returned empty-handed to Madinah.

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These excursions occurred in the winter and spring of the year 622 CE. On each occasion, the Messenger mounted a white banner on a staff or lance, and presented it to the leader, on his departure. The names of those who carried the standard, as well as the names of the leaders, are carefully recorded in tradition in these and in all other expeditions of importance.

The purpose of the Messenger for sending out groups to intimate the Quraysh or participating himself in a group that threatens the Quraysh caravan by their very presence is so that the Quraysh become aware of the importance of the situation which is that their trade routes, whether from Makkah to Yemen through Taif or from Makkah to Syria, will be under surveillance by the Islamic forces. Whenever the Muslim forces want, they can prevent the free flow of their trade or confiscate all of their goods. With the Messengers policy of preventing the development of the negative, the Quraysh will think twice before harming Muslims in Makkah or confiscating Makkan property

of Muslims who migrated to Madinah.

History: The first six months of Muhammad's residence at Madinah were undisturbed either by alarms from without, or by hostile counsels at home. No vindictive measures were planned by the citizens of Makkah. He who had for more than ten years kept the city in continual excitement, broken up their old political parties, and introduced a new faction of his own, was now gone forth with all his adherents, and his absence afforded immediate relief. The current of events, long diverted and troubled by his designs, now returned, to flow peaceably, for a while, in its ancient channel.

The people of Madinah were pledged only to defend the Prophet from attack, not to join him in any aggressive steps against the Quraysh idolaters. He must take time to gain their affections, and to secure their hearty co-operation in offensive measures against his enemies. His followers from Makkah were too few to measure arms with the Quraysh idolaters. They were also, like himself, at present occupied in providing dwelling-places for their families. In fulfilling this domestic obligation, in establishing friendly relations with the citizens of Madinah and the Jewish tribes, in organizing civil and religious institutions for his followers, now fast assuming the position of an independent society, and in riveting the hold of his government upon their minds. The autumn of the first year passed away.

The earliest indications of hostility against the Quraysh idolaters were of a petty and marauding character. In Ramadan, seven months after his arrival, Muhammad despatched his uncle Hamza, at the head of thirty Emigrants, to surprise a Makkan caravan returning from Syria under the guidance of Abu Jahl This caravan, guarded by some 300 of the Quraysh idolaters, was overtaken near the sea-shore, between Makkah and Madinah, in the territory of the Bani Juhayna. A chief of that tribe, being a confederate of both, interposed between the two parties, who were already drawn up prepared for an encounter. Hamza retired to Madinah, and Abu Jahl proceeded onwards to Makkah. (Muhammad did not send the Madinah Helpers on any hostile expedition against the Quraysh idolaters until they had warred with him at Badr and the reason is that they had pledged themselves to protect him only at their homes. (*Kitab al-Waqidi,* p 48).

About a month later (Shawwal 1 AH; Jan 623 CE), a party double the strength of the first, was sent under command of Ubaydah, son of Harith, (he was a cousin of Muhammad, Harith having been the prophet's uncle.) in pursuit of another caravan protected by Abu Sufyan with 200 men. The Quraysh idolaters were surprised while their camels were grazing by a fountain in the valley of Rabigh (one

of the stages on the road to Makkah) but beyond the discharge of arrows from a distance, no hostilities were attempted. Ubayda is distinguished in tradition as the who shot the first arrow for Islam. Two followers of Muhammad, who were with the Quraysh idolaters' convoy, fled from it and joined the party of Ubayda. (The names of the deserters are Midad and Utba, both Quraysh. Miqdad carried the standard in the next expedition under Sad. (*Kitab al-Waqidi,* p 98; Hishami, p 207, Tabari, p 226).

After the lapse of another month, a third expedition started, under the youthful Sad ibn Abi Waqqas (now 20 or 25 years old) with twenty followers, in the same direction. He was desired to proceed as far as Kharrar, a valley on the road to Makkah, and to lie in wait for a caravan expected to pass that way. Like most of the subsequent expeditions intended to effect a surprise, they marched by night and lay in concealment during the day. Notwithstanding this precaution, when they reached their destination on the fifth morning, they found that the caravan had passed a day before, and they returned empty-handed to Madinah.

These excursions occurred in the winter and spring of the year 623 CE. On each occasion, Muhammad mounted a white banner on a staff or lance, and presented it to the leader, on his departure. The names of those who carried the standard, as well as the names of the leaders, are carefully recorded in tradition in these and in all other expeditions of importance.

THE MESSENGER MARRIES AYISHA IN SHAWWAL

The Messenger marries Ayisha in the month of Shawwal.

INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC CHAPTER 2
THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

COMMENTARY°

This Chapter is the first chapter to be revealed soon after the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE. It is the longest Chapter in the Quran.

From the varied and wide-ranging context of its signs, it is safe to assume that they were not all revealed in sequence. A common feature of the long Madinan Chapters is that their signs were not revealed in consecutive order. Sometimes, passages of one Chapter were revealed before the completion of an earlier one. Therefore, the convention in deciding the chronological order of the Chapters has been based on the dates of the revelation of the opening passages, and not of the complete Chapter. In this instance, we find that 2:275-2:280, prohibiting usury, were among the last Quranic revelations, while the opening parts of the Chapter were revealed early in the Madinah period.

The composition and arrangement of the signs within each Chapter of the Quran is fixed by God and was directly intimated to Prophet Muhammad. Anyone who studies the Quran closely, and tastes the unique and rich experience of living within its ambience, will immediately identify the distinct character of every one of its Chapters. Every Chapter has an aura and a personality of its own, with unique and well-defined features, and a feel that makes it stand apart from all the rest. Moreover, every Chapter revolves around a central theme, or a number of major themes related to one another by a common thread or idea. Every Chapter radiates its own atmosphere of meaning and essence, within which its theme, or themes, are discussed using the same well integrated and well coordinated style and approach. It also has its own special rhythm and musical pulse which accord with the meaning and context of its topics and content. These general outstanding features are common to all Chapters, including the longer ones, such as the present one.

To set the contents of this Chapter in their appropriate context, it would be pertinent to throw more light on the historic environment and the religious and social setting in which the signs were revealed. Before we do that, however, it is important to point out that, in general terms, what the Muslims had to face in those early days was a miniature of, and a rehearsal for, what has occurred throughout the later history of Islam, albeit with some variations of scope and detail. The setbacks and the achievements, the allies and the opponents have invariably been the same. This fact highlights the role and status of

the Quran as the unchallenged, immutable and incontrovertible authoritative reference for the religious, ethical and legislative principles and systems of the Quranic message. It further affirms the unique property of the Quranic text as being ever fresh and responsive to the inevitable changes that come with the perpetuation and progress of human life.

With these qualities, the Quran remains the eternal guiding light for Muslims, despite the difficulties and hardships they have to suffer or the animosity and hostility they have to face. This, in itself, is an aspect of the inimitability and unsurpassed veracity and beauty of every sign in the Quran.

SEEKING A SECURE BASE

The Prophet Muhammad's migration from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE was undertaken after meticulous planning and with appropriate care and attention to detail. Leaving Makkah had become unavoidable in consequence of events: the indigenous, ungrateful Arabs of Makkah were pursuing a relentlessly hostile and oppressive campaign against the Prophet personally, and his mission and followers in general. This campaign had intensified following the double personal tragedy of 619 CE in which the Prophet had lost his wife Khadija, who had been to him a pillar of personal support and strength, and his uncle Abu Talib, his guardian and protector. This tragedy greatly restricted Muhammad's movement and his followers' activities in and around Makkah.

While the conflict between Muhammad and his tribal cousins, led by Abu Lahab, Amr ibn Hisham and Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, reached a stalemate within Makkah, his message was gaining converts and supporters outside it. The majority of provincial Arabs, however, elected to watch from a distance what they viewed as a purely internal dispute over power within the Quraysh. It would not do for them to become embroiled in supporting the religion of a the human being whose own tribe had denounced him, especially since that tribe held the custodianship of the sacred Kabah and assumed supreme religious authority for the whole of Arabia.

The Prophet had to seek an alternative home for his new faith, and a base where he could be protected, so that he could break the deadlock he had reached in Makkah, and be allowed to pursue his commission unimpeded. This, in my view, was the first and most important reason for leaving Makkah.

Before Madinah, other destinations had been proposed and tried as alternatives to Makkah. In 615, only a few years after Muhammad's call to prophethood in 610 CE, a number of early Muslims

had emigrated to Abyssinia. It would not be correct to say that they had gone there for reasons of personal safety alone. Had this been the case, the emigrants would have included the weakest and least supported elements among the Muslims. These were the ones at the receiving end of a sustained persecution campaign. But the reverse was the case. The emigrants included some of the most powerful of the Prophet's followers and tribesmen. The majority of them were from the tribe of Quraysh, including Jafar ibn Abu Talib, and a number of young men who were accustomed to providing protection to the Prophet, such as al-Zubayr ibn al- Awwam, Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, Abu Salamah al Makhzumi, Uthman ibn Affan, to mention but a few. There were women belonging to some of the most prominent families of the Quraysh, such as Umm al-Abubah, daughter of Abu Sufyan, the Quraysh's unrivalled non-Muslim leader. Such women would never be persecuted in Makkah.

There were, no doubt, other reasons for the Muslims' emigration to Abyssinia. There was the need to shake the religious and social foundations of the Quraysh's most noble and powerful families. There could be no greater insult or threat to the Quraysh dynasties than seeing their proudest and most noble sons and daughters running away for conscientious and religious reasons, leaving their cultural heritage and tribal homeland behind.

Whatever other reasons there might have been for the Muslims' emigration to Abyssinia, the fact remains that the search had started very early on for a safe haven for the Quranic message, or a secure base where it could flourish and spread freely. This is further supported by reports of the Negus of Abyssinia's conversion to the Quranic message, which only the threatened rebellion of his patriarchs prevented him from making public, as some reliable accounts confirm.

Following the death of his uncle, Abu Talib, in 619 CE and as a result of the Quraysh's growing hostility, the Prophet sought help from the Thaqif tribe who lived in the town of Juif, some 90 km east of Makkah. The effort ended in failure because the Thaqif gave him a most hostile reception. They mocked him and heaped scorn on him. They let loose their louts and their children to chase him and throw stones at him, causing his feet to bleed.

A Major Breakthrough

Not long after that, the fortunes of the Prophet and Islam suddenly changed for the better. At a place called Aqaba near Makkah, the Prophet had two crucial historic meetings in 621 and 622 CE with a group of Arabs from Madinah, during which they pledged their al-

legiance and support. This was to have a profound and far-reaching effect on the whole future of Islam and the Muslim community.

Towards the end of the Makkan period, the Prophet Muhammad embarked on a concerted effort of making contact with various influential Arab communities and tribes to introduce the Quranic message to them and seek their following and support.

The Khazraj and the Aws, the two Arab tribes of Madinah, having lived side by side with the Jews, had often heard them boast about: the Prophet who will come soon and: whose day is at hand, who would lead the Jews to victory over the Arabs. A group of the Khazraj pilgrims met the Prophet who explained to them his message. They immediately realized that he was the very Prophet the Jews were talking about. They were determined to get to him before the Jews did. Having met him and listened to what he had to say, they accepted him and became Muslims. They said to him: We have left our people in an unprecedented state of mutual hostility. May God make you the cause of their unity. On their return home, they reported what they did to their people who approved their action.

The following year a delegation comprising members of the two tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj, arrived in Makkah to meet the Prophet. They declared their acceptance of the Quranic message and their allegiance. He sent them back with one of his senior companions to teach them the Quran and instruct them in their new religion. At the following annual pilgrimage, a larger group from both tribes came to Makkah, and offered to make a covenant with the Prophet Muhammad. This was attended by his then non-Muslim uncle al-Abbas. The covenant bound them to support Muhammad and defend him as they would their own families and property. This is known as the Second Pledge of Aqaba.

Abd Allah ibn Rawaah of the Madinah people is reported to have stood up and asked the Prophet to: put forward your Lord's and your own conditions. Muhammad replied: My Lord's condition is that you worship Him alone and take no other gods beside Him. As for myself, my condition is that you give me the protection you would give yourselves and your property. Abd Allah asked: What do we receive in return? Paradise! the Prophet replied. They said: This is a profitable deal on which none will go back.

Thus the Arabs of Madinah committed themselves to the Quranic message and to following Muhammad and defending him. The Quranic message was to spread rapidly and entrench itself among them. The Muslims of Makkah began to arrive in Madinah in droves, abandoning their belongings and material possessions and taking only their faith. They were warmly welcomed by their fellow

Muslims, who offered to share with them everything they had.

Eventually the time came for the Prophet himself to migrate to Madinah. He was made aware of the plot of the ungrateful Quraysh to kill him. He asked his cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, to sleep in his bed so that he could escape. He and his close companion, Abu Bakr, then slipped away from Makkah. At last Muhammad had found the safe haven he had been looking for all those years, where he and his followers would be free to proclaim the faith and establish their community. The Prophet's arrival in Madinah was to prove a crucial turning point in the history of the Quranic message.

The Making of a Unique Community

The community taking shape in Madinah was a unique and distinguished one, praised repeatedly throughout the Quran. This Chapter opens with a concise, generally applicable, definition of true believers. Nevertheless, it refers specifically to those early pioneers of the Quranic message: (2:1-2:5)

In contrast, we are immediately given a description of the ungrateful, which is again general and universal but applies specifically to those who rejected the Quranic message and opposed it, in and around both Makkah and Madinah: (2:6-2:7)

In Madinah, a third group emerged, the hypocrites, or *al-munafiqun*. This faction had not been noticeable in Makkah; its rise was prompted by the Prophet's arrival and settlement in Madinah, as outlined earlier. That was because in Makkah, Islam had no sovereign political entity or force, and the Muslims remained soft targets for persecution and repression by the rest of the Arabs. Those who accepted the Quranic message had to be brave and sincere, prepared to endure all kinds of hardship and terror.

The leadership of the Messenger of the Madinah tribes caused some people, including a number of leading and privileged figures, to feign acceptance of the Quranic message merely to save their position and protect their social and tribal status and interests. Thus they came to be known as the 'hypocrites' in Islamic terminology. One of the most prominent of these was Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul who, prior to the Prophet's arrival in Madinah, was about to be crowned as a king of the city. At the beginning of the Chapter, we find a detailed description of the hypocrites (2:8-2:20) from which it can easily be seen that they included those who had reluctantly embraced the Quranic message and had not totally relinquished their self-pride and arrogance.

THE CHAPTER'S CENTRAL THEME

Having introduced the three main types of humanity: believers, ungrateful and hypocrites, and having made a clear though implicit reference to the 'evil ones', the Chapter addresses humanity as a whole, asking them to worship the One God and fully acknowledge the revelations He has bestowed on His Messenger. It affirms God's favor and wisdom in creating the earth and the heavens, and all that is in them, for the use and benefit of the human being. (2:21-2:29)

This is followed by an account of the occasion when God appointed the human being as His vicegerent and representative on earth, outlining the terms and conditions of that auspicious appointment. (2:30-2:39)

The Chapter addresses the Muslims instructing them how to fulfil their role as guardians and carriers of God's Message to humanity. It offers guidance on the beliefs and concepts that were to distinguish the Muslim faith and way of life for all time to come. This part begins by defining the *qibla*, the direction to which Muslims should turn when offering formal prayers. It was to be the sacred site at Makkah housing the Kabah, the House of God built by Abraham and Ishmael, its first keepers and custodians. The Chapter tells us that even while the Muslims had been praying towards Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, Muhammad was privately yearning for the Kabah to become the exclusive direction for the Muslims during formal or obligatory prayer. (2:144)

The Chapter goes on to outline the principles and systems of the Quranic message in several fields including faith and outlook, rites of worship and religious matters, personal and public behavior and conduct. It teaches the Muslims that those who give their lives for the cause of God never die; that insecurity, hunger and poverty are not necessarily evil in themselves, but are means to test the believers, to assess their potential and refine and strengthen their capacity to advance God's cause in the world. It reassures Muslims that God is their patron and will always be on their side, while their detractors and opponents will be led astray into a wilderness of darkness by impostors, false mentors and bogus leaders. The Chapter outlines aspects of lawful and unlawful food and drink, penal measures, rules governing wills, fasting, war, and pilgrimage. It dwells at length on the regulation and organization of family affairs, including marriage and divorce, and covers rules governing spending, usury, lending and trade.

The main body of the second part deals basically with the structure and organization of the Muslim community, and the essential features and qualifications it requires to uphold God's message and

fulfil its prime role as His trustee and the custodian of His message for all time to come. The following section of the Chapter is almost entirely devoted to the education, formation and building of the Muslim community, which was destined to take up the task of expounding God's message to the rest of humanity. We continue, from time to time, to come across discourses and arguments dealing with those opposed to the Quranic message. There are also instructions to the Muslims on how to fight back and what precautions to take in order to avoid their traps.

Nevertheless, the chief concern of this section, and of the rest of the Chapter, remains the establishment and codification of the distinguishing qualities and features of the Muslim community. It is a community that has its own laws, confirming and succeeding those of earlier divine revelation, its own *qibla*, and above all its distinct and original outlook on the world and life as a whole. It is a community that is fully cognizant of its relationship with God and of its leading role in the world, and the responsibilities and obligations stemming from that role. It is a community that is confidently and loyally poised to submit fully to God's will and command, as ordained and articulated in the Quran and the teachings and work of the Prophet Muhammad.

We learn that the *qibla* issue is related to the fact that the Muslim community is a moderate and middle-of-the-road community. By virtue of their message and role in the world, Muslims shall be God's witness to the rest of humanity, while Muhammad shall be a witness to them. The Quran accords the Muslims a leading status in the world, and calls on them to work hard, persevere and make all the sacrifices that are required of them to earn that status and fulfil their role, putting their trust fully in God's will and wisdom. We come across some important elaboration of basic Islamic concepts such as *taqwa*, God-consciousness, and good works.

The Chapter then turns to setting out rules and regulations for the religious and practical life of the community. These include penalties for capital offenses and rules relating to wills, fasting during the month of Ramadan, going to war during the sacred months and within the surrounds of the Kabah, the Hajj, or Pilgrimage, drinking and gambling, and family affairs. The common denominator underpinning all these duties and regulations is sound belief and strong faith in God Almighty.

The Chapter has given us a good idea of the nature of the battle the Quran was fighting and the environment it was fighting in while it was being revealed, and the objectives it was aiming to achieve in raising and building the Muslim community in the 7th century CE.

The atmosphere among the Makkan Arabs was one of intrigue, mischief, confusion and falsehood. Human weakness and greed also had to be taken into account.

Above all, the Quran was aiming to establish and articulate upright concepts and sound principles on which the community could be raised, and to chart for it a course for a righteous and dignified leadership of the world. The enduring qualities of the Quran are vindicated by the fact that the principles, rules and instructions it propounded fourteen centuries ago remain today, and for all time to come, essential for the regeneration and reconstruction of Muslim society. The battles and the issues and the controversies remain the same. The enemies, and the means and weapons used against the Quran and its followers also remain fundamentally the same. To fight and win today's battles, Muslims will need to follow the Quranic principles and teachings which shaped and guided that pioneering Muslim community of Madinah.

Muslims today need the Quran for a better and a more realistic understanding of the world and their role in it. No other source exists that can provide them with the inspiration, the practical guidance and the complete way of life they need to forge ahead and assume the leadership of the world again.

The closing two signs take us full circle to the opening of the Chapter, affirming the Muslim world community's eternal belief in all Prophets and messages sent by God to humanity, without exception, and in what lies beyond the reach of human perception. They assert the Muslims' total unqualified faith in, and submission to, the One God. Thus, the ending of the Chapter coalesces smoothly with its beginning, as the subject matter is shaped to give a complete and superb example of the Quran's inimitable and powerful style.

LESSON 87(1) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO- AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists as being selfish, self-centered, ego-centric, thinking only of themselves without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in

the extremist ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their ego-centric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change ego-centric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their ego-centric and socio-centric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or ego-centricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being socio-centric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Quranic community, they find

that the Arabs in pre-Quranic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people ego-centrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own ego-centric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's ego-centric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking ego-centrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has ego-centric, socio-centric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own ego-centric or socio-centric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be ego-centric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being ego-centric and socio-centric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH) SIGNS 2:1-2:7

Madinah: *Alif Lam Mim.* (2:1)
That is the Book—there is no doubt in it,
a guidance for the ones who are God-conscious: (2:2)

Those who believe in the unseen (2:3)
and perform the formal prayer, and they spend
out of what We provided them,
and those who believe in what was caused to descend to you,
and what was caused to descend before you, and they are certain
of the world to come. (2:4)
Those are on a guidance from their Lord
and those, they are the ones who prosper. (2:5)
Truly, as for those who were ungrateful, it is the same to them
whether you had warned them or you have warned them not.
They believe not. (2:6)
God sealed over their hearts and over their inner hearing
and a blindfold over their inner sight.
And there is a tremendous punishment for them. (2:7)

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter opens with three Arabic letters: *Alif, Lam, Mim.* (2:1) This is immediately followed by the statement: (2:2)

Several Chapters in the Quran begin with a combination of Arabic letters in this way, and interpretations of these abstract openings vary quite widely. The one we tend to favor is that these are meant to emphasize the fact that the Quran is a book composed of the letters of the Arabic language, in the same way as they are used by the Arabs who were the first people addressed by this divine revelation.

The key word in this statement is 'guidance'. It expresses the essence and the nature of the Quran. But guidance for whom? Who are the people who will find that this Book provides them with light, direction and true counsel? They are the God-conscious. Once a person's heart is filled with God-consciousness (*taqwa*), he will benefit by the Quran. Consciousness of God is the quality that opens one's mind to the true guidance contained in the Quran and allows it to have its proper effect on one's life. It is the factor that causes one's heart and mind to become sensitive and receptive to God's guidance and enables one to respond to His call and His instruction.

BELIEVING IN THE IMPERCEPTIBLE

The Chapter then gives a description of those who are God-conscious. In doing so it presents the early model of believers in Madinah, which was also to be the universal one for all future generations of Muslims: (2:3-2:4)

The most essential quality of the God-conscious believers is their conscious, active moral unity that enriches their souls with profound belief in the imperceptible, or *ghayb*, dedication to their reli-

gious obligations, recognition of all God's Messengers, and unshakeable certainty in the hereafter. Such are the ingredients that make the Muslim faith a complete whole and distinguishes believers from unbelievers. Such a thorough outlook is worthy of God's final message to humanity, which was intended as a focus and a guide for all human endeavor on this earth.

The limits of human perception do not prevent believers' souls from reaching their Creator, the omnipotent power behind the universe and all existence. (2:3) Their limited natural senses do not stand in the way of their desire to reach beyond the physical world or their pursuit of the ultimate truths of life.

This implies the believers' recognition that what they own and possess is a gift and a favor from God. (2:3) It is not of their own making. Such a belief brings mercy and benevolence towards the weak and the poor, and mutual fellowship and a true spirit of brotherhood and human community among all. The outcome is to eliminate greed and fill people's hearts with compassion and humanity, making life an opportunity for cooperation rather than an arena for conflict and confrontation. The sick, the weak and the young and helpless in society are given security, so that they feel they are living among human beings with compassionate hearts and scrupulous souls, rather than selfish beasts with nothing but claws and teeth.

This kind of benevolent spending comprises the obligatory purifying alms (*zakat*), as well as the giving of alms, voluntary donations and all other forms of charitable offerings. The latter had been instituted in Islam long before purifying alms, because they are more general and wide-ranging than purifying alms, which relates to the obligatory aspect of charitable spending.

This is a characteristic of the Muslim community, or *umma*, the rightful heir to, and custodian of, God's message and the legacy of all Prophets since the dawn of human life, and the leader of humanity. (2:4) This characteristic embodies such concepts as the unity of the human being, the oneness of God, the unity of the divine faith and God's Messengers. It purges people;s soul of bigotry and petty fanaticism. It reassures us of God's everlasting grace and protection which He has shown by sending successive Messengers preaching one and the same faith and offering the same guidance to all humanity. It allows us to feel proud of being the recipients of God's pure and universal guidance, which remains a bright shining star that is never extinguished, even in the darkest days of human history.

This characteristic (2:4) of the God-conscious links the present life with the life to come; the beginning with the end; deed with reward. It provokes in human beings the feeling that they are no mere

useless being, created without a purpose and left to wither away. It comforts them by affirming that full justice is certain to come, and thus inspires them to seek to do good, with total confidence in God's justice and mercy.

The passage aptly concludes with the comment: (2:5) Indeed, they adhered to God's guidance and they were successful. For those who wish to follow in their footsteps, the route remains clearly marked.

A CONTRASTING PICTURE

The next human model we are presented with is that of the ungrateful. (2:6-2:7) The contrast with the previous group is total. While God's Book in itself is a guide for the God-conscious, no warning to the ungrateful has any effect at all. The receptivity of the believer contrasts with the ungrateful's total unreceptivity; here the ties that bind the believer to God and the world around, and link the seen with the unseen and the overt with the covert, are completely absent. Their hearts are firmly shut and their ears can hear nothing. They are utterly incapable of receiving guidance or discovering the truth. Moreover, (2:7) They are in total darkness, with no light to guide them anywhere. All this is their just reward for ignoring God's warnings.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN AND APPLY THEM TO THEIR LESSON 87(1)

Outline: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Prove: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

Relate: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

Review: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

State: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

Summarize: When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

Trace: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way?
Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•
Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.
Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.
Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•
Why was he willing to do this? Was he scared?
What else did he feel that helped him ignore his fears?
Why? How did he look at things that helped him endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.
I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

Lesson 87(2) Critical Thinking Strategy
Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking (*furqan*) come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior.

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Signs 2:8-2:20

Madinah: *And among humanity are some who say:*
We believed in God and in the Last Day,
and yet they are not ones who believe. (2:8)
They seek to trick God and those who believed
while they deceive none but themselves,
but they are not aware. (2:9)
In their hearts is a sickness.
Then, God increased them in sickness,
and for them is a painful punishment
because they had been lying against themselves. (2:10)
And when it was said to them not to make corruption
in and on the earth,
they said: Truly, we are only ones who make things right. (2:11)
No doubt they, they are the ones who make corruption
except they are not aware. (2:12)
And when it was said to them:
Believe as humanity believed, they said:

Will we believe as the fools believed?
No! Truly, they, they are the fools, except they know not. (2:13)
And when they met those who believed,
they said: We believed.
And when they went privately to their satans,
they said: Truly, we are with you.
We were only ones who ridicule. (2:14)
God ridicules them and causes them to increase
in their defiance, to wander unwilling to see. (2:15)
Those are those who bought fallacy for guidance,
so their trade was not bettered
nor had they been ones who are truly guided. (2:16)
Their parable is like a parable of those who started a fire.
Then, when it illuminated what was around it,
God took away their light and left them in shadows
where they perceive not. (2:17)
Unwilling to hear, unwilling to speak, unwilling to see,
then, they will not return to the way. (2:18)
Or as a cloudburst from heaven in which there are shadows
and thunder and lightning.
They lay their fingertips in their ears from the thunderbolt,
being fearful of death.
And God is One Who Encloses the ones who are ungrateful. (2:19)
The lightning almost snatches their sight.
When it illuminated for them, they walked in the light.
And when it grew dark against them, they stood still.
And if God willed, He would have taken away
their having the ability to hear and their sight.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (2:20)

COMMENTARY°

THE MARK OF HYPOCRISY

We now move on to the third model. The picture that the sign paint of this type of people is neither as bright and noble as the first nor as dark and base as the second. It is an elusive, evanescent image, constantly changing. These are the hypocrites: (2:8-2:16)

This was a description of a number of people in Madinah, but the picture can be identified in every human generation. Such people are to be found among the elite of society who lack the moral courage to either openly accept the truth or clearly reject it. They are ever assuming the moral high ground, placing themselves above all others, deriding their understanding. We should, therefore, take these signs in their absolute sense, as being descriptive of hypocrites in all gen-

erations. They indeed address the human soul which is one in all societies.

Typically, the hypocrites claim belief in God and the Last Day when they in fact entertain no such belief. They simply do not possess the resolve to declare their true feelings and convictions. They delude themselves into thinking that they are so clever and cunning as to be able to deceive the 'naive' believers, but God uncovers the truth about their actions. They are trying to deceive not only believers, but God Himself: (2:9)

We find that (2:9) it mocks their behavior. They are so oblivious of the reality of their position, and so careless, that they deceive no one but themselves. God is aware of their schemes and deception. The believers are under God's protection. The thinking of these foolish hypocrites is so warped that they believe they have triumphed and achieved their goal, whereas in fact they have earned themselves nothing but doom and have condemned themselves to a terrible fate.

But why, we may ask: Do these hypocrites resort to such behavior? The answer is: (2:10) There is something wrong with their attitude and their hearts are not pure, which causes them to deviate and incur further displeasure from God, who has: (2:10) This type of sickness begins as a minor deviation and grows gradually, according to the established laws of human social and psychological behavior.

Predictably, such behavior will only lead to one end, as befits those who deceive God and the believers: (2:10) Other characteristics of the hypocrites, which were certainly evident in the case of those notorious ones encountered by the early Muslims at Madinah, such as Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, is obstinacy and justification of their corrupting behavior, together with an arrogant belief that they will escape punishment. (2:11-2:12) It is not sufficient for them simply to tell lies and resort to deception. They have to make false claims, adding insult to injury.

Hypocrites are also distinguished by their arrogance, their contempt for other people and their pretense to be what they are not. The description continues: (2:13)

It is clear that what the hypocrites of Madinah were being called on to demonstrate was sincere, unwavering faith, free of personal desire or caprice. They were being urged to join those who accepted Islam in its totality, submitted themselves completely to God, and opened their hearts and minds to the teachings and instructions of the Prophet Muhammad. But it is also clear that they were too proud to accept. They thought of Islam as a religion for the meek and the poor in society, which did not become the lofty elite. This was reflected in their response. They are quoted as saying: (2:13) Fools are

seldom aware of their predicament and are always willing to delude themselves that they are righteous and proper. Their lies and deceptions are compounded by treachery and murky scheming against the Muslims: (2:14)

To some people wickedness means strength and scheming is an art; yet the opposite is true. A strong person never feels the need to resort to treachery or intrigue. The hypocrites were too cowardly to come into the open and could only adopt a two-faced attitude. With the Muslims they professed belief in order to protect themselves and have access to the Muslim community and undermine it from within, but with their allies, they would say otherwise. Their rapport was matched by their cooperation in wicked schemes. As soon as this aspect of their conduct is revealed, God delivers the sternest warning of all: (2:15)

Here again we are faced with the timeless truth mentioned earlier: that God always takes care to defend the believers, reassuring them and thwarting their enemy, who will blunder arrogantly in the dark, deceived by God's temporary clemency and brief remission, towards their inevitable and dreadful fate. Then comes a final statement to sum up: (2:16) They spurned the opportunity to be rightly guided, and forfeited their right to it. They are left miserable and totally lost on all counts.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

A detailed description of this third group suggests that the role played by the hypocrites in Madinah in undermining the Muslim community during those formative years was a very serious one, and that they instigated trouble and instability in that community. It is also an indication of how far-reaching a role hypocrites can play in any Muslim community, and that there is a need to expose their activities and maleficent scheming against the Muslims.

Further examples are given to add more clarification and expose the nature of hypocrisy: (2:17-2:18) Unlike the ungrateful, the hypocrites did not turn away from divine guidance in the first instance. They did not block their ears or refuse to listen or understand. They simply elected to turn away from God's guidance, after having considered and understood it. They sought the light and saw it, but they did not benefit from it. (2:17) This is a punishment for their deliberate rejection of God's guidance.

Human senses are meant to enable him to perceive and receive God's Guidance, but the hypocrites wilfully closed off their senses, rendering themselves deaf, dumb and blind. Thus they are no longer able to see the light, nor can they find the right path again. They are lost.

Another description of their wavering and loss of direction tells us that: (2:19-2:20) It is a fascinating scene, full of life and movement, overshadowed by confusion. It is remarkable for the sense of loss, panic and perplexity it conveys. There is light and sound, dark stormy clouds bringing heavy rain, intermittent spells of light and darkness. People walking in all directions, not knowing where to go, and stopping abruptly in terror as the light disappears, covering their ears against the piercing sound of thunder that could well-nigh kill them.

The interaction between the various dynamic elements of this awesome scene perfectly reflects the confused and perplexed state of mind of the hypocrites, their double-faced way of life and their wavering and equivocating attitude towards others. It is a vivid picture of the psychological condition of those people, eloquently expressed in the rich inimitable style of the Quran.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING YOUR FEELINGS

Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of your own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view

QUESTIONS

Does being "*unwilling to hear, unwilling to speak, unwilling to see*" (2:18) an example of someone who responds to a situation with their feelings or their thoughts?

Whenever you discuss someone's feelings in a classroom setting, you can consider what the person might be thinking to have that feeling in that situation:

Why does the "one who turns away" feel this way?
How is he interpreting his situation?
What led him to that conclusion?
Would you have felt the same if you had been in his circumstances?
Why or why not?
What accounts for the difference?
What could he have thought instead?
Then how might he have felt?

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring your thoughts that underlie your feelings. You can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to
understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to myself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through my own reasoning.

LESSON 87(3) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and offers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
SIGNS 2:21-2:29

Madinah: *O humanity! Worship your Lord Who created you*
and those who were before you
so that perhaps you will be God-conscious. (2:21)
It is He Who assigned the earth for you as a place of restfulness
and the heaven as a canopy. And He caused water to descend from
heaven and from it drove out fruit of trees as provision for you.
Then, assign not rivals to God while you, you know. (2:22)
And if you had been in doubt about what We sent down
to Our servant, then approach with a chapter of the Quran
—the like of it— and call to your witnesses other than God
if you had been ones who are sincere. (2:23)
And if you accomplish it not —and you will never accomplish it—
then be God-conscious of the fire whose fuel is humanity
and rocks, prepared for the ones who are ungrateful. (2:24)
And give good tidings to those who believed and did as the
ones in accord with morality, that for them will be Gardens
beneath which rivers run. Whenever they were provided from there
of its fruit as provision they would say:
This is what we were provided before.
And they will be brought it —ones that resemble one another—
and in it for them will be purified spouses.
And they are ones who will dwell in them forever! (2:25)
Truly, God is not ashamed that He propound a parable,
even of a gnat or whatever is above it.
So as for those who believed, then, they know that it is The Truth
from their Lord, but those who were ungrateful, then they will say:
What did God mean by this parable?
He causes many to go astray by it and He guides many by it.
And He causes none to go astray by it,

but the ones who disobey— (2:26)
those who break the compact of God after a solemn promise
and sever what God commanded that it be joined
and make corruption in and on the earth.
Those, they are the ones who are losers! (2:27)
How is it you are ungrateful to God? You had been lifeless,
then, He gave you life. again, He will cause you to die.
Again, He will give you life.
And, again, you are returned to Him. (2:28)
It is He Who created for you all that is in and on the earth.
Again, He turned His attention to the heaven. Then, He shaped
them into seven heavens. And He is Knowing of everything. (2:29)

COMMENTARY°

The call is addressed to all humanity to worship God, the sole Creator of all beings. He alone is the Creator, and He alone must be worshipped. Human beings' worship of God fulfils a definite purpose, namely, to make them be God-conscious. It is through worship that people can attain the honorable status of believing in and being conscious of none other than God. Thus, they fulfil their obligations towards the One God, Lord of the living and the dead, past and present, and the sole sustainer and provider of all that is in the heavens and the earth. (2:21-2:22)

The tone here (2:22) emphasizes the element of ease in human life. Planet earth has been prepared as a suitable place for living, providing comfortable shelter for the human being. Long familiarity, however, tends to make people take this ease and comfort for granted and to overlook the meticulous care and balance involved in providing the means to sustain human life on earth. Should only one of the elements necessary for life on this planet fail or run short, life itself would disappear or become impossibly hard.

And the heavens a canopy (2:22) solid and well coordinated. Human life on earth is strongly linked to the skies and what they provide: heat, light, gravity, stars and planets. The forces that preserve this delicate coherence and harmony between the earth and the rest of the universe are vital to enable and sustain human life. It is no surprise, therefore, that this should be mentioned within the context of God's power and grace, emphasizing human beings' duty to worship and submit to Him.

He caused water to descend from heaven and from it drove out fruit trees as provision for you. (2:22) This is a recurring theme in the Quran, especially in the context of reminding people of God's power and grace. Water is the essence of all life on earth. God says

elsewhere in the Quran: *We have made every living thing of water.* (21:30) Causing plants to grow, running into rivers, forming lakes, permeating the soil to form underground reservoirs then springing out or drilled up, water remains the most vital substance for life.

Water as a phenomenon, and its role on this earth, are wonders that no one can deny or overlook. To assert God's power and grace, it is sufficient simply to point them out as an example.

Two fundamental Quranic principles emerge from this passage. The first is God's Oneness as the Creator of all beings; the other is the unity of the universe and its internal cohesion, and its fitness for the human being and for all life. The earth is stretched out for our ease and comfort and the skies support their marvellous systems above us, while water brings forth crops and fruits to sustain humanity. All this is by the grace of God, the sole Creator: (2:22)

The concept of *s*etting up equals to God which the Quran frequently and strongly condemns need not necessarily refer to the worship of idols or figurines or statues, normally associated with pagan religious practice and observed by the Arab idolaters. It could very well take other forms, some of which are very subtle indeed. To pin one's hopes on anyone other than God, to fear someone other than Him, to believe that others can bring fortune or cause harm, are all infringements of monotheistic belief and, therefore, forms of idolatry or, to use Quranic terminology, *shirk*.

The early Muslims were extremely sensitive and alert to these subtle forms of idolatry. We today have to reflect on our own attitude towards this matter and determine how true and faithful we are to the pure and fundamental principle of God's Oneness.

A DIVINE CHALLENGE

There were those in Madinah who used to raise doubts about the truth of the Prophet Muhammad's message, while the hypocrites, like the idol worshipping Arabs of Makkah, were sceptical and called it into question. Therefore we find the Quran challenging them all, as indeed it challenges humanity in general, saying: (2:23)

The challenge starts off with emphasizing an important fact by describing the Prophet Muhammad as God's 'servant'. This description is significant in a number of ways: it is, first, an honor to the Prophet himself and an indication that to be a 'servant' of God is the highest honor a human being can attain. Second, it affirms the essence of servitude to God in the universal human context, calling on all people to submit only to God and renounce all partners that may be associated with Him. The Prophet Muhammad, who attained the highest position of honor as a recipient of divine revelations, is

also honored by being described as a servant of God. The challenge is also related to the opening of this Chapter, which points out that the Quran was composed of the very same letters the Arabs were familiar with in their language. If they were in any doubt as to its truth or veracity, they were free to produce anything, even one Chapter, comparable to it, and they could call any witnesses they wished to testify in their favor. The Prophet's claim had already been supported by God.

This challenge remained open throughout the Prophet's life, and has done so ever since. The Quranic argument stands just as firmly today as it has through the centuries. The Quran remains today the unique work it was on the first day it was revealed, clearly distinguished from anything a person can ever produce. Thus, God's words, and His warning, remain true: (2:24)

In total contrast, we are given the scene of bliss which awaits the believers: (2:25) The interesting aspect of this life of eternal bliss, besides the chaste, pure spouses, is the similar types of fruit offered to the believers, which they somehow feel they were given previously, either in this world or in heaven. This apparent similarity seems to introduce an element of recurring surprise; every time the fruits are found to be different, adding to an atmosphere already filled with pleasure, abundance and enjoyment.

THE USE OF PARABLES IN THE QURAN

At this point the Chapter speaks of the Quranic use of parables: (2:26-2:27) Earlier in the Chapter, the hypocrites were shown in derogatory situations. They also realized that the Quran uses parables referring to insignificant creatures. One of these compares unbelievers to spiders: *The parable of those who take other than God to themselves as protectors is that of the spider who takes a house to itself. But truly the frailest of houses is the house of the spider if they had but known.* (29:41)

Similarly the Quran cites a parable showing the powerlessness of their false deities: *O humanity! A parable is propounded, so listen to it. Truly those whom you call to other than God will never create a fly, even though they be gathered together for it. And if the fly were to rob them of something, they would never seek to deliver it from the fly. Weak are the ones who are seekers and the ones who are sought.* (22:73)

This passage suggests that the hypocrites in Madinah and the idol worshippers, were, in their clumsy and confused campaign against the Quranic message, trying to exploit such use of parables to raise doubts about the Quran's divine origins, claiming that God

would not speak about such insignificant creatures as spiders and flies. They thus hoped to undermine the authority and authenticity of the Quran. These signs serve to refute that argument and explain the wisdom underlying the use of such parables, while warning the ungrateful against taking up such a line of argument and reassuring believers that they will strengthen their faith.

God is the Lord of all creatures, big and small. (2:26) Every single creature, regardless of shape or size, is a marvel to behold, embodying the greatest secret of life, which is known only to God. Besides, parables are used to explain and illustrate concepts and ideas, and the size or shape of their subjects is irrelevant; in no case should they be slighted or scoffed at. Moreover, God, in His infinite wisdom, makes use of such parables to assess and test people's faith.

Parables are used by God to test people's faith: (2:26) In consequence of their attitudes and actions, the evildoers are given even more freedom to pursue the route they have chosen for themselves.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH THE HUMAN BEING

We have not completely departed from the subject of the beginning of the Chapter: the presentation of the main types of people found in every human society. So the text turns to speak in more detail of the "evildoers": (2:27)

The 'covenant' (2:27) is in fact several covenants, the fundamental one being a person's obligation to acknowledge his Creator and turn to Him in worship and submission. Belief in God is a basic human need that must be fulfilled; but it can be abused and misdirected, so that a person sets up partners or equals to God and turns to them. There is the covenant made with Adam on behalf of all humanity, establishing the human being's role on earth and defining his rights and obligations, as we shall discuss presently.

There are numerous covenants and agreements, conveyed through Prophets and Messengers at different stages of human history, with various communities and human groups, committing them to the belief in the One God and implementation in their daily life of His laws and teachings. Evildoers, throughout history, have violated these covenants, and once they renege on their basic and fundamental obligations towards God, there is nothing to deter them from violating laws and norms of every kind, thereby wreaking havoc and destruction on all forms of life. (2:27) Such ties are also numerous, and include family ties between kindred and relations as well as humanitarian ties within the larger human family. First and foremost, God has enjoined the maintenance of a person's relationship with God and his fellow believers, which underpins all other ties and relation-

ships. When these ties are broken or dissolved, societies fall apart and chaos and corruption run rampant.

This corruption (2:27) also takes numerous forms and manifestations, but it stems from one major evil: deviation from God's word and violation of His covenant, severing the ties and relations He has commanded to be maintained. The root of all evil and corruption on earth is deviation from God's laws which He has laid down for the conduct and organization of human life. This is a departure that will surely lead to ruin and destruction. Human life cannot be built on sound and healthy foundations as long as God's laws, commands and teachings are discarded or ignored or given second place. Once this vital bond between God and the human being is broken, human and natural destruction becomes inevitable. Therefore, those who advocate such deviation from God's path and perpetrate corruption and ungodliness deserve to be left to stray and to be utterly confounded. Their confusion is caused by the same thing that provides guidance to those who are God-conscious.

GIVING LIFE AFTER DEATH

The Chapter then addresses all humanity, denouncing their disbelief in God who gives life and takes it away, and who provides for all and has full control over the whole universe: (2:28-2:29) Denial or rejection of God after seeing all these manifest signs is certainly despicable and utterly unjustifiable.

The sign questions human denial of, and ingratitude to, God: (2:28) How impertinent of a person to reject God, the origin and the cause of life. If people would only reflect on how the human being came to be in the first instance, there would be no reason for bewilderment or rejection of life after death. (2:28) As it was from Him you have come, to Him you shall return, in total fulfilment of His will and purpose.

Thus, in one short sign, the whole book of life is opened and. closed. The whole story of human existence on this earth is reviewed. It begins, by the will of God, with a state of death and ends with death, after which God will restore life again, and the ultimate return thereafter shall be to Him from whom life originated. In this brief picture, we can visualize God's awesome power and appreciate its deep impact on our hearts and minds. This is complemented by another powerful affirmation: (2:29)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Questions

The following questions may help you in understanding intellectual curiosity.

What is it to look at things Quranically?
You seem to be approaching this issue from x perspective.
Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?

What is a parable? Does a parable—or word pictures—help to develop intellectual curiosity? Discuss signs 2:26-2:27, 29:41 and 22:73 in answering this question.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I have understood the importance of Quranic parables.
As I further develop my intellectual curiosity, I hope to learn to use parables to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson as these will help me re-discover what God is like and move my heart to respond to God's love and truth.

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:30-2:39

Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:30)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:31)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:32)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:33)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:34)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:35)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:36)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:37)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:38)
Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:39)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:40-2:46

Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:40)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:41)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:42)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:43)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:44)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:45)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:46)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:47-2:59

Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:47)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:48)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:49)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:50)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:51)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:53)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:54)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:55)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:56)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:57)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:58)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:59)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:60-2:61

Madinah: Book 27: Moses (2:60)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses (2:61)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:62-2:71

Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:62)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:63)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:64)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:65)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:66)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:67)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:68)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:69)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:70)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:71)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Signs 2:72-2:82

Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:72)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:73)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:74)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:75)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:76)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:77)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:78)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:79)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:80)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:81)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:82)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Signs 2:83-2:86

Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:83)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:84)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:85)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:86)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Signs 2:87-2:96

Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:87)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:88)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:89)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:90)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:91)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:92)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:93)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:94)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:95)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:96)

Lesson 87(4) Critical Thinking Strategy
Generating Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective

One of the goals of the Quran is to encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Signs 2:97-2:103

Madinah: *Say: Whoever had been an enemy of Gabriel*
knows then, truly, it was sent down through him to your heart with the
permission of God, that which establishes as true what was before it,
and as a guidance and good tidings for the ones who believe. (2:97)
Whoever had been an enemy of God and His angels,
and His Messengers and Gabriel and Michael,
then, truly, God is an enemy of the ones who are ungrateful. (2:98)
And, certainly, We caused to descend to you signs, clear portents.
And none are ungrateful for them, but the ones who disobey. (2:99)
Is it not that whenever they made a contract—a compact—
a group of people among them repudiated it?
Nay! Most of them believe not. (2:100)
And when a Messenger drew near them from God—
one who establishes as true what was with them—
a group of people repudiated among those who were given the Book,
the Book of God—behind their backs as if they had not been knowing
that it was God's Book. (2:101)
And they followed what the satans recount
during the dominion of Solomon.
And Solomon was not ungrateful, except the satans were ungrateful.
They teach humanity sorcery, and what was caused to descend to the
two angels at Babylon—Harut and Marut. But neither of these two
teach anyone unless they say: We are only a test, so be not ungrateful.
And they learn from these two
that by it they separate and divide between
a the human being and his spouse.
And they were not ones who injured anyone with it,
but by the permission of God.

And they learn what hurts them and profits them not.
And, certainly, they knew that whoever bought it,
for him in the world to come was not any apportionment.
And miserable was that for which they sold themselves.
Would that they had been knowing! (2:102)
And if they believed and were God-conscious,
certainly, their place of spiritual reward from God was better.
Would that they had been knowing! (2:103)

COMMENTARY°

A STRANGE ENMITY TO AN ANGEL

The chapter goes on to direct Prophet Muhammad to proclaim more challenging truths: (2:97-2:98) The Quran was lodged in Muhammad's heart: (2:97) The Quran confirms and endorses in general terms all divine revelations received before it. The religion of God, as expounded and preached by all revealed Scriptures, is basically one and the same. All divine revelations have come as guidance to the human being and as a source of joyful tidings for all believing hearts that are receptive and willing to have faith in God.

The sign (2:98) insists that Prophets and angels should be equally respected and revered, and that whoever opposes or is hostile to any of them shall have God's power to contend with. (2:98)

CASTING GOD'S REVELATIONS AWAY

The chapter then turns to reassure Prophet Muhammad of the truth and validity of the revelations he had received, and to denounce those who reject or oppose his message. It specifically condemns the Children of Jacob for not living up to their promises and commitments, whether made to God or to their own prophets, or to Muhammad himself. That is manifest in their rejection of the Quran, God's final revelation to humanity, which endorsed and reinforced the revelations they already had. (2:99-2:101)

MAGIC AND PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

Would that be the end of their transgression? Would they, having rejected the revelations sent down to Muhammad, hold fast to the revelations given to their forefathers and show faith and loyalty to its laws and teachings? Definitely not. They cast God's revelations behind their backs and went in search of myths and superstitions: (2:102-2:103)

The chapter states clearly that what people learnt of practices that could bring discord between the human being and wife could only bring them harm: (2:102) Since this thing that they learnt is de-

scribed as disbelief in God, this is reason enough to make it pure evil that can bring no profit whatsoever. (2:102-2:103)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when students concern themselves with accuracy and truth. They should ask themselves:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand,?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

QUESTIONS

Are the Quranic words clear? Do we have to analyze any concepts?
Do we know when the key Quranic words and phrases apply and don't apply?
Do we clearly understand how they apply to these signs?
Does this question ask something about facts?
About the meanings of words?
Are we evaluating anything?
What? Why? What criteria should we use in the evaluation?
What facts are relevant?
How can we get the evidence we need?

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following:

I am clear about what precisely the purpose of these signs that I am evaluating are when the Quran says: *Would that they had been knowing?* (2:102, 2:103)
Given the Quranic purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?

LESSON 87(5) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:104-2:112

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Say not: Look at us (raina), *but say:*
Wait for us patiently (unzurna) *and hear.*
And for the ones who are ungrateful,
there is a painful punishment. (2:104)
Neither wish those who were ungrateful
from among the People of the Book,
nor the ones who are idol worshippers
that any good be sent down to you from your Lord.
And God singles out for His mercy whom He wills.
And God is Possessor of the Sublime Grace. (2:105)
For whatever sign We nullify or cause it to be forgotten,
We bring better than it, or similar to it.
*Have **you** not known*
that God is Powerful over everything? (2:106)
*Have **you** not known that God,*
to Him is the dominion of the heavens and the earth,
and not for you other than God is there
either a protector or a helper? (2:107)
Or want you that you ask your Messenger
as Moses was asked before?
And whoever takes disbelief in exchange for belief,
then, surely, he went astray from the right way. (2:108)
Many of the People of the Book wished that after your belief
they return you to being one who is ungrateful out of jealousy
within themselves even after The Truth became clear to them.
So pardon and overlook until God brings His command.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (2:109)
And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms.
And whatever good you put forward for yourselves,

you will find it with God.
Truly, God is Seeing of what you do. (2:110)
And they said: None will enter the Garden,
but ones who had been Jews or Christians.
That is their own fantasies.
Say: Prepare your proof
if you had been ones who are sincere. (2:111)
Yea! Whoever submitted his face to God,
and he is one who is a doer of good,
then, for him his compensation is with his Lord.
And there will be neither fear in them,
nor will they feel remorse. (2:212)

COMMENTARY°

BEGRUDGING GOD'S GRACE

The opening signs of this passage (2:104-2:110) address the believers, asking them not to emulate the Jews in their play on certain Arabic words when speaking to the Prophet. One such word is *raina*, which means: "listen to us, *look at us*, would that you never hear; but the sound of which could be subtly varied to convey an offensive meaning, but say *unurna*, "*wait for us patiently*, or please speak to us slowly so we understand or bear with us." The Muslims were advised to use synonymous words that could not be twisted to give an offensive meaning in their address to the Prophet.

The section emphasizes that God's decisions in these matters are not arbitrary. If He chooses to bestow His mercy on Muhammad and his followers, it is because He knows that they both deserve and are worthy of it: (2:105).

Regardless of the immediate occasion, the Chapter at this point gives a definitive statement with regard to this important issue: (2:106)

Partial amendments of rulings in response to changing circumstances during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad could only be in the interest of humanity as a whole. As the originator of revelations, God, the Creator, is the final and absolute authority to decide such amendments. To cancel or replace any directive or principle is His exclusive prerogative. This point is emphasized in the next sign: (2:107)

We can clearly detect a hint of warning, and a reminder to Muslims that other than God they can call on no one for support or protection. The likely reason for this is the effect the Jewish campaign had had on some Muslims, whose trust and confidence in the Prophet showed signs of flagging. That is borne out by the following sign: (2:108)

Again there is a clear denunciation of the habit of questioning the Prophets: (2:109) That enmity towards the Quranic message which filled, and continues to fill, the hearts of some has always been the real force that motivates their plotting and scheming. (2:109)

Muslims are urged to pursue the faith God has chosen for them and to invest their efforts and energies in the worship of God Almighty: (2:110)

Thus we can see how the Quran revitalizes the collective Muslim conscience, focuses on the real sources of danger to the community, and mobilizes Muslims' energy and feelings for closer contact with God and more gracious submission to His will and command. Until that will is revealed and God's word takes effect in life, Muslims are urged to exercise prudence and show tolerance and magnanimity towards detractors, envious people and ill-wishers.

CLAIMS WITHOUT BASIS

The Chapter then deals with some general claims made by Jews and Christians, to the effect that they are the only righteous people who are assured of being admitted to heaven in the life to come. At the same time they continue to denounce and throw charges at each other. It then goes on to give God's final word on the matter. (2:111-113)

The Chapter then establishes another fundamental Quranic principle: that reward is commensurate with deed, without any preference for one nation, group or individual over another. Faith and submission to God, rather than title, ancestry or name, is the determining factor in this regard: (2:112)

Here again we find the most important feature of the Islamic faith: total, unconditional, mental and physical surrender to God. It is, however, a surrender that must be manifested in a practical form, expressed in the sign: (2:112)

The Chapter notes several accusations and controversies but leaves the final judgement to God, who on the Day of Judgement shall judge between them on all their disputes. It is to Him that all matters are ultimately referred. This is the fairest and most satisfactory way of dealing with these irrational and futile arguments, which were made by people whose exclusive claim to salvation and guidance has already been refuted.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in clarifying issues or conclusions.

Are the conclusions of these signs clear?
What would someone who disagreed with them do?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

The commentary on (2:104) clarified the conclusion of that sign so that I clearly understood it.
I was able to clarify issues and conclusions in these Quranic signs by active reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Lesson 87(6) Critical Thinking Strategy
Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38: 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Quranic Signs 2:113-2:121

Madinah: *And the Jews said:*
The Christians are not based on anything.
And the Christians said:
The Jews are not based on anything,
although they both recount the Book.
Thus, said those who know not a thing like their saying.
So God will give judgment between them on the Day of Resurrection
about what they had been at variance in it. (2:113)
And who does greater wrong than those who prevented
access to the places of prostration to God so that His Name
not be remembered in them,
and endeavored for their devastation?
It had not been for those to enter them,

but as ones who are fearful.
For them is degradation in the present,
and for them is a tremendous punishment
in the world to come. (2:114)
And to God belongs the East and the West.
So wherever you turn to, then, again,
there is the Countenance of God.
Truly, God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. (2:115)
And they said: God took to Himself a son. Glory be to Him!
Nay! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.
All are ones who are morally obligated to Him, (2:116)
Beginner of the heavens and the earth
and when He decreed a command,
then, truly, He says to it: Be! (kun) *Then, it is!* (2:117)
And those who know not said:
Why does God not speak to us or a sign approach us?
Thus, said those who were before them like their saying.
Their hearts resembled one another.
Surely, We made manifest
the signs for a folk who are certain. (2:118)
Truly, We sent ***you*** *with The Truth as a bearer of good tidings*
and as a warner. And ***you*** *will not be asked*
about the Companions of Hellfire. (2:119)
The Jews will never be well-pleased with ***you,***
nor the Christians until ***you*** *have followed their creed.*
Say: Truly, guidance of God. It is the guidance.
And if ***you*** *had followed their desires after what drew near* ***you***
of the knowledge, there is not for ***you*** *from God*
either a protector or a helper. (2:120)
Those to whom We gave the Book recount it with a true recounting.
Those believe in it, and whoever is ungrateful for it,
Then, those, they are the ones who are losers. (2:121)

Commentary°

The two signs (2:214-2:215) were revealed in connection with the *qibla* issue is the sign that comes immediately after them, stating: (2:115) It is saying that in the final analysis formal prayer is valid whatever direction a worshipper faces, because God's Countenance will be there. To specify a particular direction is no more than a matter of discipline. It does not mean that God's Countenance is found in one direction rather than another. After all, God does not wish to make things difficult for people, nor would He want to take away their reward or devalue it: (2:115)

UNBELIEF IS ALL ONE

The Chapter then discusses certain distorted concepts of God. It highlights the contrast between those and the beliefs held by the pagan Arabs, emphasizing the striking similarities, before it corrects those erroneous concepts and presents the true unitarian belief of the Quranic message. (2:116-2:118)

Next we come to the pure and clear Quranic concept of the nature of God and His relationship with His creation, and how creatures come into being. This is the clearest and noblest understanding of all these facts: (2:116-2:117)

This plain concept (2:116) eliminates the need for the Creator to have offspring or have them ascribed to Him, since: (2:117) How this divine will operates cannot be known because it is beyond the human being's capacity to comprehend, and it would be futile for him to try or pretend to know.

Following this brief discussion, the Chapter cites another statement it attributes to the idolaters of Arabia, again having a strange resemblance to what the Jews and the Christians were saying: (2:118)

It is a stern, uncompromising warning (2:120), addressed to none other than Muhammad, God's Messenger and beloved Prophet. His detractors are motivated by prejudice and narrow-minded self-interest, rather than by lack of proof or knowledge. Those of them who are able to rid themselves of such motives and who properly understand their own Scriptures will believe him: (2:121)

Having delivered this decisive warning, the Chapter now addresses the Children of Jacob with an amicable and sympathetic appeal, as a fitting end to this extensive debate concerning their history and religious conduct. They are offered a last chance before they are totally discredited and deprived of the privilege and honor of being the trustees and custodians of God's message to humanity.

The appeal opens with similar words as used earlier: (2:122-123)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

EXAMINE IN DEPTH

The sacred text should be examined in depth when we want to clarify or analyze the Quranic word *ayah*.

Why does the sacred text tell you about the importance of a sign when it says: 41:53

Why does the Quranic message think this concept is worth knowing?

Does this mean that the 6600 some signs of the Quran are also signs of God;d creation in the same way that a tree is a sign: Or the planets and stars: Or a gnat, a fly, a spider, or a bee: Or we ourselves as human beings?

8 STAGES OF WRITING

1. Diagram: For a question which specifies a diagram you should present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.

2. Discuss: The term discuss, which appears often in essay questions, directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations pro and con regarding the problems or items involved. This type of question calls for a complete and entailed answer.

3. Enumerate: The word enumerate specifies a list or outline form of reply. In such questions you should recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required.

4. Evaluate: In an evaluation question you are expected to present a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations.

5. Explain: In explanatory answers it is imperative that you clarify and interpret the material you present. In such an answer it is best to state the how or why, reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. The aim is to make plain the conditions which give rise to whatever you are examining.

6. Illustrate: A question which asks you to illustrate usually requires you to explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example.

7. Interpret: An interpretation question is similar to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate, exemplify, solve, or comment upon the subject and usually to give your judgment or reaction to the problem.

8. Justify: When you are instructed to justify your answer, you must prove or show grounds for decisions. In such an answer, evidence should be presented in convincing form.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 87(7) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking. God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to learn lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not cre-*

ated this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Quranic Signs 2:122-2:129

Madinah: *O Children of Jacob!*
Remember My divine blessing with which I was gracious to you,
and that I gave you an advantage over the worlds. (2:122)
And be God-conscious of a Day when no soul
will give recompense for another soul at all,
nor will the equivalent be accepted from it,
nor will intercession profit it , nor will they be helped. (2:123)
And mention when his Lord tested Abraham with words;
then, he fulfilled them.
God said: Truly, I am One Who Makes ***you*** *a leader for humanity.*
He said: And of my offspring?
He said: Attain not My compact the ones who are unjust. (2:124)
And mention when We made the House
a place of spiritual reward for humanity and a place of sanctuary:
And take the Station of Abraham to yourselves as a place of prayer.
And We made a compact with Abraham, and Ishmael
saying that: Purify My House for the ones who circumambulate it,
and the ones who cleave to it, and the ones who bow down,
and the ones who prostrate themselves. (2:125)
And mention when Abraham said: My Lord! Make this a safe land,
and provide its people with fruits,
whomever of them believed in God and the Last Day.
God said: And whoever is ungrateful, I will give him enjoyment for
awhile. Again, I will compel him to the punishment of the fire.
And miserable will be the Homecoming! (2:126)
And mention when Abraham elevates the foundations of the House
with Ishmael saying: Our Lord! Receive it from us.
Truly, ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Hearing, The Knowing.* (2:127)
Our Lord! And make us ones who submit to ***You****,*
and, of our offspring, a community of ones who submit to ***You.***
And cause us to see our devotional acts, and turn to us in forgiveness.
Truly, ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Accepter of Repentance,*
The Compassionate. (2:128)
Our Lord! And raise ***You*** *up, then, in the midst of them, a Messenger*
from among them who will recount to them ***Your*** *signs and teach them*
the Book, and wisdom and make them pure.
Truly, ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Almighty, The Wise.* (2:129)

Commentary°

Abraham's Covenant

When his Lord tested Abraham with certain commandments and

he fulfilled them, He said: (2:124) The Prophet is here reminded of how God had imparted certain commandments and obligations to Abraham in order to test his faith, loyalty and resolve. Elsewhere in the Quran, he is described as: *Abraham who paid his account in full.* (53:37) This is a recognition by God of Abraham's faithful and complete fulfilment of those obligations, according him a very high rank in God's estimation. Therefore, God's promise: *I am One who makes you a leader for humanity.* (2:124)

Thus, Abraham becomes the leader to be followed, the one who shows people the way to all goodness. Being human, Abraham is immediately prompted to wish for that blessing and privilege to be extended to his offspring. What Abraham expressed was a natural instinctive human reaction, because the human being is always eager to multiply and perpetuate his achievements and attainments. By the passing of knowledge and experience from one generation to the next, the human lot is improved and life is preserved. This natural and necessary human process has been a target for criticism and attack, while the Quranic message recognizes its importance, and promotes it through its law of inheritance, so that it serves human society to the full.

The answer to Abraham's question: *And what of my offspring?* reiterates an already stated major principle: that religious leadership and authority are granted purely on merit, in reward for sincere faith and diligent work. They are not inherited through ancestral lineage. God said: *"My compact does not extend to the ones who are unjust.* (2:124) *Unjust* takes various forms: it might be directed at oneself, by associating partners with God, or it might be oppression directed at fellow human beings. The leadership denied to wrongdoers includes all the meanings covered by the Arabic term *imam*, which include prophethood, political authority, and the leading of congregational prayers. Equity and justice make up the foremost qualification for this lofty vocation, and no one who deviates from these qualities deserves any form of leadership, in its widest sense.

The Sacred House, the Kabah, (2:125) was defiled by the ungrateful Arabs of the Quraysh who were supposed to be its trusted caretakers and custodians. They harassed and persecuted the believers and drove them out of Makkah. Yet God wanted this House to be a sanctuary to which people of all races resort. In there people should find peace and security for all. The Arabs had been directed to establish the place where Abraham stood, which is a reference to the whole area surrounding the Kabah, as a place for prayer, which makes its subsequent designation as a *qibla*, a spot towards which Muslims turn in prayer, a very natural progression raising no objec-

tions from anyone. After all, it had been the very first place to which Muslims, the legitimate heirs of Abraham's monotheistic religion, had turned in their prayer, because it had been dedicated to God and to no one else. Abraham and Ishmael, two pious and sincere servants of God, had been charged with cleansing it and preparing it for pilgrims who would come to it for worship and meditation. They would make no claim to its ownership, nor did they have it in their power to pass such ownership to anyone else. They were mere servants of God Almighty and keepers of His sacred and revered House. Abraham said: (2:126)

While still pleading for the House to be made a universal place of peace and security for posterity, Abraham has clearly heeded God's earlier admonition, as we now find him making the exception that only the believers should receive God's favor.

The chapter then goes on to paint a lively picture of Abraham and Ishmael embarking on the job of constructing the House of God and preparing it for worshippers: (2:127-2:129)

Their first aim is that their labor, which is dedicated purely to God, should be accepted by Him. Therefore, they offer it with humility, hoping to earn God's pleasure through it, pinning their hopes on the fact that God listens to their prayers and knows their feelings and intentions. (2:127)

They turn to God seeking His guidance, fully aware that, without His help and support, they are powerless. (2:128) Their prayer also shows the intrinsic solidarity of the community of believers over successive generations.

Their main concern was that their offspring should be God-conscious, righteous and obedient to God. So they add a specific request: (2:129)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DISCUSSION

Discuss with others the critical thinking strategy of thinking precisely about thinking in regard to: (2:123) when we fully recognize that each one of us is responsible for our own intentions and behavior.

Discuss the eight obstacles to being a Quranic critical thinker.

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or s some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 87(8) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. In other words, the Quranic message advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of Book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of Prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and **society.**[1]

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:130-2:141

Madinah: *And who shrinks from the creed of Abraham,*
but he who fooled himself?
And, certainly, We favored him in the present.
And, truly, in the world to come he will be
among the ones in accord with morality. (2:130)
When his Lord said to him: Submit!
He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds.(2:131)
And Abraham charged his children to it, and Jacob: O my children!
Truly, God favored the way of life for you.
Then, be not overtaken by death
but you be ones who submit to the One God.(2:132)
Or had you been witnesses when death attended Jacob
when he said to his children: How will you worship after me?
*They said: We will worship **your** God and the God of **your** fathers—*
Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac—
One God. And we are ones who submit to Him.(2:133)
That was, surely, a community that passed away.

For them is what they earned, and for you is what you earned
and you will not be asked about what they had been doing.(2:134)
And they said: Be you ones who are Jews or Christians,
you will be truly guided.
*Say **you**: Nay! We follow the creed of Abraham a monotheist.*
And he had not been of the ones who are idol worshippers.(2:135)
Say: We believed in God and what was caused to descend to us,
and what was caused to descend to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac
and Jacob and the Tribes and whatever was given Moses and Jesus,
and whatever was given to the Prophets from their Lord.
We separate and divide not between anyone of them.
And we are ones who submit to Him.(2:136)
So if they believed the like of what you believed in it,
then, surely, they were truly guided.
And if they turned away, then, they are not but in breach.
So God suffices for you against them.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.(2:137)
Life's color is from God. And who is fairer at coloring than God?
And we are ones who worship Him.(2:138)
Say: Argue you with us about God?
And He is our Lord and your Lord.
And to us are our actions, and to you are your actions.
And we are to Him ones who are sincere and devoted. (2:139)
Or say you about Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the
Tribes had been ones who are Jews or Christians?
Say: Are you greater in knowledge or God?
And who does greater wrong than he who had been
keeping back testimony from God that is with him,
and God is not One Who is Heedless of what you do. (2:140)
That is a community that surely passed away;
for it is what it earned and for you is what you earned
and you will not be asked about what they had been doing. (2:141)

COMMENTARY°

There is a brief interjection condemning those who dispute Muhammad's role as a Prophet and Messenger and argue about the essence of divine faith: (2:130-2:132)

A FAITH TO PASS TO YOUR CHILDREN

At this point we come to witness another awesome scene: Jacob on his deathbed, giving his last words of wisdom and advice to his children, gathered around him: (2:133)

It is indeed a tremendous and solemn occasion. The most im-

portant and only issue that concerned Jacob as he drew his last breath was the religion his children were to follow after his death. He was worried about the fate of his legacy and the future of the religion placed in his trust. His children's reply must have been most reassuring and gratifying for him. The chain would not be broken, and the legacy of Abraham was sure to live on for many generations to come.

Jacob asks his children: *How will you worship after me?* (2:133) He thus tells them why he gathered them, and the issue he wanted to be sure of before his death. It is the trust and the heritage of that blessed house. His children reassure Jacob that they would be true to their trust. Thus, the same heritage of Abraham was safe with Jacob's children, who clearly state that they have submitted themselves to God.

The sign opens with a rhetorical question addressed to the Jews: *Had you been witness when death attended Jacob?* (2:133) It tells them what went on as witnessed by God Himself. They could not question the truth of what had happened or distort it after God has stated what went on.

In the light of these assertions, a clear distinction is established between that bygone generation and the one that was facing the Quranic message in Madinah: (2:134)

The Prophet is instructed here to confront the Jews and the Christians together with the same challenge, and call upon them equally to revert, together with the Muslims, to the original religion of Abraham.

As this section makes its final, irrefutable argument, showing the great gulf separating Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and his sons from the Jews who were the Prophet's contemporaries, it repeats the sign with which it concluded its discourse about Abraham and his descendants who submitted themselves to God: (2:141) With this powerful statement, all arguments are brought to their decisive conclusion.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Questions

Feel free to raise questions about passages you read.

What does one of the previous signs say?
What does it imply?
Assume? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way? Why or why not?
What might someone who disagreed with it say?
Does the text leave out relevant information?
Does it favor one perspective? Which?
Why do you suppose it was written this way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs I read.
I can discuss my interpretations of what I read.

Lesson 87(9) Critical Thinking Strategy

Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)

Quranic Signs 2:142-2:147

Madinah: *The fools among humanity say:*
What turned them from their direction of formal prayer
to which they had been towards?
Say: To God belongs the East and the West.
He guides whom He wills to a straight path. (2:142)
And, thus, We made you a middle community
that you be witnesses to humanity,
and that the Messenger be a witness to you.
And We made not the direction of the formal prayer
which ***you*** *had been towards but that We make evident whoever*
follows the Messenger from him who turns about on his two heels.
And, truly, it had been grave, but for those whom God guided.
And God had not been wasting your belief.
Truly, God is Gentle toward humanity, Compassionate. (2:143)
Surely, We see the going to and fro of ***your*** *face toward heaven.*
Then, We will turn ***you*** *to a direction of formal prayer*
that ***you*** *will be well-pleased with it.*
Then, turn ***your*** *face to the direction of the Masjid al-Haram.*
And wherever you had been, turn your faces to its direction.
And, truly, those who were given the Book know that it is The Truth
from their Lord, and God is not
One Who is Heedless of what they do. (2:144)
And even if ***you*** *were to bring to those who were given the Book*

*every sign, they would not heed **your** direction of formal prayer.*
*Nor are **you** one who heeds their direction of formal prayer.*
Nor are some of them ones who heed the direction of the others
*formal prayer. And if **you** had followed their desires after the*
*knowledge brought about to **you**,*
*then, truly, **you** would be among the ones who are unjust.* (2:145)
Those to whom We gave the Book recognize it as they recognize
their children, while, truly, a group of people among them keep
back The Truth while they know (2:146)
*it is The Truth from **your** Lord.*
*So be **you** not among the ones who contest.* (2:147)

COMMENTARY°

This passage is almost entirely devoted to a discussion of the change of the *qibla*, or direction faced in formal prayer, which occurred sixteen or seventeen months after the Prophet's arrival in Madinah in 622 CE, and the controversy that attended it. No reference can be found in the Quran to the exact date of the change of the *qibla*.

The change of the *qibla* was a central event in the history of the Quranic message with far-reaching long-term consequences. It gave Muslims a new focus and identified the Muslim community as an independent nation with a *qibla* of its own.

Before the Quranic message, the Arabs revered the Kabah and considered it a symbol of their religious and cultural heritage and glory. But in order to test their sincerity in accepting Islam, and ensure that their hearts were totally free of narrow racial or tribal loyalties, God initially instructed the Prophet to command his followers to adopt Jerusalem as the direction they faced in prayer. It was a difficult instruction to carry out, but it was a crucial test of how much they really understood the nature and the spirit of their new religion. It was necessary in order to establish how far some of those early Muslims were still influenced by pre-Quranic racial and tribal traditions.

Changing the *qibla* back to the Kabah seems the only logical conclusion from that discussion of the dispute between the Muslims on the one hand, and the Jews, Christians and idol worshipping Arabs on the other, concerning Abraham's covenant with God and the right to his heritage. That covenant bound Abraham and his descendants, from one generation to another, to total submission to God.

The Quran describes the Muslim community variously as the leading community, a consummately upright nation and a paradigm of moderation. This special acclaim is only conferred upon them by

virtue of the fact that they draw their philosophy, outlook, traditions and way of life from God's revelations.

A MIDDLE COMMUNITY AND A PURE FAITH

It is clear from the course of the discussion (2:142-2:143) The Quran goes on to direct the Prophet to the proper course of action in dealing with the questions that would arise and how to put the whole issue in its proper perspective. (2:142) Places and directions carry no intrinsic merit in themselves, except inasmuch as God assigns them such merit, and to whatever direction one turns, God will be there. It is God's prerogative to guide whomever He wishes to the right path.

The Chapter goes on to outline the central position the Muslim community, or *umma*, occupies in the world, and the great role it is destined to play in the history and development of humanity. A prerequisite of that status and role is that the Muslim *umma* should have its own exclusive *qibla* and distinct identity. It must, first and foremost, owe allegiance to none other than God Almighty, who has commissioned it for that great task: (2:143)

The Arabic term *wasat*, used in this sign to describe the global Muslim community, is a vivid epithet which evokes a much wider range of meaning than is given by its literal equivalent of 'middle'. The term is used here in a very broad sense. Thus, the Muslim community, or *umma*, to use the Quranic term, is a middle-of-the-road community which stands witness against other nations and communities in the sense that it upholds and defends justice and equality for all people. It weighs up their values, standards, traditions, concepts and objectives, judging them as either true or false. It occupies the dual position of being a witness against humanity and an umpire administering justice among them. God's Messenger, Muhammad, is, in turn, a witness against the Muslim community in the sense that, as its leader and guardian, he defines its aims, activities and obligations, and charts the direction it should take. His teachings, example and leadership stimulate the community to appreciate its role and position in the world, and live up to their requirements.

The Muslim community occupies the middle ground in its beliefs and outlook on life. It maintains a healthy and equitable balance between the two extremes of spiritual asceticism and materialism. It treats a person as a balanced combination of body, soul and spirit, and allows him the opportunity and means to satisfy them both in such a way as to uplift the soul and enhance the quality of human life. Within this framework of balance and moderation, every constructive talent, ability, aptitude, and activity is nourished and en-

couraged to grow and play its part in society.

The Muslim community is balanced in the sense that it is not rigid or dogmatic. It holds fast to its ideals and traditions, and to the sources of its religion and way of life, while fostering change and progress in all fields. It is an open society that welcomes new ideas and learns from the work and experience of other societies, cultures and civilizations. Its main objective is to seek the truth, wherever that may come from, and to adopt it with courage and confidence.

Balance and moderation are clear in the way Muslim society is run and organized. It is neither a permissive, undisciplined community nor a regimented one run by brute force or rigid rules. It is a society raised on learning, education and rich cultural and social traditions.

Within the Muslim 'middle' community, equitable and fair relationships are cultivated and regulated among all individuals and social groups in the community. Individual rights and liberties are guaranteed and protected in order to encourage innovation, production and growth, in a manner that will serve the common good without infringing upon the rights of the individual, or endangering society as a whole. Individual as well as collective rights and obligations are clearly defined to enable people to serve a society that will care for them and protect their rights and interests.

The Muslim community is also the middle nation geographically, because the part of the world where Islam first emerged, and which continues to represent the heart of the Muslim world, occupies a central position in the world as a whole. It has been a crucible of cultures and civilizations and a busy crossroads for trade from all corners of the earth. It has been, throughout history, a rich source of vital natural resources and raw materials of many kinds for nations and civilizations all over the world. This position has given the Quranic community a strategic and influential role to play on the world stage.

Having announced that the Kabah was to be the permanent, universal direction of prayer for Muslims, the Chapter now reveals the purpose behind the previous choice of Jerusalem as a temporary *qibla*. (2:143) From these few words one can immediately identify the divine approach in educating the Muslims and preparing them, from that early stage of their development, for the role of custodian of God's message and the leadership of humanity. As part of that transformation, it was essential for that nascent community to be freed of all traces of paganism and ethnocentricity, and to become totally obedient and dedicated to the new religion embodied in the Quranic message. The early Muslims had to realize that their values

and standards in life must, from then on, be derived from the divine revelations being regularly communicated to the Prophet Muhammad.

In pre-Quranic days, certain elements of idol worshipping and racism had crept into the Arabs' understanding of the faith of Abraham and the status of the Sacred House in Makkah. The Kabah had come to be venerated as an exclusively Arab shrine. This was contrary to its intended purpose, since it had been established by Abraham and his son Ishmael as a symbol of purely monotheistic faith and for the reverence and worship of God alone.

To correct the situation and to test their faith and loyalty to the Prophet Muhammad, God commanded the Muslims to adopt Jerusalem as the direction they face in prayer. Although it was not clear to the Muslims at the time, the measure was meant to be a temporary one, specifically intended to decide where their allegiance would really lie.

It was a delicate decision, but the Quranic message is a complete and self-sufficient one. It does not need to be supplemented or augmented by other religious beliefs. It does not accept any lingering traces of un-Quranic ways, serious or trivial. This is indeed the point implied in the Quranic statement: (2:143) God certainly knows everything before it happens. However, He wishes that what is kept deep in people's hearts should first appear in action before He holds them accountable for it.

It was also a critical decision because God was aware that it was going to be a hard test for some Muslims, still fresh from idolatry. But He was also there to provide help and support for the sincere ones: (2:143) With God's guidance every difficulty becomes easy.

For yet further reassurance, God affirms that the formal prayers the Muslims had performed facing Jerusalem were valid and the reward for them guaranteed. (2:143) God would have never burdened the Muslims with more than He knew they would be able to bear. As long as their intentions were genuine and their determination sincere, God was sure to come to their assistance and lighten the tasks expected of them. If a certain hardship or test is meant to reflect God's wisdom and purpose, passing such a test is indicative of His mercy and compassion.

Thus the Muslims could feel content, confident and free of worry about the past and the future.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

GUIDE TO LISTENING CRITICALLY

Listen carefully to what the Quranic signs are saying.
Take them seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence among them.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.
Seek examples and analogies to them.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of others.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.
Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism.

It is important to engage in an assignment that actually teaches critical listening. This will help you learn how to listen critically to what others are saying or asking you to do. You have to understand the assignment well in order to do a good job in following it. You can describe discussions on videotapes about the Quran in writing, then compare your version in small groups with others, trying to accurately reconstruct what you heard. Whenever possible, you should watch the piece a second time to verify what you heard or settle conflicting accounts of what you heard and what others heard. While watching a video, take notes. Afterward, compare and discuss your notes with your classmates. A leader of your group could every few minutes stop the video and have you outline the main point and raise critical questions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to study and learn listening skills that I had not been aware of before.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

LESSON 87(10) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a the human being who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake —his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self-evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Therefore, I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-

data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible **fashion.**[3]

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)

Quranic Signs 2:148-2:152

Madinah: *And everyone has a direction to that which he turns.*
Be forward, then, in good deeds.
Wherever you be, God will bring you altogether for the Judgment.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (2:148)
And from wherever ***you*** *had gone forth, then, turn* ***your*** *face*
in the direction of the Masjid al-Haram.
And, truly, this is The Truth from ***your*** *Lord,*
and God is not One Who is Heedless of what you do. (2:149)
And from wherever ***you*** *had gone forth,*
then, turn ***your*** *face to the direction of the Masjid al-Haram.*
And wherever you had been, then, turn your faces to the direction of it
so that there be no disputation from humanity against you,
but from those of them who did wrong.
Dread them not, then, but dread Me.
And I fulfill My divine blessing on you—
so that perhaps you will be truly guided— (2:150)
as We sent to you a Messenger from among you
who recounts Our signs to you,
and makes you pure, and teaches you the Book and wisdom,
and teaches you what you be knowing not. (2:151)
So remember Me and I will remember you.
And give thanks to Me, and be not ungrateful! (2:152)

Commentary°

This section urges Muslims not to deviate from the path charted for them by the Quranic message, and to compete among themselves in their pursuit of constructive and beneficial goals. They will, even-

tually, return to God, to whom all 'humanity will be gathered: (2:148)

The instruction to face the Sacred Mosque in Makkah is reiterated in the following sign (2:149) The point here has nothing to do with the people of earlier revelations. It is an order to the Prophet to turn towards the Sacred Mosque wherever he offers his prayers, emphasizing that what God reveals to him is the truth.

Then comes a third reiteration of the institution of the new direction of prayer, but this new statement has a different purpose, namely to refute the argument made by the Jews and other people that taking Jerusalem as the direction of prayer was a vindication of their claim that their religion was superior to that of Muhammad. It was also meant to counter the argument of the idol worshipping Arabs who had exploited the situation to turn their fellow Arabs, who venerated the Kabah, away from the Quranic message. (2:150) The Muslims in Madinah were reminded that God was on their side and would look after them until they were fully developed and transformed into the leading community they were destined to become.

The Muslims of that small community knew very well what God Almighty meant by the reminder: (2:150) Only a few years earlier they had been wallowing in tribal ignorance, dogged by futile internecine conflicts, and preoccupied with worldly pursuits.

The same words of Abraham's prayer (2:129) are used here (2:151-2:152), thus establishing a direct and significant link between the two Prophets and their religion. The Quranic message was not, then, invented or born out of expediency, but had its origins firmly rooted in history. The direction of formal prayer that was being instituted had not been chosen haphazardly or without purpose. It was the answer to Abraham's passionate and sincere prayers.

... *and teaches you the Book and wisdom* ... This incorporates what has been mentioned earlier about reciting God's revelations included in His book, and emphasizes its essential subject matter, i.e. wisdom. Wisdom is acquired as the fruit of instruction in this book, i.e. the Quran. It is a quality which ensures that anyone who has it views matters in their proper perspective and evaluates them correctly. He has the necessary understanding to appreciate the aims behind God's commandments and teachings.

WHEN GOD REMEMBERS HIS SERVANTS

This passage is concluded with yet another reminder of God's favors to the Muslim community. God calls on Muslims to remember and praise Him, and in return He will remember them: *Remember Me and I will remember you and be not ungrateful!* (2:152) This is the greatest privilege any human being can receive from God, whose

generosity is limitless and whose benevolence knows no bounds.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Develop Questions About Questions

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
How does the Quran teach us to think critically?
What is the question I am trying to answer?
Can I put the question in a better way?
Is the question I am asking clear? or too complex?
How do you evaluate the question?
What would need to be done to answer this question?
How can we find out?
What does this question assume?
Would x put the question differently?
How could someone settle this question?
Can we break this question down at all?
Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
Does this question ask us to evaluate something?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

Lesson 87(11) Critical Thinking Strategy
Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Quranic Signs 2:153-2:163

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Pray for help with patience and formal prayer.
Truly, God is with the ones who remain steadfast. (2:153)
And say not about those who are slain in the way of God:
They are lifeless. Nay! They are living,
except you are not aware. (2:154)
We will, certainly, try you with something of fear and hunger and
diminution of wealth and lives and fruits, and give good tidings
to the ones who remain steadfast, (2:155)
those who, when an affliction lit on them, they said:
Truly, we belong to God and, truly,
we are ones who return to Him. (2:156)
Those, blessings will be sent on them from their Lord and mercy.
And those, they are the ones who are truly guided. (2:157)
Truly, Safa and Marwa are among the Waymarks of God,
so whoever made the pilgrimage to Makkah to the House
or visited the Kabah, then, there is no blame on him
that he circumambulates between the two.

And whoever volunteered good,
then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing. (2:158)
Truly, those who keep back what We caused to descend
of the clear portents and the guidance,
after We made it manifest to humanity in the Book
—those, God curses them
and the ones who curse, curse them. (2:159)
But those who repented, and made things right,
and made things manifest, then, those
—I will turn to them in forgiveness.
And I am The Accepter of Repentance,
The Compassionate. (2:160)
Truly, those who were ungrateful, and they died
and they were ones who are ungrateful,
those, on them is a curse of God,
and the angels and humanity, one and all. (2:161)
They are ones who will dwell in it forever.
The punishment will not be lightened for them
nor will they be given respite. (2:162)
And your God is One God. There is no god but He,
The Merciful, The Compassionate. (2:163)

COMMENTARY°

THE POWER OF PATIENCE

Patience is mentioned frequently in the Quran. God is aware that patience is an essential element in maintaining a steady and balanced pace in the face of the inevitable hardships and adversities of life. It is a prime requirement for the Muslim community in its universal responsibility for establishing God's order on earth.

Patience is required on the personal level for observing one's religious duties, for resisting temptation, misfortune, poverty, oppression and injustice, and for carrying out one's responsibilities towards the establishment of the Quranic way of life in society. Patience and perseverance are required to remain always on the alert, ready to give whatever sacrifice may be needed.

SACRIFICING ONE'S LIFE

The Quran continues with its spiritual mobilization of the pioneering Muslim community of Madinah, as the latter braces itself for the crucial and momentous task of leading humanity back to God. It outlines the major demands and consequences of its hard and long struggle, or *jihad*, with its attendant sacrifices. It identifies the proper and correct criteria for the evaluation and appraisal of its outcome: (2:154)

The Chapter continues to mobilize the believers for the hard, long struggle ahead and increase their understanding of things to come: (2:155-156)

God is the ultimate sovereign and final arbiter. To Him we turn for guidance on every matter. This is the essence of true submission, which comes from full recognition of His control of our destiny and our fate. Such are the true believers who show patience and endure with fortitude. God's Messenger gives them the happy news of having earned their reward from God, the most bounteous. The blessings they receive are guaranteed by God: (2:157) It is indeed a noble and honorable reward that they will receive. Indeed, they share in the same type of reward the Prophet himself receives. What is more is that they have a testimony by God making it clear that they are rightly guided. This, again, is an honorable status.

The foregoing passage has given us a glimpse of God's amazing but effective approach in educating the Muslim community and preparing its ranks for upholding His order and carrying it on to the rest of human kind.

A VERY SIGNIFICANT RITUAL

Safa and Marwah are among the symbols set up by God. Whoever visits the Sacred House for pilgrimage or the visitation (*umra*), would do no wrong to walk to and fro between them. (2:158)

The word *shukur*, which means "being grateful", used in the Arabic original to describe God's response to voluntary acts, conveys a very friendly impression. It has the added connotation that God Almighty is very pleased with these acts and thanks His servants for doing them. This would surely demand respect and modesty towards God on the part of His human servants. If God describes Himself as thankful to His servant for any good action that servant does, how can we be sufficiently grateful to God in our praise of Him? The connotations of divine compassion and mercy implied here defy description in human language.

SUPPRESSING THE TRUTH

The signs that follow launch a sharp attack on those who concealed facts that were revealed in their Scriptures in the wake of the controversy they created over the change of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the Kabah. This suggests that they continued to exploit the situation, especially after Makkah was also instituted as the place of the pilgrimage for Muslims. (2:159-2:162)

Those who persist and refuse to repent, however, shall meet their nemesis in the worst possible way, because they rejected God's hos-

pitality and consciously chose to perpetrate evil and falsehood: (2:161-2:163)

The passage (2:161-2:163) affirms the principle of God's Oneness as an essential part of true faith and a solid foundation for the human being's moral and social systems. The One God is the only deity to be adored and worshipped, and He is also the sole source of the moral codes and norms, and the origin of all the laws and regulations that govern and control the human being's social, political and economic life and the life of the whole cosmos: (2:163) The Quran hammers home these concepts so as to leave people in no doubt that the principle of God's Oneness permeates all aspects of life and all parts of existence. God's sovereignty over this world and His active control of its affairs stem from His grace attributes. He is *The Merciful, The Compassionate.*"

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINK ABOUT:

How to think?
How to expand your ideas before they are evaluated?
How to confront new ideas?
How to relate new ideas to your own experience?
How to determine the implications of your ideas and your consequences?

Have a discussion with a friend or in your classroom. Immediately after your discussion, write for five minutes, summarizing the key points, raising new questions, adding analysis, examples, or clarification. Later these notes could be shared and discussed. To develop your abilities to use questioning if you are in a classroom setting, your teacher could present an idea or passage to you and your classmates and have you brainstorm possible questions. Pairs of you can practice questioning each other about issues raised in study, trading the roles of questioner and questioned. Your teacher may provide lists of possible initial questions and perhaps some follow-up questions. You could also be allowed to continue your discussions another day, after you have had time to think. As you practice questioning, see it modeled, and learn the language, skills, and insights of critical thinking. Your mastery of questioning techniques

will increase. The direction and structure of a discussion can be made clearer by periodically summarizing and rephrasing the main points made or by distinguishing the perspectives expressed. To practice exploring the idea of illuminating and probing questioning, you could read and evaluate different kinds of interviews, categorizing the questions asked. You could then list probing follow-up questions that weren't asked, and share your lists and discuss them with your friend or in your classroom. Why would you ask this? How could that be followed up? What would that tell you?

How would your rate yourself? I was able to:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what we are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question myself and others.

LESSON 87(12) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:164-2:167

Madinah: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and the earth*
and the alteration of the nighttime and the daytime
and the boats that run on the sea with what profits humanity,
and what God caused to descend from heaven of water,
and gave life to the earth after its death,
and disseminated on it all moving creatures,
and diversified the winds and the clouds,
ones caused to be subservient between heaven and earth,
are the signs for a folk who are reasonable. (2:164)
Yet there are among humanity
some who take to themselves rivals besides God.
They love them like they should cherish God.
And those who believed are stauncher in cherishing God.
And if only those who did wrong would consider
when they will see the punishment that all strength belongs to God,
and that God is Severe in punishment. (2:165)
When they will clear themselves—those who were followed from
those who followed them—and they will see the punishment,

all cords will be cut asunder from them. (2:166)
Those who were followed said: If there be a return again for us,
then, we would clear ourselves from them
as they cleared themselves from us.
Thus, God will cause them to see their actions with regret for them,
and they will never be ones who go forth from the fire. (2:167)

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter highlights other natural phenomena: (2:164) All these phenomena deserve our attention, reflection and intelligent study. They are all manifestations of God's awesome power and infinite mercy. Life is the greatest mystery of all. How does it spring out of the earth when water makes it fertile? How does it come about, starting gently at first before manifesting itself with full vigor? By what incredible process is it carried in a seed, an egg or a gene?

Faith gives the believer a new insight into the world around him and a new understanding of beauty, and turns life into one continuous celebration of the creation and glory of God. Nevertheless, there are still those who neither look nor understand. That is the reason they go astray and lose direction in life. (2:165)

In those days these were idols carved out of stone or wood, or they were stars and planets, or angels and devils. In every age these deities take on different forms and sizes. Their common feature is that they are all forms of associating partners with God, whether they are invoked together with God, or treated merely as objects of adoration or on a par with God. In the worst case, they replace God altogether.

But the case is different with true believers: (2:165) Their love for God supersedes their love for everything else in the world. The use of the term love here is both touching and appropriate, because the relationship between God and true believers is one of love and spiritual affection. It is an intimate and private relationship, continuously renewed with an undying adoration.

ALLIANCES FALL APART

Were these transgressors to look ahead to the Day of Resurrection, they would realize their folly in worshipping anything or anybody other than God. All power belongs to Him. He has neither equals nor partners. They would also see the hopelessness of their actions and the severity of the punishment awaiting them. The leaders shall disassociate themselves from their followers, and shall be exposed as powerless to help them, or even help themselves. The truth of God's Oneness and His absolute power would be clearly manifest.

The followers, on the other hand, would wish for a second chance of life in order to denounce and disown those false gods and leaders. The full extent of the fraud and the delusion under which they had been living would be exposed. (2:165-2:167)

It is an awesome scene in which all the hypocrisy and the insincerity and futility of the relationship between the two groups is brought fully into the open. And then come the pain and the torment: (2:167)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How do you understand these signs?
Would others see it this way?
Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialogical reasoning after studying these signs.

LESSON 87(13) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

QURANIC SIGNS 2:168-2:176

Madinah: *O humanity! Eat of what is in and on the earth—*
lawful, wholesome—and follow not the steps of the Satan.
Truly, he is a clear enemy to you. (2:168)
Truly, he commands you to evil and depravity,
and that you say about God what you know not. (2:169)
And when it was said to them:
Follow what God caused to descend.
They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers
were following on it—even though their fathers
had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided. (2:170)
And the parable of those who were ungrateful
is like the parable of those who shout to what hears not,
but a crying out and pleading
yet those to which they call out to are deaf, dumb and blind,
so they are not reasonable. (2:171)
O those who believed! Eat of what is good that We provided you
and give thanks to God
if it had been He alone whom you worship. (2:172)
Truly, He forbade carrion for you and blood and the flesh of swine
and what was hallowed to any other than God,
but whoever was driven by necessity,
without being one who is willfully disobedient,
and not one who turns away, then, it is not a sin for him.

Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (2:173)
Truly, those who keep back what God caused of the Book
to descend, and exchange it for a little price,
those, they consume not into their bellies but fire.
God will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection
nor will He make them pure.
And for them will be a painful punishment. (2:174)
Those are those who bought fallacy
for guidance and punishment for forgiveness.
So how they are ones who remain steadfast for the fire! (2:175)
That is because God sent down the Book with The Truth
and, truly, those who were at variance regarding the Book
are in a wide breach. (2:176)

COMMENTARY°

WHICH PATH TO FOLLOW

Humanity, eat of what is lawful and wholesome on earth and do not follow Satan's footsteps: he is indeed an open enemy for you. He enjoins you only to commit evil and indecency and to attribute to God something of which you have no knowledge. When it is said to them: (2:168-2:171)

The signs give the whole of humanity permission to enjoy the food God has provided on earth, with the exception of what He has forbidden—which will be mentioned later in the Chapter. People are also instructed here that they should listen only to God concerning what may or may not be lawful for consumption.

These instructions show plainly how realistic and practical the Quranic message is, and how genuinely aware of the human being's nature and needs. The rule is that everything is lawful with the exception of a few things, which are listed in the Quran by name.

The next sign gives a humiliating image of those blind followers of earlier generations, depicting them as herds of sheep that can hear the shouting and the sounds made by their shepherds but do not understand what those words actually mean. In fact, as the Chapter goes on we realize that they are worse. For while sheep can, at least, see, hear and bleat, while these are heedless and even worse: (2:171)

THINGS FORBIDDEN TO EAT

The Chapter then gives believers specific rules on the various types of animal meat that they may eat. (2:172-176)

God addresses believers by their most important quality of having accepted the faith, clearly underlining their special relationship with Him and making it clear that they should accept only His in-

structions and guidelines with respect to what is or is not lawful and permissible. They are reminded that He alone provides for them and shows them what is permissible and what is not. Nothing good or wholesome has been forbidden, only what is harmful and corrupt. The purpose behind these few restrictions is not to deprive people or curb their enjoyment of the good things God has made available, and for which they should show gratitude. God directs them to thank Him if they truly worship Him alone. Thus, they are taught that thanksgiving is an act of worship. (2:172)

Then comes a list of what has been forbidden for the Muslims to eat. It starts with an Arabic word which indicates that the restriction is limited to the given items: (2:173)

The meat of animals slaughtered in dedication to something or someone other than God is forbidden for Muslims to eat for that very reason. There is nothing physically wrong with the meat, but it is spiritually tainted by the fact that it was sacrificed in reverence of a creature of God. Of all prohibited things this type is most relevant to faith.

It becomes clear, yet again, how strongly and closely the principle of God's Oneness is linked to the source of religious guidance and lawmaking in the Quranic message, God Almighty.

In establishing the above restrictions, however, the Quranic message takes account of the circumstances under which they would apply. Necessities could arise which would entail a measured lifting or relaxation of those restrictions. These are dictated strictly by the need at the time, and on condition that consumption of forbidden meat is not, in any way, permitted for reasons of self-indulgence or in defiance of God's instructions.

This is a general Quranic principle in all matters of this kind, (2:173), and can be extended to situations of a similar nature. Any life-threatening situation creates a necessity which would allow a person to eat or drink forbidden things if alternatives cannot be found, within the conditions mentioned above.

SUPPRESSION OF GOD'S REVELATIONS

Elsewhere, the Quran informs us of other types of meat that had been forbidden to the Jews but which Muslims were allowed to eat: (6:146) All these are lawful to Muslims. (2:174-2:176)

Here (2:174) we have a description that is in perfect harmony with the scene being portrayed. Their gain for suppressing the truth is nothing but fire in their bellies. Indeed they are portrayed eating fire. Yet the description is factual. When they are in hell, the fire makes their clothes and their food. As an additional disgrace and hu-

miliation, they are totally ignored in the life to come. Their isolation is given a very graphic description in the text: (2:174)

Another expressive description tells us that they have made an utterly foolish choice by exchanging success for failure and making a losing deal. (2:175) The sarcasm is unmistakable, but it fits the vile actions of concealing the truth that God has revealed for the guidance and benefit of all humanity, and rightly castigates the folly of rejecting guidance and accepting humbug.

The result of deliberately concealing or disputing God's revealed truth is a life of constant turmoil, confusion and conflict with human nature. It is a life of permanent conflict and discord. (2:176)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found some Quranic signs that are examples of dialectical reasoning because they used some of the following phrases:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

LESSON 87(14) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:177-2:182

Madinah: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces*
towards the East or the West.
Rather, virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believed in God
and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets.
And whoever gave wealth out of cherishing Him to the possessors
of kinship and to the orphans and to the needy
and to the traveler of the way and to the one who begs
and the freeing of a bondservant,
and whoever performed the formal prayer,
and gave the purifying alms
and the ones who live up to their compac
when they made a contrac.
and the ones who remain steadfast in desolation and tribulation
and at the time of danger, those are those who were sincere
and those, they are the ones who are God-conscious! (2:177)
O those who believed! Reciprocation was prescribed for you
for the slain: the freeman for the freeman and the servant
for the servant and the female for the female.
But whoever was forgiven a thing by his brother,
the pursuing be as one who is honorable,
and the remuneration be with kindness.
That is a lightening from your Lord, and a mercy.
And he who exceeded the limits after that,
then, for him is a painful punishment. (2:178)
And for you in reciprocation there is the saving of life,
O those imbued with intuition,
so that perhaps you will be God-conscious. (2:179)
It is prescribed for you when death attended anyone of you
if one left goods, to bequeath to the ones who are your parents
and the nearest kin as the one who is honorable,

an obligation for the ones who are God-conscious. (2:180)
Then, whoever substituted it after he heard it,
truly, the sin of it is only on those who substitute it.
Truly, God is Hearing, Knowing. (2:181)
Then, whoever feared from one who makes a testament,
a swerving from the right path or sin,
and, then, made things right between them,
there is no sin on him.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (2:182)

COMMENTARY°

WHAT CONSTITUTES VIRTUOUS CONDUCT

This passage concludes with a sign that outlines the principles of true faith together with the rules of proper Quranic conduct: (2:177)

The subject of this sign is clearly linked to the issue of the direction of prayer and the controversy surrounding it, as discussed earlier. It now establishes a comprehensive principle that covers this issue. These mostly centered on new religious rituals and forms of worship introduced by the Quranic message and which differed from their own.

Taken as a whole, the sign spells out the total sum of goodness, or virtuous conduct. What, then, gives these beliefs and actions their value and meaning? What is the value of believing in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets?

To believe in the Books and the Prophets means to attest, without reservation, to the truth, honesty, and integrity of all the revealed Books and all the Prophets and Messengers God commissioned to deliver them at various times of human history. This leads to a belief in the unity of the human race, serving God alone, abiding by one and the same religion and adhering to one universal divine order. This outlook has a profound effect on the personality of the believer, who is seen as custodian of the heritage of God's Messengers and divine messages.

The next clement of God-consciousness is to spend money, dear as it may be, on one's near of kin, orphans, the needy, the stranded traveller, beggars, and for the freeing of slaves. The significance of this commendable act of charity and sacrifice is that it liberates person from stinginess, selfishness, greed and excessive love of wealth, which cripple one's ability to give and help those who are in need. It is a highly spiritual act of altruism when someone of means has the courage and the generosity to give away his dearest and most precious possessions. It is an act of liberation for the human soul when

person rises above worldly desires and materialistic instincts. It is an admirable achievement, which the Quranic message commends and values very highly.

It is characteristic of the Quranic approach that it aims, first and foremost, at liberating person from his own internal prejudices, weaknesses and desires before going on to liberate him from the pressures and influences of the society around him. Unless one overcomes one's own egotism, one is not likely to stand up to evil and temptation in the world outside.

Charity is also a social value that strengthens the bonds of love and trust within the family unit, the vital nucleus of society, and preserves the dignity of its members. Charity towards orphans in society achieves social justice and helps to save the young and the weak from homelessness, corruption and abuse. For the needy and the destitute, charity provides the care and security by which their dignity is preserved, their standing in society may be enhanced, and their contribution to society assured. It ensures that not a single person in the community is lost, or left uncared for. For travellers who, for one reason or another, find themselves stranded in foreign lands or in societies where they feel alienated, charity can be a lifeline. It is an emergency measure to alleviate an unexpected hardship, and by which they are made to feel that they belong to the global human family.

Begging is forbidden to those who can earn a minimum of sustenance or have jobs. Charity by those who have the means aims to stop this evil practice.

Charity has played a vital role in the Quranic message's fight against turning POWs into slaves. It provided the means to free those unfortunate enough to have been taken prisoner in wars against the Quranic message. This is done by either buying slaves to set them free, or by giving a slave money to buy his own freedom, at a price he agrees with his master. Under the Quranic message, slaves became entitled to their freedom as soon as they demanded it, and they were helped to regain their liberty and dignity by allocating them money from charity and *zakat*. Slaves would then become wage earners, entitled to receive *zakat*. Every effort would be made to speed up their total freedom.

The sign adds that the regular observance of formal prayer is another important aspect of virtuous conduct. Formal prayer is more than a sequence of bodily movements, and there is more to it than facing in a certain direction, east or west. It is more than a simple act of spiritual meditation. Formal prayer, an act of total submission and dedication to God, epitomizes the entire Quranic outlook on life.

The Quranic message recognizes the human being as a complex entity comprising body, mind and soul, and perceives no contradiction or conflict among their respective roles or needs. It, therefore, sees no need for suppressing the functions or needs of any one of them in order to satisfy any of the others. From this perspective we can clearly see how formal prayer combines the activity of all three elements in an integrated act of worship dedicated completely to the adoration and glorification of God Almighty. The bodily movements of standing (*qiyam*), bowing (*ruku*) and prostration (*sujud*), and the recitation of Quranic signs and other prescribed text and the deliberate reflection required on that, and exclusive devotion to God, coalesce beautifully during formal prayer in a unique and splendid combination. Maintaining this standard in the performance of formal prayer is a reminder and a fulfilment of the essence and purpose of the Quranic message as a whole.

Paying the purifying alms (*zakat*) duty is another aspect of virtuous conduct. This is a social tax instituted by God Almighty, the ultimate provider, as a token of the entitlement of the poor to a share in the wealth of the rich. It is clear from the text that *zakat* is separate from, rather than a substitute for, the charitable spending mentioned earlier. While giving to those causes is voluntary, payment of *zakat* is a religious duty in its own right, and both are essential factors in attaining virtuous conduct. Unless this was the case, obviously there would be no meaning in giving *zakat* a separate mention in the same sign.

Keeping one's promises is another aspect of virtuous conduct that the Quran frequently highlights as a feature of true faith and humanity. It is a quality that stems from honesty to God and fulfilment of one's promises to Him. Furthermore, it is an essential requirement for creating an environment of mutual trust and confidence among individuals, societies and nations. History will readily testify to the Muslims' impeccable record in honoring agreements, promises and treaties with allies and enemies alike. The Quranic message has given an unparalleled example of integrity that can never be surpassed.

Steadfastness and perseverance in times of adversity and hardship, and in the face of danger, are necessary qualities for the education and development of strong individuals with solid characters who will stand firm, come what may. Under such conditions the faithful never lose hope or confidence in God, nor will they seek help from any source other than Him.

For the Muslim community, or *umma*, to fulfil its great role of universal leadership of humanity and its task of instituting justice and equality in the world, it is necessary to collectively acquire these

qualities. All should have the resilience to withstand poverty, weakness, loss of friends and allies, shortage of manpower and resources, and the rigors and consequences of war and striving to serve God's cause.

The construction of this part of the sign in the Arabic original indicates that this quality is singled out as especially significant in the context of the sign as a whole. This gives added importance and a higher status in the sight of God to those possessing this quality.

Thus we see how, in the inimitable style of the Quran, a single short sign combines the essentials of faith and personal and financial Islamic obligations and presents them as a complete code under the all-embracing title of virtuous conduct (*al-birr*), which has been variously interpreted as 'virtuous conduct', 'righteousness', 'ultimate goodness' or, indeed, 'faith'. It is essentially a concise and complete statement of the basic philosophy of the Quranic message and the principles of the Islamic code of living that must be evident in any Muslim society.

They will have been sincere in their faith and their commitment to God (2:177), and they will have proved themselves capable of translating that faith into a practical way of life. They are also God-conscious because they are God-conscious and of their bond with His power and grace, and they are conscientious in fulfilling their obligations towards Him.

In reflecting on the contents of this sign, one can clearly visualize the great heights to which God is aiming to raise human beings through the Quranic message, His constitution. But as one looks at those who ignore the Quranic message, or those who resist it and suppress or persecute its followers and supporters, and those who simply turn away from it, one cannot help being filled with sorrow.

Yet we must not despair. Our faith and trust in God fill our hearts with hope and confidence that the day is coming when humanity will come around to seeing the profound value, universal beauty and eternal qualities of the Quranic message.

This passage covers a series of instructions relating to the social organization of the Muslim community during its formative period in Madinah. It also introduces certain aspects of Muslim religious worship. The two parts go hand in hand, and are linked with the notion of maintaining a sense of God-consciousness, or *taqwa*, which is emphasized towards the end of each part. It is worth recalling that the same feature of *taqwa* was highlighted at the end of the previous (2:177), which outlined the fundamental elements of righteousness, incorporating aspects of faith and practical behavior.

The passage discusses the legal aspects of just retribution (*qisas*)

in cases of killing. It outlines rulings on will and inheritance, and outlines provisions relating to fasting, formal prayer, retirement to a mosque for a certain period of time (*itikaf*), and rules governing financial claims.

The outline of each of these and other subjects in the passage is concluded with a direct or an indirect reference to *taqwa*.

This consistent and deliberate approach highlights the essential nature of the religion of the Quranic message. It is an integral system, an indivisible whole. Its social systems, legislative codes, and religious rituals emanate from faith and the comprehensive world order it generates. These are all held together by a common goal of submission to, and veneration of God, the Creator and the Provider, who has instituted person as His vicegerent and custodian in this world. This trusteeship is conditional on the human being's worship of God alone and on receiving all his concepts, systems and laws from Him only.

The passage is a notable example of the cohesion of the various aspects of the Quranic message.

THE LAW OF JUST RETRIBUTION

The passage (2:178-2:179) begins with an address to the believers, highlighting their main quality of having accepted the faith, which means that they receive their laws from God. They are hereby informed that retribution in cases of killing is permitted to them, in accordance with the provisions laid down in these two signs. They are also called upon to reflect on the purpose and wisdom of this legislation, outlined in the second sign. They are reminded of the need to enhance their sense of God-conscious, which acts as a safety valve against any excess or injustice in punishing those accused of killing.

The statement clearly indicates how retribution ought to be exacted: a free person for a free man, a slave for a slave, a woman for a woman. (2:178) This situation would arise when the victim's relatives decide to accept financial compensation instead of insisting on the execution of the killer in retaliation. Once this is agreed, the victim's relatives are also under an obligation to seek a fair and amicable settlement, while the killer's guardian or representative must, on his part, settle readily and honorably. This serves to clear the air and to remove any ill-feelings or grudges that would have inevitably arisen between the two parties. It would also be conducive to a more friendly and pleasant relationship between the living members of both parties.

This provision has been laid down out of God's grace, as a special favor and an act of mercy towards believers: (2:178) The con-

cession permitting the settlement of cases of killing by financial compensation paid to the victim's family was not given to the Jews in the Torah. For the Quranic message, it has been set up as an alternative aiming to spare lives when agreement and amicable settlement can be reached.
(2:178)

It is not merely the punishment in the hereafter that is certain to come; such aggression means that capital punishment becomes due and financial compensation no longer accepted. Reneging on the agreement constitutes a violation of the agreed settlement and could only fuel hatred, animosity and a desire for vengeance from both sides. Therefore, when the victim's closest relatives have accepted blood money, they can no longer seek retaliation by killing the killer.

We can appreciate the profound wisdom of the Quranic approach and its respect for, and understanding of, human nature and motivation. The Quranic message recognizes anger as a very basic human reaction when one's relative is killed, and the Quranic message satisfies this desire by legislating for just retribution in this way. Rigorous justice cools tempers and helps to remove grudges and deter the killer from offending again.

At the same time, however, the Quranic message holds out the prospect of pardon and opens the way for mutual agreement, defining precisely the principles and rules which govern it. The Quranic message advocates that the alternative of pardon should, therefore, come as a voluntary option accepted by both sides out of a genuine desire for reconciliation, rather than having it forced upon them.

Revealing the profound wisdom underlying this ruling, and its objectives, the sign ends with the words: (2:179) Vengeance, or the satisfaction of grudges, is not the prime goal of this legislation. Its objective is to promote and preserve human life. Furthermore, there is an invitation to reflect on the wisdom of this code and an endeavour to raise believers' consciousness and fear of God.

LIFE PRESERVATION THROUGH RETRIBUTION

This is achieved by providing strong deterrence, preventing further crimes from being committed. When a person knows for certain that the price he will pay for committing murder is his own life, he is more likely to stop and think before deciding to go ahead. Life is also preserved by giving satisfaction to the victim's relatives in exacting justice on the offender, with the effect that they will neither seek, nor have the right to seek, further revenge on the offender's family. In pre-Quranic Arabia the desire for vengeance knew no limits, leading to protracted wars and conflicts that continued, on and

off, for forty years. There were other family, tribal and clan feuds in which vendettas and bloodshed continued for generations.

The law of just retribution promotes life in a wider and more comprehensive sense. Murder is an aggression on life and a criminal act against humanity as a whole. In preventing a single murder from being committed, the law upholds the inviolability of life as an absolute value. This is a far higher goal than saving the life of an individual or a group of people. It is a goal that enshrines life. More importantly, the sign urges believers to reflect deeply on this matter and discover the wisdom behind the code, in order that you may remain God-conscious.

This is the real deterrent that can prevent murder being committed in the first instance, and stop vendettas being pursued endlessly. Without this measure of deterrence, no law can be successfully upheld and crime can never he effectively rooted out. Laws and regulations that lack such sensitivity, or do not evoke in people the fear and respect of an authority higher and more powerful than the human one, are inadequate and ineffective.

This explains the remarkably small number of cases in which capital punishment was carried out during the Prophet Muhammad's era and that of his early successors. In most of those cases, conviction was based on confessions voluntarily made by the offenders themselves. God-consciousness *taqwa* was evident in the public conscience which, together with enlightened and wise legislation, served as a most effective deterrent. Legal codes and regulations were supplemented by religious discipline, education and exhortation to produce a balanced and virtuous society, with clear concepts of responsibility and justice.

The next piece of legislation introduced in the Chapter relates to personal wills: (2:180-182) Before the later revelation of the signs in Chapter 5 specifying the exact share of inheritance due to each heir, it was an incumbent duty on Muslims to make a will in favor of parents and other near of kin. The Arabic term *khayr*, translated here as property, also means good and goodness, and some commentators interpret it to denote wealth generally.

The Quranic signs, 4:11, 4:12 and 4:176, specifying shares for the distribution of inheritance were revealed at a later date than those under discussion here. Those signs make parents legally entitled to specific shares of their departed children's wealth. Therefore, no bequest by will may be made to them. The Prophet established the rule that no will may be made in favor of an heir. As for other relatives the present rule holds in general terms, except for relatives who are named as heirs in the relevant signs on inheritance in Chapter 4. All

other non-inheriting relatives may be included in a will.

The provision of including non-inheriting relatives in one's will is extremely perceptive because it benefits, in particular, those relatives who are not assigned a share or entitled to any inheritance. Providing for them through a will strengthens family ties and promotes the welfare of the family.

In this way equitable distribution of wealth is guaranteed: heirs are not wronged, and other relatives are not ignored. A will should be made combining moderation, kindness and benevolence. As an additional measure, the Prophet specified that a maximum of one-third, and preferably a quarter, of the inheritance may be bequeathed by will. This ensures that the rights of natural heirs are not unfavorably affected by the will. These legal measures are reinforced, as is the case with all social legislation in the Quran, by God-consciousness.

Anyone having knowledge of the contents of a will who, after the death of the testator, gives himself the right to alter any of its details will be guilty of grave misconduct. The deceased would bear no blame for such unauthorized alteration: (2:181) God will be the witness to the deceased's innocence as well as to the guilt of those who tamper with the will, and He will deal with each of them accordingly.

There is, however, one exceptional situation in which an executor may amend the contents of a will. This arises when the executor realizes that the will favors some beneficiaries at the expense of others or that it prejudices one or more of the heirs. (2:182) Here again, the action is closely linked to how conscientious and God-conscious the people involved are. This quality, as we saw earlier in our discussion of just retribution, is the basis of the Quranic concepts of justice and honesty, and of public responsibility in a Quranic society.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

This Quranic Studies program has been developed to clarify and settle questions peculiar to itself. You should use such questions to organize and unify details covered in Quranic studies. The basic questions we all face in-

clude the nature of right and wrong, how we know things, and so on. In order to develop a framework for organizing details, both general and specific, Quranic ideas should be continuously raised. You need to learn to come to your own conclusions, raise thought-provoking issues, be allowed extended discussion of them and help keep the discussion focussed. Have extended discussions on thought-provoking ideas. Maintain a focus in the discussion so that multiple issues are discussed. Be clear about your objectives so that you feel that you are moving towards them in an affective way.

QUESTIONS

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to elaborate further on the deep questioning strategy in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

Lesson 87(15) Critical Thinking Strategy
Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations

How to use information will become clear by answering the following questions:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Quranic Signs 2:183-2:188

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Formal fasting was prescribed for you as it was prescribed
for those who were before you so that perhaps
you will be God-conscious. (2:183)
Fasting is prescribed for numbered days.
Then, whoever among you had been sick or on a journey,

then, a period of other days.
And for those who cannot fast is a redemption of food
for the needy.
And whoever volunteered good, it is better for him.
And that you formally fast is better for you
if you had been knowing. (2:184)
The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran
was caused to descend—a guidance for humanity—
and clear portents of the guidance,
and the Criterion between right and wrong.
So whoever of you bore witness to the month,
then, formal fasting, and whoever had been sick or on a journey,
then, a period of other days.
God wants ease for you, and wants not hardship for you,
so that you perfect the period and that you magnify God
because He guided you
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (2:185)
And when My servants asked you about Me, then, truly, I am near.
I answer the call of one who calls when he will call to Me.
So let them respond to Me and let them believe in Me,
so that perhaps they will be on the right way. (2:186)
It is permitted for you on the nights of formal fasting
to have sexual intercourse with your wives.
They (f) are a garment for you and you are a garment for them (f).
God knew that you had been dishonest to yourselves
so He turned to you in forgiveness and pardoned you.
So now lie with them (f) and look for what God prescribed for you.
And eat and drink until the white thread becomes clear to you
from the black thread at dawn.
Again, fulfill the formal fasting until night.
And lie not with them (f) when you are ones
who cleave to the places of prostration.
These are the ordinances of God.
Then, come not near them.
Thus, God makes His signs manifest to humanity
so that perhaps they will be God-conscious. (2:187)
And consume not your wealth between yourselves in falsehood,
nor let it down in bribes to the ones who judge
so that you consume a group of peoples wealth among humanity
in sin while you know. (2:188

COMMENTARY°

FASTING: ITS NATURE AND PURPOSE

For the Muslim community, or *umma*, duty-bound to undertake a campaign of struggle, i.e. *jihad*, as a means of establishing God's universal order, to assume the leadership of humanity, and to stand witness against the rest of humanity, it is only natural that fasting should he made obligatory. Fasting is a means of testing the human being's determination and will-power, and an important aspect of the human being's relationship with God. It is a discipline that teaches person how to rise above his physical needs and overcome the pressure of temptation in order to earn God's blessings and reward. (2:183-2:185)

EXEMPTION FROM FASTING WHEN TRAVELING

As far as fasting while traveling is concerned, one gets the distinct impression that the ruling is strongly in favor of exemption from fasting without restricting the exemption to cases of hardship. As for the licence to break the fast during illness, apart from the different opinions of scholars, it also seems to be granted unconditionally and without qualification. Implicit in this ruling is the requirement that the missing days must be compensated for at a later date, with no requirement to make the compensatory fasting days consecutive.

OBLIGATORY FASTING

This (2:184) is followed by the recommendation that, apart from cases of illness or travel, fasting would be more beneficial and preferable despite the hardship or discomfort it might cause: (2:184) There is here an obvious element of education and training of will-power to enable Muslims to make the effort to fast. This also highlights the health benefits of fasting, in spite of the strain, all of which are important factors in the Quranic self-education process.

These recommendations were a step towards the withdrawal of the exemption for non-travelling healthy people and making fasting in the month of Ramadan obligatory, as given in (2:185). The concession remained valid for elderly people who find fasting in Ramadan too strenuous and are not expected to be able to fast at a later date.

The Chapter gives the Muslims yet another incentive to keep the fast: (2:185) This statement encapsulates the fundamental principle on which all Quranic duties are founded. They are intended to be easy, not arduous. This indicates a generous and realistic outlook on life as a whole. It instils in the Muslim heart a tolerant, easy and agreeable attitude. Religious and social activities and responsibilities

are discharged with ease, confidence and assurance, in the happy knowledge that God's purpose is to enable person to go through life with the minimum of hardship or discomfort.

To complete a whole month, sick people or those who travel in Ramadan and avail themselves of the special concession are required to make up for days missed by fasting an equal number of days at a later date in the year: (2:185)

Fasting is an occasion to celebrate God's guidance, glory and grace. Therefore, the requirement: (2:185) It is a time during which believers can feel and appreciate God's favors and reciprocate with thanks, submission and gratitude. In so doing, Muslims cultivate the precious and vital quality of *taqwa*, or God-consciousness; a main objective of fasting.

Thus we can see how evident God's grace is in the imposition of the duty of fasting which, on the face of it, seems hard and demanding. We can clearly see its educational and disciplinary benefits for a nation being prepared for the leadership of humanity, guided by a genuine fear of God, a keen sense of accountability, and a vigorous conscience.

A Close Relationship with God

Interposed among the signs dealing with fasting comes a sign reflecting a profound insight into human nature. It reaches to the deepest recesses of the human psyche, offering solace and ample rewards for keeping the fast in response to God's commands: (2:186) How kind and compassionate God truly is! Any hardship encountered in keeping the fast fades in comparison with this friendly and gentle reassurance. The choice of words creates an atmosphere of intimacy and accessibility, with God Himself stating a direct contact between Him and His servants. He does not give instructions to His Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad on how to answer believers' questions about Him. He gives the answer Himself: (2:186)

This sign fills a believer's heart with love, confidence and utter reassurance. In this atmosphere of friendliness and compassion, God, who has no need for anyone, directs believers to respond to Him and believe in Him, in the hope that this will guide them to wisdom and righteousness. (2:186) By earning God's generosity and guidance, believers end up winners on all counts.

Further Rules on Fasting

The Chapter then resumes its elaboration on the rules of fasting. It points out that, in addition to food and drink, married Muslims are permitted sexual intimacy with their spouses between sunset and

dawn. It gives the exact time for the fasting which extends from dawn till sunset. It points out that during any period when people retire to a mosque for worship in Ramadan, i.e. *itikaf*, sexual intimacy is not permitted for married people. (2:187)

HONESTY AT ALL TIMES

Within this context of fasting and abstention from food and drink, the Chapter sounds another warning, this time against usurping other people's possessions. The sign refers specifically to presenting false and fraudulent evidence before a judge or an arbiter in order to obtain a favorable judgement giving one the right to appropriate someone else's property. To reinforce the sense of deterrence, the warning follows immediately after reference to the bounds set by God and the call for more consciousness and fear of Him. (2:188)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of your own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

LESSON 87(16) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:189-2:196

Madinah: *They ask you about the new moons.*
Say: They are appointed times for humanity,
and the pilgrimage to Makkah.
It is not virtuous conduct that you approach houses from the back.
Rather, virtuous conduct was to be God-conscious,
and approach houses from their front doors.
And be God-conscious so that perhaps you will prosper. (2:189)

See Prelude (2:190)
See Prelude (2:191)
See Prelude (2:192)
See Prelude (2:193)
See Prelude (2:194)

And spend in the way of God, and cast not yourselves
by your own hands into deprivation by fighting. And do good.
Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good. (2:195)
And fulfill the pilgrimage to Makkah, and the visit for God.
And if you were restrained, then, whatever was feasible
of sacrificial gifts.
And shave not your heads until the sacrificial gift
reaches its place of sacrifice.
Then, whoever had been sick among you,
or has an injury of his head, then, a redemption of formal fasting,
or charity or a ritual sacrifice.
And when you were safe, then, whoever took joy in the visit
and the pilgrimage to Makkah then whatever was feasible

of a sacrificial gift. Then, whoever finds not the means,
then, formal fasting for three days during the pilgrimage
to Makkah and seven when you returned,
that is ten completely.
That would be for he whose people are not ones who are present
at the Masjid al-Haram.
And be God-conscious of God
and know that God is Severe in repayment. (2:196)

COMMENTARY°

This new passage resumes the elaboration of religious obligations and practical rules governing behavior within the Muslim community and its relations with the outside world. (See Prelude)

It explains the religious and practical significance of the phases of the moon. It dismisses the pre-Quranic Arab superstitious practice of entering houses through the back door on certain occasions. It outlines the rules governing war and fighting generally, as well as the prohibition of fighting in the four lunar months and particularly in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. It ends with a comprehensive description of the rituals of the pilgrimage and the visitation (*umra*) as prescribed by Islam, revising, modifying and replacing all the pagan and idolatrous concepts and practices of former times.

In one concise passage, and in a succinctly clear style, the Quran lays down rules and principles relating to faith and belief, the regulation of religious rituals and practices, as well as war and fighting. These are all linked and interlaced with powerful admonitions and comments evocative of God and His power.

On correcting the Arab practice of entering houses through the back door, the Chapter points out that form, in itself, is not what really matters but it is one's God-consciousness. It says: (2:189)

The Chapter calls on Muslims to spend of their wealth for the cause of God, exhorting them to (2:195)

The Chapter again emphasizes God-consciousness when dealing with the pilgrimage rituals. (2:196) (2:197) (2:203)

It is quite clear that there is a common thread firmly binding these instructions and rulings together. Matters of faith, ritual and law, the spiritual and the mundane, the religious and the secular, the personal, national and international, are all intertwined and spun together in one comprehensive, universal religious and social system based on rules and laws laid down directly by God.

THE QURANIC TRANSFORMATION

Beginning with this passage, we note a salient feature recurring in the rest of the Chapter. We find the Muslims addressing the Prophet Muhammad with specific questions relating to a wide range of everyday issues and situations they were encountering in their new way of life. They reveal a genuine desire on the part of the new Muslims to find out what their new religion has to say about these matters. The believers wanted to learn more about how the Quranic message viewed and interpreted the social and physical phenomena they were experiencing in the world around them.

They asked questions about the moon and the various phases it goes through. Why does it start as a fine crescent which becomes bigger until it develops into a full sphere, and then reverse—the cycle until it disappears altogether before it is reborn in the shape of a thin crescent again?

They asked questions about what part and how much of their wealth they should give away as charity. They asked questions about war, and whether it would be allowed during the sacred months and in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. They asked for Islamic rulings on alcoholic drinks and gambling, which were social habits in pre-Quranic Arabian life.

They asked questions about menstruation, and whether sexual contact between spouses was allowed during such periods. They asked about even more intimate and personal issues concerning matrimonial relations. These questions were sometimes raised by women.

Questions relating to other issues are to be found in several other Chapters in the Quran. The fact that they were raised is in itself significant in more ways than one.

To begin with, it indicates a high degree of enlightenment and dynamism in the Muslim society, which was already developing a distinct character. A sense of community was rapidly growing. The Muslims were no longer a set of isolated individuals, nor were they any longer separate tribes scattered all over Arabia. They had become a nation with its own identity, systems and relationships, in which every person was keen to assume his or her role and position. This new social, intellectual and emotional awareness was brought about by Islam, and was molded by the Islamic outlook on life, its system and its pioneering views and concepts.

Second, this inquisitiveness also indicates a keen sense of religious consciousness emerging in the new society. It reflects the depth and strength of the hold the new faith had taken on the hearts and minds of its followers. Having discarded their old assumptions and

attitudes, and wrenched themselves away from pre-Quranic customs and traditions, they lost confidence in the old order and began asking questions looking to their new religion for education and guidance in all aspects of life.

This state of emotional and intellectual awareness is generated by true faith. The believer is freed from all former beliefs and traditions. He begins to view with scepticism all previously held ideas, and to subject all his actions to fresh scrutiny. The believer becomes readily receptive to the directives of the new faith, and keen to reform his or her life accordingly. Even those former concepts and practices which are approved or adopted by the new order will assume a new context as they are integrated into the new faith.

The new order need not necessarily replace the old one in every detail, but it is important that those details adopted by the new faith should be assimilated and incorporated into it in substance as well as in spirit. This is very well illustrated by the pre-Quranic pilgrimage rituals which the Quranic message transforms into a new set of rules, hardly bearing any resemblance to those formerly practised by the Arabs.

The situation today is not very different. Human nature has not changed and the Quran is also there. Neither person nor the Muslim world community will be safe until the Quran assumes conduct of the battle as it did for the first generation of Muslims. Unless Muslims realize this fact they cannot hope to succeed or prosper.

The least that results from such a realization is that Muslims would approach the Quran with the same understanding and attitude. The Quran would be seen as a dynamic, active force, formulating new concepts, facing up to anti-Quranic ideas, insulating Muslims against ignorance and deviation and helping them avoid the pitfalls. This would be far removed from the present approach many have adopted towards the Quran, viewing it merely as a fine work of literature and going no farther than reciting it rhythmically or chanting its words like a melody on certain occasions.

The Quran was revealed for a totally different purpose. God meant it as a blueprint for a complete way of life, a stimulus, a driving force guiding the Muslim community, charting its course through thick and thin, and helping it overcome and avoid all the difficulties and obstacles it is bound to encounter in this world.

THE NEW MOON AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

They ask you about the new moons: (2:189) Some reports suggest that the Prophet Muhammad was asked why the moon goes through its various phases. Others say that he was asked why have

the crescent moons been created, which seems to be more consistent with the answer given in the Chapter: They are signs for people to mark fixed periods of time, and for the pilgrimage.

THE PILGRIMAGE AND VISITATION (*UMRA*)

Whether this custom related to the pilgrimage only, which seems more probable, or to travelling in general, the Arabs had maintained the belief that it was a sign of piety and virtuous conduct to uphold it. However, the Quran refutes that as an empty gesture that could serve no religious purpose. It goes on to establish the proper religious concept of virtuous conduct as God-consciousness and His presence at all times and in all situations, rather than as a routine gesture that had no meaning whatsoever. Therefore it gives the instruction that houses must be approached from the front, and re-emphasizes the importance of God-consciousness as the road to success in this life.

Let us now take a closer look at the signs on pilgrimage in this Chapter and the instructive message they convey. (2:196) *Ihram*, or consecration, involves that men discard their normal clothes and wear simple unsewn garments, refraining from shaving or cutting their hair, covering their head, clipping their nails, hunting, and sexual contact with their spouse. This state is assumed at specified locations outside Makkah, each known as *miqat*, and for the main part of the pilgrimage and the whole of the *umra*. Women observe the same restrictions but wear sewn clothes, often all white.

The first thing to notice about this sign is the precision with which it treats the subject. It is divided into a number of short, well-defined instructions. Any exceptions or provisions relating to each ruling are made immediately before moving on to the next. The passage is rounded off with a strong emphasis on God-consciousness.

The first article stresses the fact that once one has decided to perform the pilgrimage or the visitation, one must do so in full and dedicate one's actions to God:

Exemption from completing the pilgrimage or the *umra* is granted when one is prevented from doing so either by an enemy or, by illness or other exceptional circumstances. The same applies to the case of being prevented from completing the rites. (2:196) If prevented by force, pilgrims offers a sacrifice within the means at their disposal. They would then be able to terminate their state of consecration, or *ihram*, at the point they reached, even though they might not have performed any of the rituals other than going into the state of consecration.

The sign refers to whatever offering you can easily afford. This includes animals such as camels, cows, sheep, or goats. Pilgrims

should sacrifice whatever they can easily afford, and several people may share in a single camel or cow. In the *umra* of al-Hudaybiyah, as many as seven people shared in the sacrifice of one camel. On the other hand, one person may choose to offer a sheep or a goat, which would suffice. The exemption serves to mitigate hardship such as that encountered at al-Hudaybiyah, or which might arise as a result of illness.

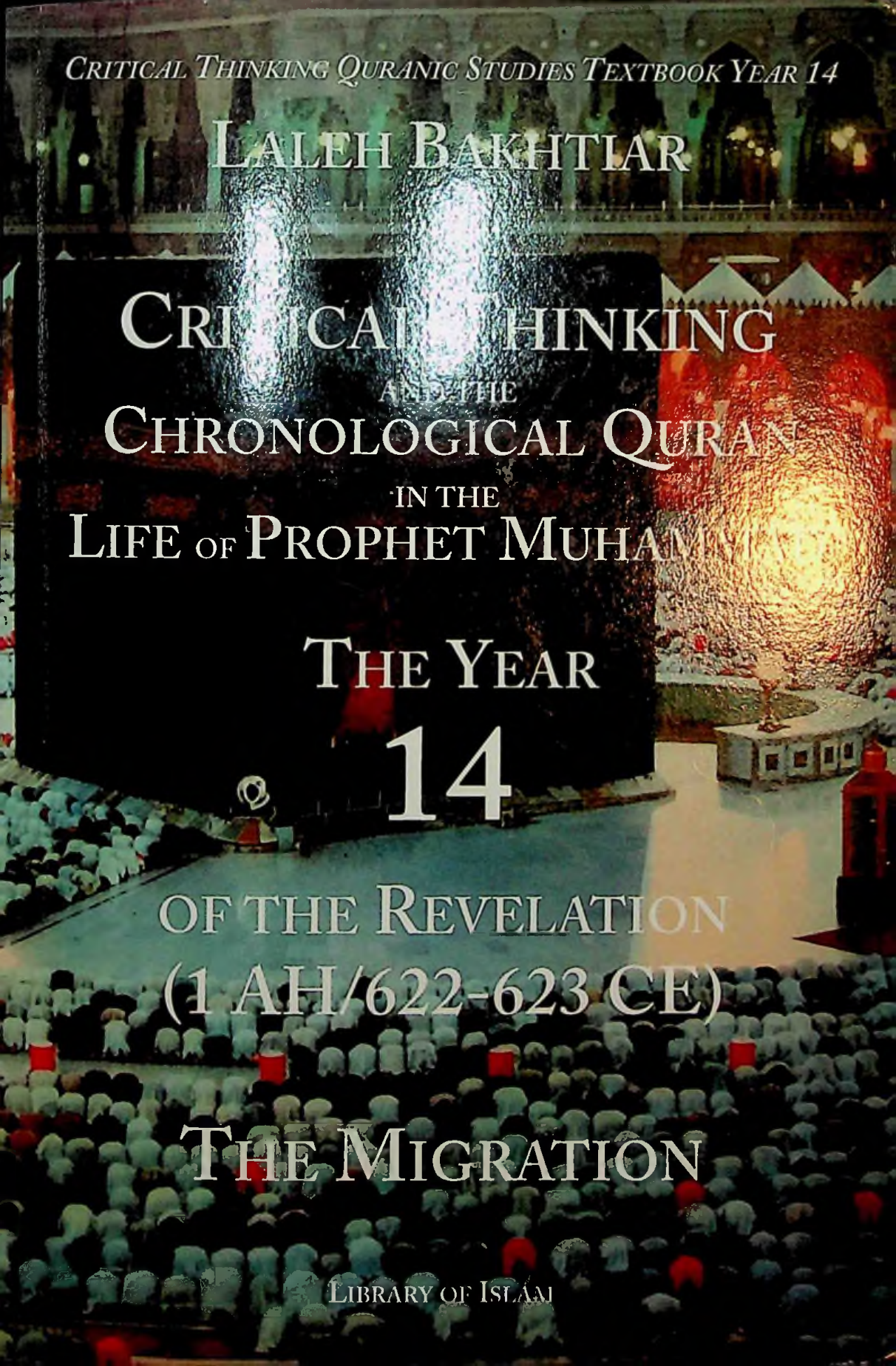
The essential aim of such a religious practice is to revive one's awareness of God and draw closer to Him. If this is disrupted by threats from a hostile quarter, a disabling illness or the like, pilgrims are not deprived of the rewards they would have received had they completed the pilgrimage or the *`umra*. They are, therefore, instructed to proceed with making the offerings as if they had completed the intended rituals. This compassionate attitude is well in line with the spirit of the Quranic message and its view of the purpose of worship.

Then follows another rule relating to the performance of pilgrimage and *umra*. (2:196) This, of course, applies under normal peaceful conditions. Pilgrims are not to shave their head or cut a piece of their hair, which precedes the termination of the state of consecration, or *ihram*, until they have made their offerings at the designated place and time. This is done at Mina on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijja, after attendance the previous day at the plain of Arafat. Once the offerings are made, pilgrims may release themselves from consecration.

Here we have another exemption: (2:196) The Quranic messag is a practical and humane religion, and if there are grounds of health that would require shaving one's head, one would be permitted to do so while in the state of *ihram*, even before the destination for offering the sacrifice is reached or the appropriate rituals are completed. The concession, however, is balanced with a compensation which has been set as a three-day fast from dawn to dusk, the feeding of six needy people, or slaughtering a sheep and giving its meat to the poor.

The Chapter gives another ruling relating to the pilgrimage and the *umra*: The sacrifice is required of those who are able to complete the rituals of both duties. Let us look at the matter in more detail.

One form of *tamattu*, which is referred to in this sign as: taking advantage of performing both duties of pilgrimage and *umra*, involves the performance of the *umra* separately, prior to performing the pilgrimage. To do this, one sets off for *umra*, goes into *ihram* at the appointed location, performs the rites of *umra*, which include circumambulation (*tawaf*) around the Kabah and running between (*sai*) between Safa and Marwah, and shaving one's head or trimming one's


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hair to release oneself from consecration. One then waits for the time of the pilgrimage to re-enter into *ihram*, or consecration, for the pilgrimage. This is valid only if the *umra* is offered within the appointed months of pilgrimage: Shawwal, Dhu al-Qada and the first ten days of Dhu al-Hijja.

Another form of *tamattu* is when one goes into *ihram*, at the appointed location, with the intention of combining both *umra* and pilgrimage. On arrival in Makkah, the *umra* is performed, after which the pilgrim maintains his *ihram* until he has performed the rest of the rites of the pilgrimage at the proper time.

In both cases, pilgrims are required to make such offerings as they can afford and are available. Animals such as camels, cows, sheep and goats can be offered for this purpose.

Those who lack the means need to fulfil an alternative requirement. (2:196) It is recommended that fasting should be undertaken over the three days before attendance at Arafat on the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijja. The other seven days of fasting are undertaken following one's arrival back home, a total of ten days in all, as the Quran clearly points out.

The idea here apparently is to keep the pilgrims' hearts and minds attached to God during the interval between the *umra* and the pilgrimage. The requirement of sacrifice or fasting perhaps aims to maintain the feeling of being closer to God in the period between the *umra* and pilgrimage. Thus, lifting the restrictions of consecration, or *ihram*, after performing the *umra* would not lead people away from the highly spiritual atmosphere that the pilgrimage generates.

Since those who live close to the Sacred Mosque are required to perform the pilgrimage only, and not the *umra*, they cannot have the option of *tamattu*. They have no sacrifice to offer and, consequently, the ruling of fasting ten days instead does not apply to them, either: (2:196)

At this juncture the Chapter draws attention to a vital and fundamental aspect of the human being's relationship with God. It exhorts: (2:196) The requirement for proper observance of these rulings would be an ever-present sense of God-consciousness, and an appreciation of the awesome power of His retribution. By its very nature, *ihram* invokes a high sense of awareness of God and an eagerness not to incur His displeasure, which must be maintained, with equal vigor and sincerity, during the interval when the pilgrims are relieved from the restrictions of *ihram*. Pilgrims are expected to remain vigilant and self-controlled throughout the whole period.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions::

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

Lesson 87(17) Critical Thinking Strategy Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards

How are developing criteria for evaluating by clarifying values and standards used in the Quran? Criteria Include:

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are rea-*

sonable. **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:197-2:210

Madinah: *The pilgrimage to Makkah is in known months.*
And whoever undertook the duty of pilgrimage to Makkah in them,
then, there is no sexual intercourse nor disobedience nor dispute
during the pilgrimage to Makkah.
And whatever good you accomplish, God knows it.
And take provision.
Then, truly, the best ration is God-consciousness.
So be God-conscious, O those imbued with intuition! (2:197)
There is no blame on you
that you be looking for grace from your Lord.
And when you pressed on from Arafat,
then remember God at the Sacred Monument.
And remember Him as He guided you,
although you had been before this,
certainly, of the ones who go astray. (2:198)
Again, press on from where humanity pressed on, and ask God for forgiveness. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (2:199)
And when you satisfied your devotional acts, then, remember God
like your remembrance of your fathers,
or a stauncher remembrance. And among humanity are some who
say: Our Lord! Give to us in the present! And for him, there is no

apportionment in the world to come! (2:200)
And among them are some who say:
Our Lord! Give us benevolence in the present
and benevolence in the world to come
and protect us from the punishment of the fire! (2:201)
Those, for them is a share of what they earned.
And God is Swift at reckoning. (2:202)
And remember God during numbered days.
So whoever hastened on in two days, then, there is no sin on him.
And whoever remained behind, then, there is no sin on him.
And for whoever was God-conscious, be God-conscious.
And know that to Him you will be assembled. (2:203)
And among humanity is one whose sayings impress you
about this present life and he calls to God to witness what
is in his heart while he is most stubborn in altercation. (2:204)
And when he turned away, he hastened about the earth
so that he makes corruption in and on it,
and he causes the cultivation and stock to perish,
but God loves not corruption. (2:205)
And when it was said to him: Be God-conscious!
Vainglory took him to sin. So hell is enough for him!
And, certainly, it will be a miserable Final Place! (2:206)
And among humanity is he who sells himself
looking for the goodwill of God,
and God is Gentle with His servants. (2:207)
O those who believed! Enter into peacefulness collectively
and follow not the steps of Satan.
Truly, he is a clear enemy to you. (2:208)
But if you slipped after drew near you the clear portents
then, know that God is Almighty, Wise. (2:209)
So do they look on but that God approach them
in the overshadowing of cloud shadows? And the angels?
The command would be decided.
And commands are returned to God. (2:210)

COMMENTARY°

A SYMBOL OF QURANIC UNITY

The Chapter then gives an outline of the rituals of the pilgrimage and the visitation (*umra*). This follows quite naturally from the earlier account dealing with lunar changes and phases, and the admissibility of fighting during the sacred months of the year and in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. (2:197-2:203)

The Chapter proceeds to give further details of the pilgrimage

rituals. It defines the time of the year in which it is valid and explains further the values to be observed in its performance. Like the preceding passage, it closes with an exhortation to fear God at all times. (2:197)

Having pointed out what should be avoided, the Chapter conveys the reassurance that: (2:197) This would be the greatest incentive for the believer to perform more good deeds, and to have God witness more of his devotion, which is in itself a source of contentment and recompense.

God then calls on the pilgrims to provide for themselves, physically and spiritually, in preparation for the challenging and demanding experience of pilgrimage. Therefore, the emphatic exhortation: (2:197) God-consciousness is a real source of both material and spiritual sustenance. It provides the human mind and body with strength, refinement and physical and moral support. Those with insight and understanding would be the first to appreciate this directive and benefit from divine provision.

The Chapter outlines more pilgrimage rules. It explains that it is permitted for pilgrims to engage in trade or employment during the pilgrimage period. It also adds further elaboration of rituals. (2:198-2:199)

Thus, trading and commercial activity, including letting and leasing, are permitted during pilgrimage. In fact, the Quran describes such activities as a means of seeking God's blessings. Thus, anyone who seeks to earn some income through trade and business in pilgrimage should feel that he only seeks God's bounty and that whatever he receives is given to him by God. It is not his own efforts that give him his earnings. It is God, the generous giver who gives us all we have. Once this is appreciated by the pilgrim, he will realize that even as he is trading, he is in a state of devotion to God which in no way violates or defiles his observance of the pilgrimage duties.

Once this principle is established in believers' hearts and minds, the Quranic message allows them total freedom to pursue their interests, every one of which would in itself be considered a valid act of worship.

It is not by chance, therefore, that a sign dealing with the rituals of pilgrimage should also include instructions on earning through trade and commercial activities. (2:198) Attendance at Arafat is the central duty of the pilgrimage.

The scheduled time for attendance at Arafat begins at noon on the Day of Arafat, the ninth day of the Muslim lunar month of Dhu al-Hijja, and ends at the break of dawn the following morning, the Day of Sacrifice.

PERFECT DEVOTION AT EVERY MOVE

The Prophet laid down this rule and extended the time to the break of dawn on the Day of Sacrifice, the tenth of Dhu al-Hijja, in order to distinguish Quranic practice from that of the pagan Arabs.

The established tradition adopted by the Prophet was to depart from Arafat after sunset. The Quran exhorts Muslims to invoke God's name following their departure from Arafat. It reminds them that this is part of the guidance God favored them with, and that their actions are an expression of gratitude for that favor. They are also reminded of the gloom and despair that had marked their way of life prior to the Quranic message: Remember Him who has given you guidance. Before this you were certainly in error.

Those early Muslims were fully aware of this profound truth. They were only a few years away from the pagan Arab way of life, with its lamentable religious ignorance and its worship of idols, jinn and angels, who were also conceived to be daughters of God, while the jinn were thought to be His in-laws. Such foolish superstitions had in turn led to confusion in religious practices. These included the unjustified and unexplained prohibition of the meat of certain animals, or the meat from their backs, and the sacrifice of children to idols, gods or jinn.

Pre-Quranic Arab life was plagued with a host of socially unjust and morally corrupt practices. The Chapter points specifically to one of them here, class distinction, by commanding: (2:199)

The Arabs' decadence was also shown in the senseless and bloody tribal conflicts which at the time had totally undermined their position in the world. It was further reflected in the near-total confusion of their sexual mores, marriage customs, and family relationships in general. It was apparent in the injustice inflicted upon the weak by the strong, in the total absence of ethical or legal guarantees to restore the balance. Above all, it was manifested in the Arabs' marginal existence and insignificance on the world stage, which had only begun to be redressed with the advent of Islam.

Returning to the main theme of this passage, one can also describe the pilgrimage as the greatest gathering of Muslims from all over the globe. They are brought together under the single banner of the Quranic message, abandoning all their former racial, cultural and national ties. The unsewn *ihram* garments they don when they are in the state of consecration are symbolic in more senses than one. All pilgrims wearing these garments stand on the same level, with no distinctions of tribal or ethnic kinship. The Quranic message is the only unifying factor.

In pre-Quranic days, the Quraysh used to give themselves cer-

tain privileges to distinguish them from the rest of the Arabs during the pilgrimage. They arrogantly referred to themselves as *al-hums*, or the pure. One such privilege the Quraysh had granted themselves was that they did not attend at Arafat, and so approached Muzdalifah from a different direction to that of other pilgrims. These Quranic instructions eliminated this anomaly and bound the Quraysh to observe the same pilgrimage rituals as the rest of the Muslims, removing all false distinction.

All prejudices and manifestations of pride and vanity must be discarded during the pilgrimage. Pilgrims are instructed to direct their devotion, praise and pleas to God, to pray for forgiveness for their errors and excesses, large and small. They ought to keep their minds, hearts and souls pure of all thoughts of lewdness, transgression, wicked conduct and wrangling of any kind. Through the pilgrimage, Muslims are educated in the wide fundamental principles of Islam: the equality of person and the rejection of discrimination on the basis of caste, race, language, or any other differences. Should they deviate or become negligent, they are urged to seek God's guidance and forgiveness.

THE JOURNEY APPROACHES ITS END

Human destiny is determined, and his credentials evaluated, according to how close his way of life is to God. (2:200-202) There are two types of people: those who care only for the here and now and devote their energies to nothing else, and those with a wider vision and more far-reaching concerns, who are conscious of God and who seek happiness in this life without forfeiting their share of life to come.

But those who say: (2:201) are assured their full share of happiness and reward. They are polite enough not to specify the type of reward they seek, but will be content with whatever God grants them. His generosity is neither withheld nor delayed. The temperate and reasonable tone of their formal prayer assures them success and a generous response from God Almighty.

The passage on pilgrimage rituals closes with more exhortations to praise God and be conscious of His power: (2:203) These special days are widely believed to be the day of Arafat (the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijja), the day of sacrifice (the tenth day), and the following three days.

The passage ends on a significant note, reminding the believers of the Day of Judgement, to which reference is made in some of the signs on pilgrimage, thus arousing in their hearts a healthy fear of God. *Have fear of God and know well that you shall all be gathered*

before Him. (2:203)

The preceding signs demonstrate clearly how Islam transformed the pagan Arab customs of the pilgrimage into a rich and meaningful Quranic ritual, ridding it of all idolatrous, sectarian and exclusive practices. It turned it from a narrow Arab tradition into a truly universal one: a typical Quranic form of worship dedicated to the praise and service of God Almighty. This is yet another example of how the Quranic message can overcome and transcend all differences and distinctions that divide humanity.

TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE

The passage introduces a person who portrays himself as the epitome of goodness, sincerity, dedication, love, innocence, and undoubted willingness to spread goodness, compassion, happiness, and purity of heart all around him. (2:204) Such people enchant you with their turn of phrase; their tone of sincerity and claims of integrity and righteousness can easily mislead; and, for good measure, they would cite God as witness to what is in their hearts.

In reality, however, such people are *the most stubborn in altercation.* Their hearts are filled with malice and hatred, with no room for love, compassion or tolerance. Such two-faced people are capable of the most vicious lies; they are treacherous and totally dishonest. When put to the test, their true personality is revealed: evil, spiteful, and malevolent.

As they go about their daily work, these people do nothing but spread evil and plunder the material and human resources of society. (2:205) Their actions are a true and accurate reflection of the grudges they harbour and the evil contained inside them. But God is fully aware of the corruption these hypocrites spread in society and throughout the world, and utterly condemns them.

As we read on, more features of this type of people are revealed: (2:206) Intent on pursuing their vile deeds, these people become resistant to advice and reform; if anything, they grow more obstinate and arrogant. They begin to take pride in spreading evil and corruption, with no remorse, sense of guilt or fear of God. The portrait is thus complete. The example is clear, true to life, and instantly recognizable, at any time and in every society.

This snobbery, contention and lack of shame are met with a most swift and appropriate punishment: (2:206) That would be more than sufficient retribution. For hell is the most terrible of all punishments: it is a fire fuelled by men and stones; it consumes everything thrown into it. With unmistakable irony, the sign describes hell as their *resting place*:

By way of contrast, the Chapter presents the other type of human being: (2:207) These people are willing to dedicate their souls and bodies to God Almighty, for nothing in return other than His pleasure. It is a deal they conclude without a moment's hesitation, desiring nothing else but divine blessing and approval.

The Arabic expression used here may be interpreted differently to give the same message. The Arabic term denoting 'sell' is also used to mean 'buy'. Thus such people buy themselves by giving up all the pleasures of this world, dedicating themselves purely to God. They are ready and willing to sacrifice all worldly success and pleasure so that they may be accepted by God and admitted into the divine fold.

We have two contrasting portraits. One is that of the hypocrite, silver-tongued who is essentially brutal, ill-mannered, contentious, and corrupt. The other is that of the true believer whose whole life is dedicated to the service of God, and who has conquered the temptations of life.

These two living portraits, which reveal some extraordinary aspects of the Quranic style, are for us to study and marvel at. We cannot but stand in awe of God's inimitable power of creation, as we learn how not to be taken in by soft-spoken words or false pretenses. We are directed to look deeper into the essence of things, rather than be deceived by outward appearances. The signs also draw our attention to the values and criteria, based on faith in God, which should be used to judge people.

THE TRUE MEANING OF ISLAM

Against this background, the Chapter addresses the Muslim community, the believers, with a very special and unique instruction: (2:208-209) The call is addressed to the true adherents of Islam, whose faith sets them apart and links them directly to God. The invitation entails, first of all, total submission to God Almighty in all matters, simple or grave. Believers must surrender to God their intentions, actions, desires, and their whole destiny, and accept His judgment without hesitation, and with total trust and self-assurance. They will submit in full certainty and confidence that God will lead them to happiness and self-fulfilment, in both this life and the life to come.

A CARING AND PEACEFUL SOCIETY

In such a society husbands and wives grow to trust each other, and people feel that their families and their honor are safe and respected. All society is free from stress and anxiety. There are no sala-

cious or lurid temptations that might lead people to violate the moral codes and norms of society. It is a tranquil and peaceful society.

As God calls upon the believers to submit themselves to Him alone, He warns them against following: *Follow not the steps of Satan.* (2:208) There is no third way; it is either God's Guidance or Satan's confusion; either the way of the Quranic message or the way of ignorance and foolishness. A Muslim has to be very clear on this point and permit no doubt or hesitation.

The Chapter goes on to point to the consequences of taking that warning lightly, saying: (2:209) The reminder carries awesome power. Those who disregard God's advice, challenge His power and question the wisdom of His guidance, expose themselves to condemnation and destruction.

At this point the Chapter adopts a different approach to emphasize its previous warnings and speaks in the third person, saying: (2:210) This is an illustration of the unique and effective style of the Quran, which brings to life the scenes it describes, and makes the reader or listener feel, see and hear what is going on as if it were happening now.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?
What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Evaluating Reasoning by:•

- Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
- Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
- Developing criteria for evaluation
- Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
- Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

Lesson 87(18) Critical Thinking Strategy
Analyzing or Evaluating Actions

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Quranic Signs 2:211-2:216

Madinah: *Ask the Children of Jacob*
how many a sign a clear portent, We gave them.
And whoever substitutes the divine blessing of God after it drew
near him, then, truly, God is Severe in repayment. (2:211)
Made to appear pleasing to those who were ungrateful
is this present life, and they deride those who believed.
But those who were God-conscious will be above them
on the Day of Resurrection.
And God provides for whomever He wills
without reckoning. (2:212)
Humanity had been of one community.
Then, God raised up the Prophets,
ones who give good tidings and ones who warn.
And with them He caused the Book to descend with The Truth
to give judgment among humanity
about what they were at variance in it.
None were at variance in it but those who were given it
after the clear portents drew near them
because of their insolence to one another.
Then, God guided those who believed to The Truth—
about what they were at variance in it— with His permission.
And God guides whom He wills to a straight path. (2:213)
Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden
while approaches you not the likeness
of those who passed away before you?
Desolation and tribulation afflicted them.
And they are so convulsed that even the Messenger says,
and those who believed with him:
When will there be help from God?
No doubt, truly, the help of God is Near. (2:214)
*They ask **you** what they should spend.*
Say: Whatever you spent for good is for
the ones who are your parents and the nearest kin and the orphans
and the needy and the traveler of the way.
And whatever good you accomplish,
then, truly, God is Knowing of it. (2:215)

See Prelude (2:216)

COMMENTARY°

A QUESTION PUT TO THE CHILDREN OF JACOB

The Chapter then addresses the Prophet Muhammad, ordering him to inquire of the Children of Jacob, described earlier in the Chapter as hesitant in their response to God's call: how many signs they chose to disregard and how they abused the privileges God had bestowed upon them and how much they distorted His Message: (2:211)

The Chapter then contrasts believers and ungrateful, and the difference in their outlook: (2:212) This life, with its transient concerns and ephemeral interests and enjoyments, is all that the ungrateful know and aspire to. They are unable to see beyond the here-and-now; they know of no greater values or aspirations other than those of life on this earth. Consequently, their scope is limited, their vision is blurred, and they are deprived of the higher understanding and greater reward experienced by believers.

Believers should uphold their faith and disregard the mockery and scorn of the ungrateful. They have God's word that they shall occupy a higher position than those ungrateful on the Day of Resurrection, and that shall be the real test and the final judgment. The true measure is that of God who confirms: (2:212)

What God has in store for believers is far better and far more favorable. They shall be rewarded in abundance, according to God's wish and wisdom, either here in this life or in the life to come, for *God provides for whomever He wills without reckoning.* (2:212)

A SINGLE COMMUNITY AND DIVERGENT VIEWS

With progress and diversity came differences, disagreements and divisions. New beliefs, traditions and ideologies appeared and were accepted in various degrees by various communities. It was then that God, in His infinite wisdom, decided to send forth Prophets to convey the promise of success and to warn against deviation. With the Prophets, God: (2:213)

It is essential that there should be a proper and valid by which differences and divisions may be judged and evaluated. Such a point of reference is alluded to in the Chapter when it says that God: (2:213)

The Chapter goes on to explain why people allowed their whims and prejudices to cause them to neglect God's Book and turn away from the truth and the guidance it had brought them: (2:213) Jealousy, greed, caprice and self-aggrandizement were some of the mo-

tives behind the divisions, disagreements and conflict that have beset humanity throughout history.

No two people could disagree over the veracity and authenticity of God's revelations unless one or both of them are adversely motivated. True believers are in full agreement: (2:213)

WHEN WILL GOD'S HELP ARRIVE?

Do you reckon that you will enter paradise while you have not suffered like those [believers] who passed away before you? Affliction and adversity befell them, and so terribly shaken were they that the Messenger and the believers with him would exclaim: (2:214)

With these poignant and profound words, and in this direct manner, God addresses the founding community of the Quranic message, drawing their attention to the experiences of their fellow believers before them who were entrusted with the same task of establishing the divine code of living on earth. Nevertheless, the message in these words is timeless. It is directed to all human groups to whom God assigns that honorable task.

BALANCING KINDNESS AND PERSONAL PREFERENCES

The subject of charity (2:215) had already been dealt with in several Quranic passages that preceded the revelation of the present sign. The circumstances that witnessed the birth of the Quranic message made voluntary financial contributions by Muslims absolutely essential in order for the community to emerge and consolidate its position, considering the great difficulties and threat of war it was facing. It was also essential as an expression of solidarity and cohesion within the community, and to eliminate inequality and reinforce loyalty and self-sufficiency. All these are indispensable qualities for building up a true and practical sense of community among the Muslims.

At this point we are told that some Muslims asked: (2:215) The question is about giving money Muslims may give in charity. The reply speaks of the nature of charitable spending and defines the most important beneficiaries. The phraseology of the answer: *Whatever you spent for good* ... indicates, first of all, that whatever is given in charity is good for the donor, the recipient and the community as a whole. It is good in itself and it is done for good reasons. It also implies that people should give from the best of what they have and share it with others. As well as benefitting the needy, this would purify the donor's heart and soul and give charity and altruism real meaning.

As to whom charity should be directed, the sign explains:

(2:215) The sign gives a list of categories of people brought together through ties of family, kinship, compassion, and an integral strong framework of human social welfare, nurtured and promoted by religious faith.

God is Knowing of it. (2:215) God is aware of the deed as well as of the intention behind it. Thus, it will not go to waste. He has taken note of it and, being just, He will give a suitable reward for it.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above sign?
What the assumption of those who say that all disbelievers should be killed?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried to find the key concept of one of the Quranic signs.
I was able to analyze my actions today and evaluate them.

Lesson 87(19) Critical Thinking Strategy Distinguishing Relevant from Irrelevant Information

Developing Sensitivity to Relevance

You can discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Quranic Signs 2:217-2:221

Madinah: *They ask you about the Sacred Month and fighting in it.*
Say: Fighting in it is deplorable and barring from the way of God
and ingratitude to Him. And to bar from the Masjid al-Haram,
and expelling people from it are more deplorable with God.
And persecution is more deplorable than killing.
And they cease not to fight you until they repel you
from your way of life, if they are able.
And whoever of you goes back on his way of life, then, dies
while he is one who is ungrateful, those, their actions were fruitless
in the present and in the world to come.
And those will be the Companions of the Fire.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (2:217)
Truly, those who believed and those who emigrated

and struggled in the way of God, those hope for the mercy of God.
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (2:218)
*They ask **you** about intoxicants and gambling.*
Say: In both of them there is deplorable sin
and profits for humanity.
And their sin is more deplorable than what is profitable.
*And they ask **you** how much they should spend.*
Say: What is extra.
Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you
so that perhaps you will reflect (2:219)
on the present and the world to come.
*And they ask **you** about orphans.*
Say: Making things right for them is better.
And if you intermix with them, then they are your brothers/sisters.
God knows the one who makes corruption
from the one who makes things right.
And if God willed, He would have overburdened you.
Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (2:220)
Marry not ones who are female idol worshippers until they believe.
The one who is a believing, female bondservant is better than the
one who is a female idol worshipper even if she impressed you
and wed not the ones who are male idol worshippers
until they believe.
And one who is a believing, male bondservant is better than the
one who is a male idol worshipper even if he impressed you.
Those call you to the fire while God calls you to the Garden
and to forgiveness with His permission.
And He makes manifest His signs to humanity
so that perhaps they will recollect. (2:221)

COMMENTARY°

THE ULTIMATE AIM OF THE ENEMIES OF THE QURANIC MESSAGE

The sign states, in no uncertain terms, how determined the ungrateful are in pursuing their goal of destroying the Muslims' faith, saying: (2:217) Above all, there is God's grace and mercy, reserved for those who struggle for His cause. No one with true faith can ever despair of God's mercy: (2:218) As long as a believer continues to trust in God's grace, he shall never be disappointed. Those early Muslims from Makkah, who had given up everything for their faith, lived up to their belief, strove hard, and received the appropriate rewards. They deservedly won God's forgiveness and mercy, pointing the way to those who would come after them.

THE QURANIC METHOD OF EDUCATION

The Chapter goes on to give the Islamic rulings on drinking and gambling, two of the most popular indulgences among the Arabs at the time, who had little else of importance to occupy their minds or their time:

They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. (2:219) Prior to the revelation of this sign, drinking and gambling were tolerated but never condoned. We do not have a single statement in the Quran which may be construed as making them permissible. God, however, carefully charted the way He wanted the newly born Muslim community to take, marking it step by step, so that it would he able to fulfil the role He has assigned to it. The time had to come when such wasteful pastimes would be condemned and rooted out of the Muslim community whose role in the life and history of humanity demanded the dedication and full conscious participation of everyone in that community. Unlike godless societies, past, present and future, a Muslim community has no room for escapism or excessive diversions. The Quranic approach in banning these practices was measured and deliberate.

This statement was the first step towards a universal ban on drinking and gambling in Muslim society. While good and evil could often intermingle and be confused with one another, making it impossible in the human world for things to be purely good or purely evil, the main criteria for whether something could be permissible or prohibited is the preponderance of good or evil associated with it. This statement is a good example of the judicious Quranic approach discernible in many Islamic legal and practical rulings and teachings.

We often find that in matters of faith or abstract belief, the Quranic message gives specific and definite pronouncements, but when it comes to matters of tradition or complex social practices, it takes a more pragmatic and measured approach, preparing the ground for smoother adoption and implementation.

Drinking and gambling are well-entrenched social habits that require careful treatment. The first step was to raise in people's minds an inner consciousness of their harmful effects, advising that they would be better avoided. The second step came later on, which directed Muslims: *O those who have believed! Come not near the formal prayer while you are intoxicated...* (4:43)

The third and final step in banning drinking came in the sign which says: *O those who have believed! Indeed intoxicants and gambling and fetishes and divining arrows are of the disgraceful actions of Satan. Then avoid them...* (5:90)

DEALING WITH SLAVERY

At the advent of the Quranic message, slavery was an established social and economic practice known all over the world. Any movement towards the abolition of making POWs into slaves would require radical social change and far-reaching economic reforms and adjustments, as well as international treaties and conventions to govern the treatment of POWs. The Quranic message never condoned slavery. There is not a single statement in the Quran that recommends or approves of slavery or the enslavement of war prisoners.

Apart from war captives and children of POWs who were made slaves, the Quranic message opted for eliminating the root causes and drying up the sources of slavery, with an overriding objective to avoid social upheaval, and it strove to provide the basic guarantees of a decent living and dignity for freed POWs.

As for war captives, the Quranic message could not unilaterally forgo enslaving POWs since non-Muslim states continued to do so with Muslim prisoners in times of war. Were it to do so, it would have immediately put the Muslims at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their enemies. If any Muslim soldiers were taken prisoners, they would be certain to be made slaves, while prisoners taken by Muslims would remain free.

On the other hand, were the Quranic message to require that children born in slavery be immediately freed before creating the right social and economic environment that would absorb them as free citizens, they would have been left stranded, thrown into society with no means of living or welfare. They would have had no family to protect them against descending into poverty or moral delinquency.

Taking the well-entrenched social conditions into account and while not banning the enslavement of war captives, the Quran did not specifically order that they should be held in bondage. Instead, the Quran advises the Muslims: *So when you have met those who were ungrateful, then strike their thick necks until you have given them a sound thrashing. Then tie them fast with restraints and afterwards either have good will towards them or take ranson for them until the war ends laying down its heavy load....* (47:4) This gave the Muslim authorities the choice to deal with war captives according to the prevailing circumstances and the nature of the conflict and the enemy they were facing. War captives could be released, exchanged or, if necessary, held in bondage.

Other ways of enslavement, and they were many, were totally banned. That was sure to minimize the number of POW/slaves in society. The Quranic message began by integrating those POW/slaves

as soon as they joined the Muslim community. It gave them the full right to buy their freedom through an agreement a POW would make with his master, who may not refuse him such a deal.

Once an agreement of this sort is made, a POW has the right to work, own property, earn an independent income, and seek employment with other employers, in order to be able to raise the money to secure his freedom. That made it possible for POWs to gradually acquire an independent status in society and enjoy all the basic citizenship rights of the community, and they would become eligible for state welfare aid, which consists mainly of *zakat* revenue.

Furthermore, the Quranic Message urged its followers to help POWs financially to secure their freedom and incorporated the freeing of POWs into the legal code as a form of atonement for certain offenses including manslaughter, reneging on an oath, and the ancient Arabian practice of a husband banishing his wife and saying that he considers her, for marital purposes, like his mother.

The subsequent proliferation of non-POW/slavery in Muslim societies had come about as a result of a gradual decline of the authority of Islam. This is a historical fact for which Islam may not be blamed. Islam cannot be held responsible for its incorrect implementation in certain periods or societies. Islam was, and remains, unchanged, but what had changed was people's understanding of it an the way they translated its principles into social reality, which was often an aberration and a travesty of Islam for which it cannot be held accountable.

Any revival of the life of Quranic message should, therefore, start from the authentic and established sources and principles of Islam and not be a continuation of a certain distorted historical legacy. This is an essential truth, both in abstract as well as practical terms, that cannot be overemphasized. Grossly mistaken conclusions are made regarding the Islamic view of history and on understanding the historic reality of Islam and how it operates in society. The leading culprits in this field are the so-called Orientalists, or Western scholars of Islam, and their students, including some sincere but very naive Muslim scholars who were misled by them.

MORE QUESTIONS BY BELIEVERS

The Chapter continues, answering other questions and laying down more fundamental Quranic principles. (2:219-220) The answer given to this question the first time round, in (2:215), identified what could be given in charity and to whom, and here it identifies quantities. Anything above one's basic reasonable personal needs should be considered available for donation to others, starting with those el-

igible among one's nearest of kin, as already pointed out.

The present statement implies that the obligatory *zakat* is not by itself sufficient as a means of wealth distribution, and this ruling, in my view, has not been overruled by the imposition of *zakat*. Payment of *zakat* by those liable to it does not exempt them from making additional donations and contributions to good causes. *Zakat* is a duty levied by the ruling Muslim authority for allocation to the various causes specified in the Quran: *Charities are only for the poor and the needy and the ones who work to collect it and for those whose hearts were brought together and to free the bondservant* (POW) *and the ones who are in debt and in the way of God and for the traveler of the way* ... (9:60), beyond which Muslims continue to have an obligation towards God and fellow-Muslims in society. It may not exhaust one's ability to give, or one's desire to gain further blessings and pleasure from God Almighty.

Muslims are then reminded: (2:219-220) It would not suffice to consider only the realities of this life, which represents the more immediate and shorter part of the whole picture of human existence and all the responsibilities and relationships associated with it. That would only give a distorted understanding of the values and the criteria upon which life is built which would bring about the wrong kind of human behavior.

The distribution and allocation of wealth, in particular, calls for total awareness of accountability in this life and in the life to come. One is always substantially rewarded, spiritually and morally, for what one gives in charity. Further reward comes in the contribution one makes to the welfare and well-being of society. These rewards may not, however, be readily apparent to everyone, which makes the rewards of the hereafter even more of an incentive to give generously and willingly and away from ostentation and pomposity.

TREATMENT OF ORPHANS

The Chapter then raises the question of how orphans ought to be treated: (2:220) Social welfare is the bedrock of Muslim society which has a responsibility to care for the weaker among its members and protect their interests. Having lost either or both of their parents at a young age, orphan children would come at the top of the list of social groups that deserve care and protection. Some guardians of orphan children used to incorporate any possessions or wealth those children might have inherited into their own, for trading or other purposes, which did not always work in the children's favor. As the Quran denounced such actions, some conscientious people began to feel guilty and went too far the other way in caring for orphans, to

the extent that they separated their own food from that of the orphans in their care. This led to subsequent revelations being sent down to moderate the situation and put the whole issue in a proper perspective. Muslims were urged to do what would he in the best interest of the orphan children they were caring for. Being members of the larger family of Islam, orphans should be treated in a spirit of fraternity and brotherhood. God is the judge of people's motives and intentions. He recognizes those who are genuine and, being all-powerful and compassionate, He does not wish to overburden them.

The Quran refers all actions ultimately to God. Faith and life revolve on the central pivot of belief in God. It is notable that the Quranic teachings and precepts are based on an inner conscious conviction that acts as a solid guarantee for their success and effectiveness.

MARRIAGE TO UNBELIEVERS

Marriage is the deepest and most enduring bond that can exist between two human beings. (2:221) It calls for the widest possible range of mutual and intimate responses and, therefore, requires the most firm emotional commitment that can be made. For this to be achieved, a clear common objective must exist between the two parties, and what is better than religious faith to provide such affinity and unity of purpose. This profound influence of religion on human thought has often been ignored or overlooked and some societies have made the mistake of trying to replace religious faith with one social philosophy or another.

During the early days of Islam in Makkah, although the Muslims had succeeded in detaching themselves spiritually and ideologically from the rest of society, it was not possible for them to totally disengage themselves socially. This transformation required time and a measured pace of change. In Madinah, however, where Muslims were to acquire an independent social as well as religious identity, the new social order rapidly began to take shape, with these Quranic signs prohibiting any new marriage of Muslims and idol worshippers. Existing marriages remained valid, however, when signs 60:9-60:10 were revealed these marriages were annulled.

From then on, marriages involving Muslims and idol worshippers were prohibited, as such unions were considered devoid of spiritual meaning and non-deserving of God's blessings or consecration, since the parties involved did not share the same beliefs and outlook on life. Having honored humanity, God does not want marriage to be based on mere physical attraction. It is a bond that is closely related to the divine system for human life.

Therefore, we have a clear, definitive injunction: (2:221) Were the ungrateful woman to embrace the faith, the barrier would be removed and the hearts of the two people concerned would fall into harmony and could be united in marriage as they are united in belief. (2:221) Such attraction would normally be physical, rather than spiritual, and therefore superficial. It is the attraction of the soul that really matters, even if the Muslim girl is a POW, because it would be infinitely more enduring and profound. (2:221) The same rule applies to Muslim women who wish to marry idol worshipping men, and for the same underlying reason: (2:221)

It is noteworthy that Muslim men are not prohibited from marrying Christian or Jewish women, despite certain important differences in religious belief and practice. This is because Muslims, Christians and Jews share a fundamental belief in God's Oneness. *Today what is good is permitted to you. The food of those who were given the Book is allowed to you and your food is allowed to them. And the ones who are free, chaste females from among the ones who are female believers and the ones who are free, chaste females from among those who have been given the Book before you. When you have given them their bridal due as ones who seek wedlock, not as ones who are licentious, nor as ones who have taken lovers to themselves* ... (5:5)

Muslim women, however, are forbidden from marrying Jewish or Christian men. The two cases are different, meriting different verdicts. Under Islamic law, children are called by their father's names. It was the practice in all societies that, after marriage, a woman would join the household of her husband. If a Muslim person married a Christian or Jewish woman, she would move to the town or country where he lived, and join the rest of his family, and their children would take the father's name and grow up in his religious and cultural environment. The situation would be reversed in the case of a Muslim woman marrying a Jewish or Christian man, where the children would be raised in a non-Muslim culture and most likely grow up to be non-Muslims.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS QUESTIONS

How would you answer the Quranic question?

What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear an other's heavy load?

What issues are the sign addressing?

Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Read a chapter of the Quran with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Share and discuss your lists.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.

It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 87(20) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:222-2:228

Madinah: *They ask you about menstruation.*
Say: It is an impurity, so withdraw from your wives
during menstruation.
Come not near them (f) until they cleanse themselves.
And then when they (f) cleansed themselves, approach them (f)
as God commanded you. Truly, God loves the contrite
and He loves the ones who cleanse themselves. (2:222)
Your wives are a place of cultivation for you, so approach your
cultivation whenever you willed and put forward for yourselves.
And be God-conscious.
And know that you will be one who encounters Him.
And give you good tidings to the ones who believe. (2:223)
And make God not an obstacle with your sworn oaths
to your being good, and being God-conscious,
and making things right among humanity.
And God is Hearing, Knowing. (2:224)
God will not take you to task for idle talk in your sworn oaths.
Rather, He will take you to task for what your hearts earned.
And God is Forgiving, Forbearing. (2:225)
For those who vow abstinence from their wives, await four months.
Then, if they changed their minds,
then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (2:226)
And if they resolved on setting them (f) free,
then, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing. (2:227
And the women who are to be divorced will await by themselves
three menstrual periods. And it is not lawful for them (f) that they
(f) keep back what God created in their (f) wombs, if they (f) had
been believing in God, and the Last Day. Their husbands have bet-
ter right to come back during that period if they (m) wanted to
make things right. For the rights of them (f) in regard to their hus-
bands is the like of rights of their (f) husbands in regard to them
(f), as one who is honorable.
And men have a degree over them (f).
And God is Almighty, Wise. (2:228)

COMMENTARY°

PURITY IN SEXUAL RELATIONS

They ask you about menstruation. (2:222-223) Within marriage, sex is not an end in itself, but a means to achieving much more profound goals in life, not least of which is reproduction and the continuation of human life. While it may satisfy the physical desire, sex during menstruation is not only unclean and carries health risks for both person and woman, but also fails to serve its fundamental objective. As a matter of fact, sex during menstruation is not very attractive to normal healthy people because it is not conducive to reproduction. Sound human nature tends to avoid it. (2:222)

However, that is not the end of the matter. Sexual behavior outside the menstruation period must conform to certain manners and standards of decency and propriety: (2:222) Here the Chapter points out that sexual intercourse is allowed only at the place where fertilization may take place. The immediate physical pleasure is not the only purpose of sexual intercourse; its higher purpose is the continuity of human life. God points out what He has made lawful, and a Muslim seeks what is lawful. Moreover, God's laws are meant to purify His servants. Therefore, the statement: (2:222)

The Chapter then defines this aspect of the marital relationship in the most poignant and affectionate terms, saying: (2:223) There can hardly be a more accurate and eloquent description of the nature and purpose of this aspect of the relationship between husband and wife. It is by no means a complete description of the marital relationship.

Sexual fulfilment must, therefore, be sought as part of an overall objective which serves to please God Almighty, and is beneficial to the individuals concerned. They will be further rewarded by God for respecting His teachings and abiding by them.

OATHS AND ATONEMENTS

The Chapter then moves on to the subject of renouncing wives on oath and abstaining from sexual contact with them as a form of punishment. By way of introduction, it begins with talking about oaths in general, saying: (2:224-227)

God is even more gracious in offering this concession not only for inadvertent vows that need no atonement, but also for vows made in earnest and with full intention. The Prophet was reported to have often overlooked off-hand or casual vows made out of habit or in the heat of the moment. Premeditated vows must be revoked and atoned for, if keeping them results in, or leads to, something evil, harmful or inequitable.

The Chapter emphasizes that God knows all and hears all, and that He is forgiving and lenient, in order to establish in people's minds the fact that these matters are ultimately referred to God Almighty for judgement, and to urge them to be conscious of Him and seek His pleasure and grace in all such matters.

Having established the general rule with respect to vows, the Chapter goes on to deal with the specific vows by husbands to abstain from sexual contact with their wives, either indefinitely or for a specified but long period of time: (2:226-2:227)

RULES OF DIVORCE

Having reached in the previous sign a point when divorce becomes a possibility, the Chapter goes on to outline in some detail the rules governing divorce and all matters relating to it, such as the waiting period and maintenance: (2:228)

The three monthly courses referred to here are variously understood as three menstrual periods, or three periods of cleanliness from menstruation. The idea is that a divorced woman should not seek another marriage within that period.

The waiting period acts as a period of grace during which the estranged couple can test their feelings and emotions. They may still have feelings for each other, and their mutual compassion might have been overshadowed by a temporary moment of heated emotions, or a misunderstanding, or personal pride. Once tempers are cooled and fury gives way to common sense, the couple might reconsider their situation and decide that it would be more sensible to forget their disagreement and resume their life together.

Divorce is the least preferable solution in God's eyes; it should only be used as a last resort, when all else has failed. Elsewhere, the Quran urges that divorce must be preceded by attempts at reconciliation and that it must not take place during the menstrual period. It is only possible in a period of cleanliness from menstruation during which no sexual intercourse has taken place between the divorcing couples. This gives yet more time for reflection and reconsideration.

When a first divorce between a married couple is initiated, the waiting period acts as a test for their feelings, and if they discover during this time that reconciliation is possible, that option is available to them. As the Chapter says: (2:228) The condition here is that, in coming back together again, the couple should be seriously seeking reconciliation. The aim should never be to undermine the wife's right to marry someone else or put any pressure on her to resume an unhappy relationship.

The divorced woman (2:228) is required to wait for a certain pe-

riod before she can marry someone else, and is obliged to declare whether she is carrying a baby by her divorced husband. The husband is equally required to show good faith if he wishes to take her back, making sure that he intends to cause her no harm. He is further obliged, as we shall see later, to provide maintenance for his divorced wife during the waiting period.

The Chapter goes on to say: (2:228) This advantage, in my view, is in no way absolute but is contingent, within the present context, upon the fact that it is the person who initiates the divorce and would, therefore, have the prerogative to take his wife back, a decision that could not be left to her to take. This advantage, indeed a useful and proper one, is by no means universal, as some have erroneously concluded, but is simply dictated by the nature and the circumstances of the dispute.

FAIR AND BALANCED DIVORCE SYSTEMS

The Chapter says: (2:229) Couples are allowed to divorce and revoke their divorce twice before the condition stated in the next sign applies. Under this provision, remarriage with a three-times divorced wife cannot take place except in the case when she legally marries another husband who may subsequently, and in the normal course of events, divorce her. Should this take place normally, without it being pre-arranged, the woman and her first husband may be re-married, if they believe that by now they are able to make their marriage successful.

The background to this ruling is that in pre-Quranic Arabia no limitation was set on the number of times divorce could take place. Men would marry, divorce and remarry the same woman, virtually at will. When a person from Madinah had fallen out with his wife and grew to dislike her intensely, he vowed that he would neither keep her nor let her go; he would divorce her and then take her back just before her waiting period had elapsed. The woman complained to the Prophet Muhammad, to whom this sign was then revealed.

This is another example of the prudent and propitious method the Quran had adopted in providing the Muslims with the rulings and directions they needed to organize their community. This approach continued throughout the period of the revelation of the Quran until all the main provisions of the Quranic code were fully laid down, enabling succeeding generations of Muslims to live by their guidance and principles.

Limiting the number of times divorce can be revoked prevents its abuse. The first time a person divorces his wife he would be entitled, without the need for any formalities, to take her back anytime

during her waiting period. If this period elapses, the divorce would become final and a fresh marriage contract, with a fresh dowry, would have to be entered into. In both cases, the husband is allowed one additional divorce if matters again go wrong. The third time a divorce takes place, it is final and irrevocable. The only way a three-times divorced couple could resume a married relationship would be if the ex-wife married a different person who subsequently dies or, in the normal course of events, divorces her and she completes her waiting period without the marriage being re-instated.

The first divorce, as we said earlier, would put the whole relationship to the test, the second one would provide a second and final chance to reassess the situation before judging whether it is irreconcilable. If the marriage could be saved, well and good. A third divorce would, however, be evidence of a total breakdown of the relationship, and that the marriage was unworkable.

In any case, divorce should only be a last resort option to remedy a situation which could not otherwise be saved. Once divorce takes place twice, it would only be fair to either maintain the relationship with honor and dignity and resume as happy a life as possible, or to amicably bring it to an end without pain or acrimony. This would be the third divorce, after which both person and woman are free to start afresh with a different spouse. This is an extremely realistic approach, providing practical solutions. It neither denies the problem nor condemns it, nor attempts to re-create human nature to suit it, nor, indeed, does it ignore the problem altogether or try to sweep it under the carpet.

If the marriage proved unsustainable, the woman would be entitled to everything that had come to be hers during the marriage including the dowry. She would not have to reimburse the person for any upkeep or other costs he had incurred, unless it was her decision to end the marriage, for reasons of her own which had convinced her that life with that particular husband was no longer tolerable or would drive her to transgress the limits of decency, with herself or in her relationship with her husband. In this case the woman may ask for a divorce but would be obliged to compensate the person for the break-up of his marriage home, through no fault of his own, by giving him back the dowry he had paid her, or reimbursing him for all or some of the costs he had incurred while keeping her and enabling her to preserve her honor and dignity.

These realistic and scrupulous measures take account of all possible situations and feelings, ensuring that a wife will never have to accept an unhappy marriage under duress, and that a husband does not forgo any of his rights if his marriage breaks up through no fault of his own.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one of the signs in this section based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

The commentary in this section gives clear reasons and evaluates the reasons for the various types of divorce. It helped me learn how to reason and evaluate other issues.

LESSON 87(21) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Even though many of us may believe in the Day of Resurrection, when our words expressing belief are not consistent with our actions, this is a sign of a contradiction. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what you get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them.

Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views such as being a Muslim, but not believing or practicing his or her faith with an eye to the Day of Resurrection.

When discussing conflicting lines of reasoning, inconsistent versions of the same story, or ego-centric reasoning or behavior, Quranic critical thinkers can be encouraged to bring out both views and practice recognizing contradictions as the example to follow shows.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. Discuss your views on the two different versions and if you interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, ***The Study Quran***)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty,

Great. (4:34, ***The Sublime Quran***)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, ***The Study Quran***)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be God-conscious of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, ***The Sublime Quran***)

After this study in possible contradictions created through interpretation of Quranic signs, we turn to the Quranic chapter for this lesson where we find a contradiction between thought and deed of those who want to act immorally and yet ask: *When is this Day of Resurrection?* The Quran explains what will happen that Day. It says that those who wanted to act immorally will face the contradiction between their words and deeds by asking: *Where is the place to run to?* The Quran says: *There is no refuge from it so follow the Recitation (al_Quran).*

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

QURANIC SIGNS 2:229-2:231

Madinah: *Setting free is said two times: Then, hold fast to them (f) as one who is honorable or setting them (f) free with kindness. And it is not lawful for you that you take anything of what you gave them (f) unless they both fear that they both will not perform the ordinances of God. And if you feared that they both will not perform the ordinances of God, then, there is no blame on either of them in what she offered as redemption for that. These are the ordinances of God, so exceed not the limits. And whoever violates the ordinances of God, then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* (2:229)

And if he divorced her finally, then, she is not lawful to him after that until she marries a spouse other than him. Then, if that husband divorced her irrevocably, there is no blame on either of them if they return to one another if both of them

thought that they will perform within the ordinances of God,
and these are the ordinances of God.
He makes them manifest for a folk who know. (2:230)
And when you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term,
then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f)
free as one who is honorable.
But hold them (f) not back by injuring them
so that you commit aggression.
And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself.
And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery.
Remember the divine blessing of God on you,
and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom.
He admonishes you with it.
And be God-conscious of God
and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231)

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter continues, giving more rulings relating to divorce: (2:230) If a third divorce takes place in a marriage, it could only be a sign of serious and irreversible deterioration within that relationship. The best solution in this case would be permanent separation, and for each partner to seek happiness with someone else. However, if any or all of the three divorces were pronounced by the person lightly, or out of spite, or in the heat of the moment, here again, a drastic measure must be taken to prevent men abusing their divorce privilege. Such s an unhappy relationship should not be perpetuated, since the person has no appreciation for it, nor is he keen to protect it.

If, after the third divorce, the woman marries someone else and this marriage is then terminated in the normal course of events by divorce or by the husband's death, she may be reunited with the first husband as long as: (2:230) This indicates very clearly that the matter is not left to the couple to decide as they please, but it is regulated by terms and conditions set out by God for a proper social order that conforms to His will. These terms and conditions are fully expounded in the Quran for all who are capable of learning and understanding.

KINDLY RETENTION OR AMICABLE SEPARATION

Having detailed the divorce procedure, the section goes on to give directions to divorcing couples, urging them to show kindness, compassion and consideration during the post-divorce period, regardless of how the rift came about: (2:231-2:232)

In pre-Quranic society, women faced a great deal of oppression and abuse. Female infanticide was widespread in Arabia, and those who survived would suffer cruelty and degradation throughout their lives. Women were bought and sold like animals; mares and she-camels were sometimes considered more precious! They would suffer when they were married; and they received grossly unfair treatment when divorced. Divorced women were not allowed to remarry without their former husband's permission, nor were they allowed by their families to return to their husbands if they wished to be reconciled. Generally, women were looked down upon in Arabia, as indeed in other societies.

When the Quranic message came, it brought fresh principles and values that recognized women and afforded them a status comparable to that of men. It elevated marriage to a religious duty, preserved women's human dignity, and established for them specific rights when they were married and when they were divorced.

Thus, as the end of the waiting period approaches, a husband should either take his wife back into the marriage, with no ill-feelings and with a sincere intention to treat her kindly and sympathetically; or allow the waiting period to elapse and the divorce to take effect without causing any harm or injustice to the divorced wife or demanding any compensation from her.

To emphasize this further and purge men's hearts of evil and selfishness, the Quran appeals to the noblest of feelings and to the human being's sense of shame and honor and fear of God: (2:231)

Keeping a wife against her will, or mistreating her, would be akin to harming oneself, because she is a fellow human being, with dignity and feelings. A person would be doing himself injustice, too, by allowing himself to act in defiance of God's guidance and teachings.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?

3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran guides to what is what is honest, honorable, worthy, moral, conscientious, good, virtuous. What does the Quran give to those who are guided? Good tidings to the ones who believe and who act in accord with morality. It is those who believe and who are moral people who will have a great compensation. Following God's guidance is to act morally. Acting in accord with morality results in a great compensation from God. Human beings have been created with a moral compass.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What do the different signs say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other?
When arguing opposing views, you should find points of agreement ar specify points of dispute or contradiction.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What does each sign (4:23 and 2:231) say? Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agreer?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?
The class can explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

LESSON 87(22) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how we experience, how we describe, how we categorize, and how we reason about things. We become more careful and discriminating in our use of words and phrases.

Quranic signs often call on us to compare and contrast two or more things—objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. To merely list similarities and differences has little value in itself. Rather than making such lists, these activities should be proposed in a context which narrows the range of pertinent comparisons and requires some use be made of them in pursuit of some specific goal. For example, if comparing and contrasting two social practices (marriage and divorce), we should use our understanding to illuminate the relationship between them. Thus, only those points which shed light on the particular problem need be mentioned, and each point has implications to be drawn out and integrated into a broader picture.

Here are the two examples of different translations of two Quranic signs we studied in the previous lesson in regard to contradictions. Now we look at them in terms of similarities and differences to compare and discuss in relationship to the Quranic views on marriage and divorce:

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran*)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. Be God-conscious of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

The Quran warns those who do not accept the message from Prophet Muhammad. They are similar in that God created both from a *sperm-drop, a clot,* but unlike the blessed Prophet, they walk *arrogantly* upon the earth and they do not believe that the One who created them and shaped them has Power to give life to the dead.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:232-2:235

Madinah: *And when you revocably divorced wives,*
and they reached their (f) term, then, place not difficulties for them
(f) that they (f) re-marry their former spouses when they agreed
among themselves as one who is honorable.
This is admonished for him—whoever had been among you who
believes in God and the Last Day—
that is pure and purer for you.
And God knows and you know not. (2:232)
And the ones who are mothers will breast feed their (f) children for
two years completely for whoever wanted to fulfill breast feeding.
And on one to whom a child is born is their (f) provision and their
clothing (f) as one who is honorable.
No soul is placed with a burden, but to its capacity.
Neither the one who is a mother be pressed for her child,
nor the one to whom a child is born for his child.
And on one who inherits is the like of that.
While if they both wanted weaning by them agreeing together
and after consultation, then, there is no blame on either of them.

And if you wanted to seek wet-nursing for your children, then, there is no blame on you when you handed over what you gave as one who is honorable. And be God-conscious. And know that God is Seeing of what you do. (2:233)

And those of you whom death will call to itself, forsaking spouses, they (f) will await by themselves (f) four months and ten days. And when they (f) reached their term, then, there is no blame on you in what they (f) accomplished for themselves (f), as one who is honorable. God is Aware of what you do. (2:234)

And there is no blame on you in what you offered with it of a proposal to women, or for what you hid in yourselves. God knew that you will remember them (f), except appoint not with them (f) secretly, unless you say a saying as one who is honorable. And resolve not on the knot of marriage until she reaches her prescribed term. And know that God knows what is within yourselves. So be fearful of Him. And know that God is Forgiving, Forbearing. (2:235)

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter directs Muslims not to stand in the way of an estranged wife, whose waiting period has elapsed, if she wants to remarry her divorced husband and they have come to an amicable and honorable agreement to do so: (2:232)

CHILD CARE IN BROKEN HOMES

The following ruling concerns the fostering and breast-feeding of infants after divorce. When a marriage breaks up, certain ties, commitments and relationships continue to exist between the divorced couple, foremost among which is the well-being and upbringing of children. The Chapter covers all possible eventualities: (2:233)

A divorced mother continues to have a God-given duty towards her infant, no matter how acrimonious the separation from her husband. God's mercy and compassion dictate that under no circumstances should the children be made to suffer, especially during the early years of life when they are still being breast-fed. Modern scientific research has shown that the mother's milk is essential for the first two years of life for the healthy physical and psychological development of the child. humanity needed to know this important fact and hence God, out of His infinite mercy, revealed it in the Quran more than fourteen centuries ago.

In return, the mother has secured the right that the father must provide for her maintenance with fairness and good-will, as partners in their responsibility towards the infant and within their respective means.

The child should not be used by either parent as a pretext to put pressure on the other: (2:233) Neither parent should resort to emotional blackmail or coercion to extort concessions from the other. Were the child's father to die. The father's heir takes over the responsibility to provide for the suckling mother in a fair manner. This is a case where gains and liabilities are shared within the family: the heir receives his share of inheritance and discharges the liabilities of the deceased. It is essential that this right of the mother, and that of her child, is respected and fulfilled in all situations.

If, for health or other reasons, the parents, or the mother and the father's heir, jointly decide that it would be in the child's interest to take him or her off his mother's milk before he or she has reached two years of age, they shall have the right to do so, provided they have had sufficient consultation over the matter, and act in the child's interest.

Similarly, if the father chooses to have the baby suckled by someone other than the natural mother, and can show the distinct advantage of such action, he may do so provided that he ensures that the suckling mother receives her wages. This ensures that the wet nurse would take good care of the child.

The sign closes with yet further exhortation to all concerned to fear God and take account of His presence and overall authority. This, above all else, is a firm guarantee of proper and fair conduct by all.

THE CASE OF WIDOWS

The Chapter then turns to introduce the rules governing widows, their waiting period and whether and when they can entertain new proposals for marriage: (2:234-2:235)

In pre-Quranic Arabia, widows suffered a great deal of injustice at the hands of their own families, their in-laws and society in general. When a husband died, his widow would be confined to a drab part of the home and made to wear her shabbiest clothes and refrain from using any perfume or incense for a whole year. At the end of that period, she would be required to perform a series of degrading and meaningless rituals which included casting animal faeces into the air and riding an ass or a sheep through the town or village. The Quranic message did away with all those worthless customs and alleviated the suffering of widows who, in addition to the grief of losing their husbands, had to endure the humiliation and persecution of their families and were deprived of the opportunity to resume a happy and decent family life.

The Quranic message set a waiting period of four months and

ten days, which is slightly longer than that for a divorced wife, unless a woman is pregnant, in which case her waiting period extends until she has delivered. The purpose of the waiting period is to determine whether the woman is pregnant and to avoid hurting the feelings of the family of her deceased husband by leaving his home immediately after his death. Once the waiting period is over, no one, from either her family or that of her deceased husband, has the right to dictate to her what to do with her life. She is totally free to decide for herself within the established traditions and teachings of the Quranic message. She is free to wear all the adornments permitted for Muslim women, to receive marriage proposals, and to give her consent to marrying anyone she chooses, unimpeded by any antiquated or unreasonable traditions or customs. She has only God to please and fear.

As for men who wish to marry a widow before the end of her waiting period, the Chapter gives a most perceptive ruling, based on the observance of principles of decency and propriety, ethical and social values, and the feelings and sensibilities of all concerned while taking account of the overall needs and interests of the community as a whole: (2:235)

The Chapter also makes it clear that God is always aware of any unexpressed feelings or intentions by some men in wishing to marry a certain widow. It casts no aspersions on such feelings, which it implicitly recognizes as natural and normal, but urges that no practical steps be taken, or secretive arrangements agreed, before the waiting period is over. Thus, the Quranic message regulates and tames human natural desires rather than condemning or suppressing them. (2:235)

None of this should prevent a decent contact with the woman, provided the subject of conversation falls within the decent religious and social norms as dictated by the Quranic message. No intention of marriage is expressed directly lest the woman's feelings are hurt at such a delicate time in her predicament, as pointed out earlier. (2:235) Once again we note the delicate touches with which the Quran approaches sensitive subjects. It does not warn against making marriage contracts before the end of the waiting period; it warns against making a commitment.

The choice of words at the end of the sign is significant: (2:235) These closing words refer the whole matter to God's grace and generosity, appealing directly to Muslims' respect and fear of God Almighty in conducting their personal and social affairs. This fear and respect are, in themselves, the ultimate guarantee of God's forgiveness and tolerance towards those who earnestly and sincerely strive to observe and implement His directives and rulings.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the translations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic? How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What conclusions am I coming to?
Is my inference logical?
Are there other conclusions I should consider?
Does this interpretation make sense?
Does our solution necessarily follow from the facts?
How did you reach that conclusion?
What are you basing your reasoning on?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.

LESSON 87(23) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS

THE MIDDLE COMMUNITY
ISLAMIC MODERATION[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of the Quranic message that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of the Quranic message, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable issues of the Quranic message include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the *umma* throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable issues of the Quranic message include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of the Quranic message set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*umma*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:236-2:242

Madinah: *There is no blame on you if you divorced wives whom you touch not, nor undertake a duty to them (f) of a dowry portion. And make provision for them (f). For the one who is wealthy—according to his means—and for the one who is needy —according to his means—with a sustenance, one that is honorable, an obligation on the ones who are doers of good.* (2:236)

And if you divorced them (f) before you touch them (f),
and you undertook the duty of a dowry portion for them (f),
then, half of what you undertook as a duty unless they (f) pardon it
or they (m) pardon it in whose hand is the marriage knot.
And that they (m) pardon is nearer to God-consciousness.
Forget not grace among you.
Truly, God is Seeing of what you do. (2:237)
Be watchful of the formal prayers and the middle formal prayer.
Stand up as ones who are morally obligated to God. (2:238)
And if you feared, then, pray on foot or as one who is mounted.
And when you were safe, then, remember God,
for He taught you what you be not knowing. (2:239)
And those whom death will call to itself forsaking spouses,
will bequeath for their spouses sustenance for a year
without expelling them (f). But if they (f) went forth themselves (f),
then, there is no blame on you in what they (f) accomplished
for themselves (f) as one who is honorable.
And God is Almighty, Wise. (2:240)
And for ones who are divorced females,
sustenance, as one who is honorable.
This is an obligation on the ones who are God-conscious. (2:241)
Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (2:242)

COMMENTARY°

KINDNESS AFTER DIVORCE

The Chapter then tackles a different, but frequently met, situation, in which a woman is divorced before the consummation of the marriage. It outlines the respective rights and obligations of both spouses. (2:236-2:237)

Two situations are outlined here. The first involves a woman who is divorced before her marriage had been consummated or a dowry agreed. In this case, the husband is obliged to recompense her according to his means. Such a gesture would have an immense psychological impact on the woman, who would be devastated at having her marriage dissolved before it has even begun. It would go a long way towards dissipating any bitterness or acrimony left in her heart. The unfulfilled marriage would be understood as an unfortunate mistake rather than a reflection on her suitability or integrity. The aim would be to diffuse the tension and conduct the severance of the relationship amicably, in a spirit of fairness and with no hard feelings. Meanwhile, the size of the gift offered in this case is left to the human being's discretion and conscience, within his financial ability: (2:236)

The second possibility arises if a dowry has been agreed and settled, in which case half of it must, in principle, be paid unless the wife, or her guardian if she is young, choose, without any pressure, to forgo such a payment. Forgoing such a claim is the attitude of one who has the power of the law on her side but she declines to touch the money of a person with whom she no longer has any relation. Nevertheless, the Quran goes on to urge more fear of God, tolerance, magnanimity and benevolence on the part of all involved. It exhorts: (2:237)

A QUESTION OF WORSHIP

Having evoked an atmosphere of submission to and God-consciousness, the Chapter interjects with a short passage on formal prayer, the main act of worship in the Quranic message, before it deals with other aspects of divorce. The inference here, in the inimitable style of the Quran, is that obedience to God in matters of marriage and divorce is an act of worship no less reverent or commendable than formal prayer itself. This is in total harmony with the comprehensive Quranic concept of worship (*ibadah*) which encompasses all human activity.

The Chapter says: (2:238-239) This is a clear instruction to Muslims to attend regularly to the five daily prayers, offering them in the proper manner, in the correct form, and at their appointed times. The middle formal prayer is generally taken to refer to *asr*, or mid-afternoon formal prayer.

The Chapter points out that even in times of danger and war, Muslims must not neglect the obligatory prayers. They may perform them in the most convenient way possible under the circumstances. They are permitted to perform the prayer in whatever posture they find themselves in, walking or riding, without having to face the *qibla*, the direction of the Kabah, or follow the prescribed procedure.

When safety and security prevail, formal prayer must be observed in the normal way, as taught to Muslims by God Almighty in the Quran and through the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. The Chapter stresses this fact: (2:239) Indeed, human beings would not have known anything if it were not for the fact that God teaches them in every minute of their lives.

More Rights for Widows and Divorcees

This interjection, with its fine spiritual touch, serves as a fitting interlude before the remaining rules on the rights of widows and on divorce are given: (2:240-2:242)

The first of these three signs establishes the right of a widow to

a bequest by her deceased husband, allowing her to stay in his home with a provision for her maintenance. She does not need to leave his home or marry again during that period if that is what she chooses to do. This does not exclude her right to leave the house after four months and ten days, the waiting period, as laid down earlier. While the waiting period is an obligation upon the widow, her staying in her late husband's home for a year is her right.

The Chapter goes on to state that: (2:240) The use of the plural 'you' in this context is significant because it indicates a collective communal responsibility for the welfare of widowed women, and a need for all members of the community to respect and observe Quranic rules and norms.

The concluding phrase: *God is Almighty, Wise* draws attention to God's power and wisdom in laying down such rules, with a hint of warning that they should not be taken lightly.

The next sign institutes a divorcee's right to provisions, in general, and links the observance of this to virtuous conduct and God-conscious.

The final sign in this section asserts: (2:242) God lays down rules clearly, fairly and effectively, inviting people to reflect on their value and purpose and to appreciate God's blessings and mercy, implicit in them. They should not lose sight of the fact that they are aimed to bring about conciliation and accord. They are straightforward, easy and beneficial to put into practice, but rigorous and decisive at the, same time.

There is a great need for humanity to take heed of the divinely-inspired social order of Islam and put it into effect in their daily life, which will surely bring peace, stability and harmony into their hearts and minds, and into their lives as a whole.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight

points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life:

LESSON 87(24) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:243-2:248

Madinah: *Have **you** not considered those who went forth*
from their abodes while they were in the thousands
being fearful of death? And God said to them: Die!
Again, He gave them life. Truly, God is Possessor of Grace
for humanity except most of humanity gives not thanks. (2:243)
So fight in the Way of God,
and know that God is Hearing, Knowing. (2:244
Who is he who will lend God a fairer loan
that He will multiply it for him manifold times?
And God seizes and extends and you are returned to Him. (2:245)
*Have **you** not considered the Council of the Children of Israel*
after Moses when they said to a Prophet of theirs:
Raise up a king for us, and we will fight in the way of God.
He said: Perhaps if fighting was prescribed for you,
you would not fight.
They said: Why should we not fight in the way of God
when we were driven out of our abodes with our children.
Then, when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away,
but for a few of them.
And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust. (2:246)
Madinah: Book 28: Samuel Anoints Saul (2:247)
Madinah: Book 28: Samuel Anoints Saul (2:248)

COMMENTARY°

The present passage gives an account of an episode in the history of past nations to add to the practical lessons given to the Muslim community, as part of its preparation to face what may lie ahead on its way. The first is outlined briefly, but adequately, without even mentioning the people involved. They are a large group who tried to flee from death, leaving their homes to no avail. God caused them to die and brought them back to life, rendering their efforts to evade death futile, and giving them a new life without any effort on their part. As it shows them this example, the Quran urges the believers to fight and donate for the cause of God who gives and takes away both life and wealth.

FLEEING FROM DEATH

We need not go into the plethora of interpretations with regard to the identity or the time and place of the people referred to in this sign. Had these details been of any particular importance in understanding the moral and the message of the story, they would most certainly have been given in the Quranic account.

Such a mass exodus, with thousands of people fleeing at the same time, whether from a hostile attack or the outbreak of disease, could only occur in a state of total panic. Nevertheless, running away could not save those people from meeting their death: (2:243)

MULTIPLIED LOAN REPAYMENT

As the Chapter continues, we begin to understand the significance of the story and partly appreciate God's purpose in citing this episode quite early on in the history of the Muslim nation. The next sign says: (2:244)

This sign tells the Muslims very clearly that neither their love of life nor their fear of death should stop them from fighting for God's cause. Death and life are determined by God, and those who believe should fight for His cause and under His banner alone. They should be mindful that God is aware of what they do and is there to respond to their needs and appreciate and reward their actions.

The emphasis on financial sacrifice was essential, as the Chapter strongly states: (2:245) God bestows life and takes it away, and one may go to battle and survive, if that is God's will. Wealth is not lost when spent in a good cause. It is a form of loan to God whose generous repayment is guaranteed, both in this world and in the life to come.

Poverty and wealth are also due to God's will rather than the outcome of one's financial acumen or frugality or philanthropy: (2:245) People and all their possessions shall one day return to God, and so death and poverty no longer pose any threat. Believers shall go ahead and sacrifice their lives, their wealth and all their possessions in the cause of God who has already charted their course and destiny in this world. They shall live their lives to the full, in dignity and freedom, in the service of God Almighty.

This short passage is a fine example of the power of the Quranic language and style. We are immediately taken into a scene of panic and confusion, with thousands of people fleeing in all directions to avoid death and annihilation. Suddenly, they meet the very fate they are trying to escape; no measures or precautions they have taken will avail them. And, just as suddenly and without further explanation, they are brought back to life by the mighty hand of God, who con-

trols everything and whose power is overwhelming. Thus, we realize that life and death are in the hands of God Almighty, as are wealth and fortune, which complement the theme of the passage.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Does this description stick to the facts?
Or, is reasoning or response included?
Is this something that can be directly seen?
Or would you have to interpret what you saw to arrive at this statement?
Is this how anyone would describe the situation?
Or would someone else see it differently?
What alternative descriptions or explanations are there?

Students could then examine the assumptions and inferences underlying the alternatives.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

QURANIC SIGNS 2:249-2:253

Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:249)
Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:250)
Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:251)
Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:252)
Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:253)

LESSON 87(25) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:254-2:257

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Spend of what We provided you,
before a Day approaches when there is neither trading in it
nor friendship nor intercession.
And the ones who are ungrateful,
they are the ones who are unjust. (2:254)
God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal.
Neither slumber takes Him nor sleep.
To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
Who will intercede with Him but with His permission?
He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them.
And they will not comprehend anything of His knowledge,
but what He willed. His Seat encompassed the heavens
and the earth, and He is not hampered by their safe-keeping.
And He is The Lofty, The Sublime. (2:255)
There is no compulsion in the way of life.
Surely, right judgment became clear from error.
So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God,
then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold.
It is not breakable. And God is Hearing, Knowing. (2:256)
God is The Protector of those who believed.
He brings them out from the shadows into the light.
And those who were ungrateful, their protectors are false deities.
They bring them out from the light into the shadows.
Those will be the Companions of the Fire.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (2:257)

COMMENTARY°

These facts which God reasserted through revelations are timeless and universal, and not restricted to the Muslims of Madinah at that time. The use of a single incident to illustrate an absolute principle is a device used frequently in the Quran.

The Chapter addresses believers directly, urging them to give part of their wealth, which God has bestowed upon them, for the cause of God, complementing the earlier call to fight for God's cause and reinforcing it. (2:254)

God addresses the Muslims in a most intimate and touching way, using the title they most love and value: believers. He calls on them to give out of the wealth He has given them, before it is too late, in order to secure the greatest gain and the highest reward. He calls

upon them to give for His cause; to uphold and defend His way of life and to subdue and uproot wrongdoing and injustice.

The ungrateful *are the unjust* by virtue of their denial of the truth. They wrong themselves by choosing a doomed course in life. They wrong others by misleading and confusing them, depriving them of God's generosity and compassion which brings them peace, security, reassurance and serenity of faith.

GOD'S UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Then follows a sign that summarizes, in powerful and succinct Words, the basic principles of the Quranic message, citing those attributes of God that most aptly assert the meaning and significance of the basic Quranic principle of *tawhid*: the Oneness of God: (2:255)

Every one of these attributes reflects a fundamental aspect of the universal Quranic view of the world. Although the subject matter of this sign would normally be expected to fall within the themes of the Quranic parts received by the Prophet in Makkah, we do find that on several occasions, parts received in Madinah also cover these most important aspects of the Quranic message. For the overall Quranic system to be understood and appreciated, the fundamentals have to be established and firmly implanted in the minds of the believers.

This statement (2:255) clearly and definitively distinguishes the Quranic concept of God from that of the Trinity, adopted and advanced by Christian church councils long after Jesus, and from the pagan beliefs of the ancient Egyptians who confused God with the sun and recognized the existence of lesser gods beside Him.'

The sign describes God as *The Living, The Eternal.* This implies a self-generating, self-sustaining being that is unique and independent of everything else. It is also a being without a beginning or an end, totally outside the dimension of time which defines the beginning and end of other ephemeral beings. Furthermore, this being, God Almighty, is absolute and cannot be defined in conventional terms applicable to all creation. He is unique in every respect, and nothing can be compared with Him. Thus, all other definitions or representations of God, conjured up by the human mind throughout the ages, are false and inadequate.

The Eternal implies that God has power over all things and that He is the supreme and ultimate cause, the reason for being of everything, without whom there can be no existence or action.

This statement, *neither slumber takes him nor sleep,* reinforces, in simpler and more graphic terms, the preceding one: that God is the everlasting power sustaining everything in existence. It also dis-

tinguishes God from other beings by pointing out that He is not affected by sleep to any degree, in any shape or form.

God's claim over the cosmos is total and absolute; unconditional and incontestable. This is another aspect of the principle of God's Oneness which confirms that God is supreme, ever-present, eternal, master and owner of all. It completely invalidates the assumption that God has partners in His power or actions.

Here we can see how Quranic principles are directly translated into law for immediate application in life. When God says: (2:255) He is not merely stating a principle of faith, but also laying down a fundamental rule of the order of life He envisages for humanity.

Once the belief is firmly established in our consciousness that everything in this world belongs to God and that what we own is merely on loan for a limited period of time, greed and lust to accumulate wealth and worldly possessions by any means will not be difficult to hold in check. This belief is bound to fill our hearts with contentment, humility, tolerance, and magnanimity. One will face wealth and poverty with equal ease and steadfastness, and if impoverished will not be in the least bitter or grudging.

Who will intercede with Him, but with His permission? This statement underlines yet another aspect of the concept of God's Oneness, distinguishing clearly the Supreme Being, God, and His sub ordinate creation. All creatures stand in total humility and submissio to the Master, never arrogating to themselves powers or authorities not delegated to them by Him. Above all, they are not to intercede on behalf of anyone without God's permission, and when they are granted such permission, they will act within its limits, as set out by God Almighty. Some will certainly attain a higher degree of approval than others, but none of them will overstep their set limits.

This statement, *He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them,* expresses God's omniscience. He has full and total knowledge of the present, the past and the future, which human beings cannot possibly know or perceive. He is ever aware of what human beings know and what they do not, and will not, know. They can learn only what He allows them to learn.

The fact that God knows our present, past and future actions and deeds, and beyond, ought to fill us with dread and awe, for being totally and permanently exposed before God Almighty. It inspires total humility and submission to the one omniscient God. It is also poignant to reflect on the corollary of this principle: *and they will not comprehend anything of His knowledge.*

Here we have another example of the unique style of the Quran in expressing an abstract idea by means of a visual image, in order

to make the meaning clear and accessible. *His Seat encompassed the heavens and the earth.* The word *kursi*, meaning "seat' or "chair' or'throne', is usually used to denote realm or sovereignty. The idea here is that God's sovereignty and authority extend over the entire cosmos, and the image makes it clear, easy to grasp and comprehend.

Likewise, the phrase, *and He is not hampered by their safe-keeping,* is an expression of God's omnipotence, depicting in simple but powerful terms how easy it is for God to sustain and preserve the heavens and the earth.

Quranic expressions of this kind have provoked a great deal of controversy, largely because commentators ignored the Quranic syntax and leaned heavily on alien and absurd philosophies which distorted much of the clarity and simplicity of the Quran.

The sign ends with two more attributes of God: *He is The Lofty, The Sublime,* exalting God above all else. The Arabic words make it clear that these attributes are exclusive to God Almighty. No human being, or any other creature, could aspire to these qualities, and those who try shall be humbled and disgraced.

FREEDOM OF BELIEF GUARANTEED

Having outlined some of the most essential and detailed aspects of faith, and having precisely defined the status of God and the nature of His relationship with the rest of creation, the Chapter goes on to describe the proper behavior of the believers as they adopt this faith and pass it on to others, and assume the leadership of humanity. (2:256-2:257)

The Quran was revealed to declare and establish the great universal principle that: *There is no compulsion in religion (the way of life). Surely right judgment became clear from error.* (2:256) This reflects the honor God has reserved for person and the high regard in which human will, thought and emotions are held, and the freedom he is granted to choose his beliefs, and the responsible position he is afforded to be judge of his own actions.

Freedom of belief is the most basic right that identifies person as a human being. To deny anyone this right is to deny him or her humanity. Freedom of belief also implies the freedom to express and propagate one's belief without fear of threat or persecution; otherwise, that freedom is hollow and meaningless.

The Arabic text, using a generic negative, imparts a negation of the very idea of compulsion. When it comes to matters of belief, not only should these never be imposed by coercion or compulsion, but there cannot even be an option to use such a means of conversion or persuasion.

The Chapter reinforces the principle with a gentle, but firm, touch to arouse the human conscience and guide it along the path of enlightenment, saying simply: *Surely right judgment became clear from error.* (2:256)

The Chapter elaborates the theme further, saying: (2:256) It is false deities that must be rejected, while faith must be reserved for God, who alone deserves faith and trust. The Arabic term for "false deities' is *taghut*, meaning tyrant, a word denoting anyone that takes hold of the mind or suppresses the truth, or transgresses the laws and limits set by God. It refers to forces and systems that disregard the divine religious, moral, social and legal order and operate in this life on values and principles not sanctioned by God or derived from His guidance and teachings. To resist such forces, in all their manifestations, and to believe in God's oneness is the only certain path to success and salvation.

The light of faith and truth is one and unique, leading to the one straight path; while darkness, in the sense of evil, can take various shapes and forms. There is darkness in caprice and uncontrolled desire; in deviation, conceit and tyranny; and there is darkness in abject acquiescence and servility; as well as in ostentation and hypocrisy, in lechery and greed, and in cynicism and scepticism. All these forms of darkness stem from the evil of abandoning God's guidance and submitting to powers and laws other than His. Leaving the light that radiates from God plunges person into darkness and despondency, and the ultimate end is even worse: (2:257)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi-

dent you have learned.

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.

I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.

I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

QURANIC SIGNS 2:258-2:260

Madinah: Book 26: Abraham (2:258)
Madinah: Book 26: Abraham (2:259)
Madinah: Book 26: Abraham (2:260)

LESSON 87(26) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, VOCABULARY

WHAT IS A CONCEPT?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:261-2:266

A parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of God
is like a parable of a grain. It puts forth seven ears of wheat.
In every ear of wheat, a hundred grains.
And God multiplies for whom He wills.
And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. (2:261)
Those who spend their wealth in the way of God
and, again, pursue not what they spent with reproachful reminders
nor injury, the compensation for them is with their Lord.
And there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (2:262)
An honorable saying and forgiveness are better than charity
succeeded by injury. And God is Sufficient, Forbearing. (2:263)
O those who believed! Render not untrue your charities
with reproachful reminders nor injury like he who spends of his
wealth to show off to humanity,
and believes not in God and the Last Day.
His parable is like the parable of a smooth rock.
Over it is earth dust. A heavy downpour lit on it, and left it bare.
They have no power over anything of what they earned
and God guides not the ungrateful folk. (2:264)
And the parable of those who spend their wealth
looking for the goodwill of God and for confirming their souls
is like the parable of a garden on a hillside.
A heavy downpour lit on it. Then, it gave its harvest double.

And even if lights not on it a heavy downpour, then a dew.
And God is Seeing of what you do. (2:265)
Would anyone of you wish that he have a garden of date palm trees
and grapevines beneath which rivers run with all kinds of fruits in
it for him? Then, old age lit on him, and he had weak offspring.
Then, a whirlwind lit on it in which there is a fire.
Then, it was consumed. Thus, God makes manifest His signs
for you so that perhaps you will reflect. (2:266)

COMMENTARY°

ETHICS OF QURANIC CHARITY

The present passage opens with gentle exhortations, touching inner, deep-seated human feelings and senses. It depicts a vigorous, flourishing picture of life, with grains sprouting and growing to yield multitudes of grains and return many times what has been invested. This verdant and lush image, the Chapter says, represents a model for those who spend of their own money for the cause of God. (2:261)

With this vivid image, the Quran directs the human conscience to giving and to charity. By giving away what one dearly loves to retain, one is in fact earning; and the more one gives, the more one gains, in a perpetual process which, with God's blessing, can continue without any limits or restrictions. (2:261) God's grace never runs out, nor is it withheld. God is aware of people's thoughts, intentions and feelings, and nothing escapes His knowledge.

The question here is: What kind of spending is made to grow in such a phenomenal way, and is rewarded so generously by God, both in this life and in the life to come?

The spending that is generously rewarded is that motivated by the purest and highest human feelings, and which enhances such feelings. It is not intended to degrade or spite or hurt. It is purely done for the sake of God Almighty: (2:262)

When those who have, give, they do so from the wealth God has given them. Indeed, this act of charity is, in the Quranic sense, a loan given to God which is then returned multiplied manifold. Recipients of charity are there to provide the giver with an opportunity to earn a greater reward from God. The terms which the Chapter lays down in this passage emphasize these values, seeking to dissuade givers from flaunting their generosity and encouraging the needy to abandon any feelings of inferiority or inadequacy. Both are beneficiaries of God's bounty, and both shall receive their respective rewards so long as they observe the ethics and the terms laid down by God. (2:262) Givers should not fear poverty, jealousy or injustice, nor

should they regret their actions or have any concern regarding their fate in the hereafter.

CHARITY COUPLED WITH GOOD MANNERS

The next sign reasserts the idea that a charitable act followed by wicked behavior is worthless: (2:263) A pleasant word or a kind-hearted gesture would be far more favorable and likely to spread trust, confidence and love and to calm the hearts and souls. Charity, after all, is not a favor from the giver to the recipient, but an obligation towards God. He neither needs these pitiful donations nor is He anxious to exact punishment on the ungrateful. All people owe their very existence to God Almighty. He overlooks many of their shortcomings, and they ought to learn from Him by showing forgiveness and compassion towards the poor and the needy. (2:264-2:265)

We are presented here with a complete portrait, which is the composite of two perfectly contrasting scenes. Each is full of detail and contrast, beautifully reflecting ideas and feelings in elegant strokes of color and imagination.

The first of these two scenes is arid, harsh and barren, but with a superficially attractive exterior; the other welcoming and fertile. The first reflects nothing of the warmth of faith; its harshness is concealed under a thin layer of soil, like the thin layer of hypocrisy that shields the real personality of the ungrateful. As soon as rain falls, the veneer disappears and the barren interior is revealed: (2:264)

The other scene depicts the believers: (2:265) Such people's hearts are filled with happiness and reassurance. They are full of confidence in the value and goodness of their actions. These are portrayed like a fertile garden with thick, rich soil, as opposed to the thin layer in the previous scene, set on a hillside. Rain revives and reinvigorates it to yield: (2:265) In fact it does not need heavy rain. Only: (2:265) That is exactly the effect charity has on the believer. It rejuvenates him and enhances his relationship with God who, in turn, would reward him and make his wealth grow even more, thereby raising the quality of social welfare and the life of the community as a whole.

In the inimitable style of the Quran, the Chapter presents a fully integrated and harmonious picture, with exquisite detail and elegant contrast of mood and color, depicting every feeling and every emotion, and reflecting every idea and meaning with clarity and ease. The sign concludes by stressing that God is aware of the real motives and intentions behind people's actions.

The scene that follows depicts the outcome of flaunting one's charity and generosity, and how He thus causes their effect to be to-

tally and irreversibly wiped out. In vivid and powerful terms, the Chapter paints a depressing and violent picture.

Charity, in essence, is given a tangible picture. It is fresh, opulent, luxuriant, bountiful and fertile. Thus is charity in its effect on the life of the giver and the recipient alike, and on the life of the community. It is blessed, purifying, ever-growing. We can see clearly from this passage how the Quranic style achieves.

GIVING AWAY THE BEST

The Chapter goes on to outline the nature of charity, its methods, manners and outcome: (2:267) Following the ethics and principles of charity outlined in the preceding signs, one should give of the best in one's possession, rather than of the less worthy, which one would not accept if offered in trade, unless one could strike a bargain price. God has no need to accept charity out of people's second-rate possessions.

This is a broad principle, valid for all time and all types of property, whether earned, cultivated, extracted or mined, whether known at the time of the Prophet Muhammad or not. Not a single kind of earnings or capital, acquired at any time, is exempt from the obligation of charity, and *zakat* accrues on it all, in accordance with the rates and proportions specified by the Prophet for the various types of capital known then. These form the standard by which percentages and proportions are determined for new types of wealth, capital or earnings.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

CONCEPT MAPPING:

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

PRE-QUESTIONS:

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

DEFINITION:

What is....?
Where does ... fit?
What group does ... belong to?

CHARACTERISTICS:

How would I describe...?
What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

EXAMPLES

What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

EXPERIENCE

What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

LESSON 87(27) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONCEPTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Quranic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Quranic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (*Quranic Sunnah*) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[1]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:267-2:273

Madinah: *O those who believed! Spend of what is good that you earned, and from what We brought out for you from the earth. And aim not at getting the bad of it to spend while you would not be ones who take it, but you would close an eye to it. And know that God is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise.* (2:267)

Satan threatens you with poverty and commands you to depravity; whereas God promises you His forgiveness from Himself and His grace. And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. (2:268)

He gives wisdom to whom He wills. And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition. (2:269)

And whatever of contributions you spent or vows that you vowed, then, truly, God knows it. And for the ones who are unjust there is no helper. (2:270)

If you show your charity, then, how bountiful it is
while if you conceal it and give it to the poor, that would be better
for you. This absolves you of some of your evil deeds.
And God is Aware of what you do. (2:271)
Their guidance is not on thee. But God guides whomever He wills.
And whatever of good you spend, it is for yourselves.
And spend not but looking for the Countenance of God.
And whatever of good you spend, your account will be paid to you
in full and you will not be wronged. (2:272)
Spend for the poor, those who were restrained in the way of God
and are not able to travel on the earth. The one who is ignorant
assumes them to be rich because of their having reserve.
You will recognize them by their mark.
They ask not persistently of humanity.
And whatever of good you spend, then, truly,
God is Knowing of that. (2:273

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter goes on to reveal to the believers that miserliness and the tendency to give to charity out of one's inferior possessions are motivated by lack of faith in God and by fear of poverty. Such fear is only entertained by those who have no trust in God and their accountability to Him. It identifies these motives clearly, pointing to their original instigator: (2:268-269)

The Chapter is telling the believers that Satan insinuates into their minds a fear of poverty in order to arouse their selfishness and greed, and that it is he that entices them to transgress and commit indecencies. This fear was responsible for the practice of burying one's young daughters alive in pre-Quranic Arabia, while greed and excessive lust for wealth led some to gorge themselves on usury—both abhorrent and shameful practices.

In contrast to Satan's destructive exhortations, God promises forgiveness and generosity and provides sustenance and livelihood for everyone, in return for their generosity, because He is beneficent and fully aware of people's innermost thoughts and intentions. Furthermore: (2:269) God grants wisdom and common sense to enable people to reason and evaluate their actions and to seek moderation and forethought in their attitudes and behavior. What a great gift, indeed! ... *those imbued with intuition* ... take heed. (2:269)

They are the ones who appreciate and understand and judge matters sensibly. As in all matters, it is up to God's absolute will to determine who deserves to receive the gift of wisdom, but the Chapter reassures those who sincerely strive for wisdom and guidance that

they shall not be denied these gifts.

This statement (2:268) asserts the fundamental truth that, in this life, there are only two clear choices to make: God's way or the way of Satan. person can either heed God's advice or act on Satan's promises; rejecting one way means following the other. Only one way, the way of God, leads to the truth and all other routes belong to Satan. This truth is frequently and deliberately emphasized in the Quran in order to leave those who reject God's path with no argument or excuses. The path of truth is one and well defined, and people are free to take it or turn away from it. They will face the consequences of their choice.

The Chapter continues with the theme of charity, emphasizing that God is fully aware of what people give and how they give. He will reward them for both the act of giving and the intention behind it: (2:270-2:271)

Giving, in this sense, refers to all kinds of alms and charity, voluntary as well as obligatory, for private or public causes. Vows and pledges are made by individuals for personal reasons and must be made for the sake of God and for no other cause.

The Chapter urges that voluntary charity is best given in private, to ensure that it is free from all traces of flaunting and pretension. However, publicizing the giving of obligatory charity could in fact be beneficial because it would promote the practice and help establish it in society. Therefore, both ways are acceptable: (2:271) This statement covers both cases, giving each its appropriate weight, promising atonement from sin for both of them: (2:271) It also evokes consciousness of God on the one hand, and confidence and reassurance on the other. Furthermore, it confirms that all actions and intentions are known to God, who is aware of all that people do.

We cannot fail to note the elaborate and extensive way in which the ethics of giving for charity are covered in the Chapter, from which two important conclusions can be drawn.

First is the fact that the Quranic message recognizes human nature, its propensity to be selfish and tight-fisted and its constant need for motivation and encouragement. Only in this way can human nature overcome these tendencies and aspire towards the noble and benevolent spheres God wishes person to reach.

Second is the nature of the community the Quran was addressing. The Arabs were particularly known for their hospitality and generous disposition, but these were tarnished by their tendency to flaunt their generosity and by their pursuit of fame, acclaim and recognition. It would not, therefore, have been easy to teach them to give all that up and give of their wealth purely for the sake of God. The task

required extensive education and motivation to instruct them in self-denial and dedication to God's cause, in which Islam has achieved unparalleled success.

CHARITY BENEFITS THE CHARITABLE

At this point the Chapter addresses the Prophet personally, setting out a number of essential facts bearing on the formulation of Islamic principles and scope of behavior: (2:272)

Guidance is a matter for God alone. Not even the Messenger of God could be held responsible for whether individuals heed the truth or not. God is the Creator, and He alone has power over people's hearts and minds. The mission of God's Messenger is to convey His message, and then it is up to God how He gives guidance to individual human beings, as they deserve to be guided. In taking this crucial issue out of the human domain, an important principle is established that a believer should seek and receive guidance from God alone. It also impresses upon the Messenger a need to show understanding, tolerance and perseverance in the face of any rejection or resistance he meets in conveying God's message to the public. He is to appeal to God to grant them guidance and show them the light.

Prophet Muhammad is directed to open his heart to people, to show kindness, and to offer all possible help, leaving judgement and reward to God Almighty. (2:272)

With such tenets and principles, the Quranic message opens the widest possible horizons of compassion and tolerance. It goes beyond the recognition of religious freedom and rejection of compulsion and coercion. It demands universal human compassion and establishes the right of all needy members of society to help and support, regardless of their religious faith, as long as they do not pose any threat to the community. It further asserts that the rewards of those who give for the sake of God are safely guaranteed. No other religious faith has risen to or achieved such high standards of human or social morality.

The Chapter emphasizes that: (2:272) Only a believer gives for the sake of God and no other. He does not give to charity in order to gain influence or praise, nor does he exploit his generosity to achieve personal ends or satisfy his ego, nor does he seek the favor or pleasure of people in power or authority. A believer gives to charity in the full knowledge and satisfaction that he will be rewarded by God; and that his life, character, and standing will be enhanced and that, furthermore, God's generosity in the hereafter is guaranteed and will be all the more fulfilling..

The Chapter then refers to a specific form of giving, the benefi-

ciary of which is an honest and honorable section of society who are not ashamed of being poor and who are prevented by their dignity and self-esteem from degrading themselves by begging: (2:273)

The description fitted a group of Emigrants who had migrated with the Prophet to Madinah, leaving behind all their belongings and members of their families. They settled in Madinah; some of them, known as Ahl al-Suffah, lived in and around the Prophet's Mosque, and devoted their lives completely to the service of the community, volunteering for military missions and expeditions or guarding the Prophet and his household and mosque. These people were not able to work and earn a living, but behaved with dignity and propriety, refusing to beg or ask for charity, so much so that only a few people were aware of their plight.

Nevertheless, the directive has a universal application. In every generation there will be people not able, for various reasons, to earn their livelihood, but who insist on preserving their modesty and personal dignity by not becoming a burden on anyone else. They do their utmost to hide their poverty and distress, and only a few people are able to detect and appreciate their predicament.

Thus, in its unique and inimitable style, the Quran depicts in a few words a full and deeply poignant picture of human dignity and self-respect. The highly expressive syntax brings the features of those people gradually to life, and puts the reader face to face with their human characters.

Those honorable people who hide their want, as eagerly as they would their nakedness, could only be offered assistance privately and in such a way as would not offend their dignity. The sign closes with the appropriate comment that: (2:273) He will certainly not let it go unrewarded.

Finally, the next sign gives a concise summary of the whole subject of charity and reiterates, reassuringly, the pledge made to those who give out of sheer humanity and altruism: (2:274) They will have their reward which includes an increase of what they have in this life, other life blessings, and a reward in the hereafter. But they also have what is more than that, namely earning God's pleasure. Therefore, they need fear nothing whatsoever in this life or in the life to come.

There is a striking harmony between this closing comment and the earlier detailed statements. It provides a fitting final note for the Islamic ethical code of charity which represents a vital aspect of Islamic community and social life.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice.

The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness.*

They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it; (48:26)

To be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19)

Arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14)

To swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains.

Lesson 87(28) Critical Thinking Strategy
Developing One's Perspective:
Creating or Exploring Arguments

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
Quranic Signs 2:274-2:281

Madinah: *Those who spend their wealth by nighttime and daytime, secretly or in public, then, for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:274)
Those who consume usury will not arise, but like he who arise: whom Satan prostrated by touch. That is because they said: Trading is only like usury and yet God permitted trading and forbade usury. So whoever drew near an admonishment from his Lord and refrained himself, for him is what was past. And his command is with God. While whoever reverted, then, those will be the Companions of the Fire. They, ones who will dwell in it forever! (2:275)
God eliminates usury, and He causes charity to increase. And God loves not any sinful ingrate. (2:276)
Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms, for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse. (2:277)
O those who believed! Be God-conscious of God. And forsake what remained of usury, if you had been ones who believe. (2:278)
But if you accomplish it not, then, give ear to war from God and His Messenger.

And if you repented, you will have your principal capital, doing no wrong to others nor will you be wronged. (2:279)
If a debtor had been possessing adversity, a respite until a time of ease and prosperity. And it is better for you that you be charitable, if you had been knowing. (2:280)
Mina: *And be God-conscious of a Day on which you are returned to God. Again, every soul will be paid its account in full for what it earned, and they will not be wronged.* (2:281)

COMMENTARY°

THE HORRIFIC IMAGE OF USURY

Those who gorge themselves on usury cannot rise up except as he may rise up whom Satan has confounded with his touch. That is because they say: (2:275-2:276)

Before we study the Quranic text in detail, let us review the different types of usury, or *riba*, known at the time of revelation and how the Arabs of the pre-Quranic *jahiliyyah*, or Dark Ages, viewed the whole practice of usury. There were two main types, known in Arabic as *riba al-nasiah*, increase related to deferment, and *riba al-fadl*, increase based on difference in quality.

Riba al-nasah applies to selling goods on credit for an agreed term. When the term expires, and the buyer finds himself unable to settle, the seller raises the price in lieu of extending the settlement term. If a borrower fails to settle a debt, he agrees to make an additional payment, over the original loan, to the lender in return for an extension of the settlement period. According to others, *riba al-nasiah* was no more than a deferred loan conditional on an implied premium, the deferment being granted in return for the additional payment over the original amount.

That *riba al-nasiah* is usurious is self-explanatory: it involves an increased payment and time extension, the two essential elements of usurious transactions. In *riba al-fadl* there have to be real differences in quality of the same commodity which give rise to an increase in the quantity of one over the other. There is this type of transaction condemned by the Prophet as usurious, since it assigned different values to the two types of dates. Therefore, the Prophet ordered that one type of dates should be sold for cash, which is then used by the seller to buy the other type, thus removing all suspicion of usury.

The requirement to exchange traded goods simultaneously, hand to hand, is important in order to avoid any difference in the two quantities due to a lapse in time which could affect their respective values. It also indicates how sensitive the Prophet was to any suspicion of

usury, and how sagacious was his approach in uprooting it.

DIVINE ADMONITION REMAINS UNHEEDED

• This (2:275) is a reference not only to those who take interest or charge a usurious gain, but also to society as a whole.

These rules apply to private, one-to-one transactions, while the whole community is condemned to the onslaught of God's wrath in societies where usury forms the basis for financial transactions. Such a society lives in turmoil and constant insecurity.

Those with vested interests objected to the condemnation and abolition of usury, claiming that: (2:275) Their argument rested on the false assumption that the objective of both trading and usury was to secure gains, but trading is open to the risk of loss as well as to making profit. It also requires real tangible input from the trader. Usury transactions, on the other hand, are aimed at bringing guaranteed gains for the lender in any case. That is the crucial difference between the two. Any transactions involving a guaranteed return for the lender, under all circumstances, are usurious and, hence, forbidden. There can be no argument on this point. God has permitted trading for many reasons that make it beneficial for human life, and the absence of guaranteed returns is first among them.

However, the Quranic message faced the situation existing at the time with realism, averting any kind of economic or social upheaval. It declared its new rules effective immediately and turned a new page with respect to what had been going on previously: (2:275)

It seems to suggest that exoneration for previous usurious activities would be left to God's grace, thereby providing individuals with a stronger incentive to desist and seek to conduct their trade withou usury. Nevertheless, it goes on to warn those who go back to such practices: (2:275) It affirms with power and authority for the benefit of those who might delude themselves that the hereafter was a long way away: (2:276)

This statement (2:276) clearly indicates that those who persist with usury, after all that has been said about it, are guilty of grave wrongdoing and condemned by God. Evidently, those who legalize what God has forbidden are guilty and damned, even if they assert their belief in Islam with all the power at their disposal.

The Quran is not mere words one utters, but it presents a comprehensive way and system of life. To reject a part of it is to reject it all. In this case, there is not the slightest doubt that usury is totally forbidden. Therefore, to legalize it and build the life of society on it is tantamount to unbelief.

IN PERFECT CONTRAST WITH USURERS

In contrast to the preceding example of disbelief and wrongdoing, the Chapter presents the case of faith and virtuous conduct, highlighting the essential attributes of the community of believers and the basis of the economic system which disavows usury and has the firm foundation of the important institution of *zakat*: (2:277)

The main element in this sign is that of *zakat* which denotes giving willingly, expecting nothing from any human being in return. The sign also introduces a feature of the community of believers and one of its important pillars, before it goes on to describe the total reassurance, tranquillity and happiness such a community enjoys.

The institution of *zakat* represents the foundation of a caring, sympathetic and supportive society, which has no cause to resort to usury in any aspect of its life. The image of *zakat* has faded somewhat in the minds of those unfortunate generations of Muslims who have had no experience of life under the Quranic message. They have not seen Quranic laws, ethics and principles shaping the daily lives of people, and creating a healthy, virtuous, decent society. They have had no experience of how *zakat* works in practical terms to bring about economic growth and prosperity as a reward for individual diligence and honest cooperation.

Zakat is levied by Muslim authorities at the yearly rate of 2.5 per cent on liquid money (or 5-10 % on crops, and 20 % on mineral resources), as an incumbent duty rather than optional charity. The authorities then distribute the proceeds among those in need in the community as widely as possible, in order for the beneficiaries to meet their basic necessities and alleviate their hardships. Debtors who are insolvent are helped with *zakat* money to settle their debts, whether these are personal or commercial. Poor people are helped to find appropriate work that makes them self- sufficient.

The form in which such a system operates is of secondary importance. What is important is the spirit in which the system and society come together and function as a whole to bring about genuine care and effective social welfare.

God promises those who conduct themselves according to the ethics and principles of faith, in submission to the divine will and in a spirit of cooperation: (2:277)

TOTAL WAR AGAINST THE USURERS

Having evoked an atmosphere of calm and peace, the Chapter makes a final passionate appeal to the true believers to eradicate usury and rid their society of it completely, or face a relentless war waged against them by none other than God Almighty and His Mes-

senger: (2:278-2:279) What a terrifying prospect! How could the frail and powerless humans even contemplate going to war against God and His Messenger; the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

Following the revelation of these signs, the Prophet instructed his governor in Makkah to use force against the wealthy clan of al-Mughayrah if they refused to cease dealing with usury.

The Quranic message continues to call on every generation of humanity to desist from the evil of usury and adopt clean and wholesome monetary and commercial practices, assuring them that: (2:279)

KIND TREATMENT OF INSOLVENT DEBTORS

This passage dealing with lending and borrowing is concluded with advice on how to deal with insolvent debtors. In such cases, the solution would not be to impose further penalties in lieu of deferred payment, but the debtor should be granted a reprieve until he is able to settle his debt, or the lender should be magnanimous enough to write off the debt completely.

The words (2:280) evoke an atmosphere of tolerance and benevolence. They provide a respite from the harshness and severity of greed and selfishness. They call for clemency and compassion on the part of creditor and borrower, as well as by society as a whole.

As believing Muslims, we recognize that these are words of truth that are certain to bring about happiness and security for all humanity: (2:280)

With the Quranic message, a debtor is never put under duress by either the creditor or the law, but is always given another chance to settle his debt. Furthermore, society at large will not stand idly by when a borrower is suffering genuine hardship because of his indebtedness. God calls on the creditor to willingly waive the debt, and if he does so it will be good for him and for the debtor, and for the welfare and cohesion of the community as a whole.

The abolition of usury would lose much of its purpose if the creditor were allowed to harass and squeeze the debtor while he was not able to settle the debt. Thus the Chapter urges that he should be given time to settle, and advises the creditor to waive the debt, in full or in part.

Then, in a highly inspiring comment, the Chapter recalls the fearful Day of Judgment when people shall stand defenseless before God to account for their actions. These words cannot fail to move a thoughtful and conscientious person to write off any money he might be owed by some helpless borrower. (2:281) The day to be feared is awesome indeed. Believers' hearts dread the events of that day when

all will be made to stand in front of God to face the reckoning of their deeds. This sign serves as a fitting comment on a passage devoted to the liquidation of past unfair dealings.

This fear is the powerful 'voice within' which the Quranic message kindles in the deepest recesses of people's minds and hearts to act as a potent guiding force in life. Thus, the Quranic message proves yet again how vigorous, well-integrated, practical and merciful it is, and demonstrates that its overriding aim and objective is the happiness and well-being of person as an individual, and of human society as a whole.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully. Try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Have you tried the strategy below? How would your rate yourself?

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

LESSON 87(29) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[2]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw th best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taugh by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) *After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control your thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights

from many subjects to the analysis. Make use of insights into one subject to inform students' understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, **economics.**[3]

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
QURANIC SIGNS 2:282-2:283

Madinah: *O those who believed! When you contracted a debt for a term—that which is determined—then, write it down. Let one who is a scribe write it down between you justly. One who is a scribe should not refuse to write it down as God taught him. So let him write down and let the debtor dictate. Let him be God-conscious of, his Lord, and diminish not anything out of it. But if the debtor had been mentally deficient, or weak, or not able to dictate himself, then, let his protector dictate justly. And call two witnesses to bear witness from among your men. Or if there are not two men, then a the human being and two women, with whom you are well-pleased as witnesses, so that if one of them (f) goes astray, then, the other one of the two will remind her. And the witnesses will not refuse when they were called. And grow not weary that you write it down, be it small or great, with its term. That is more equitable with God and more upright for testimony, and likelier not to be in doubt unless it be a trade, that which is transferred at the time— to give and take among yourselves. Then, there is no blame on you if you not write it down. And call witnesses when you have a transaction. Let neither one who is a scribe nor witness be pressed. And if you accomplish that, then, it is, truly, disobedience on your part. So be God-conscious. And God teaches you. And God is Knowing of everything.* (2:282)

And if you had been on a journey and find no one who is a scribe, then, a guarantee of that which is held in hand. But if any of you entrusted to another, then, let who was trusted give back his trust and let him be God-conscious of his Lord, and keep not back testimony. And he who keeps back, he, then, truly, his heart is one that is perverted. And God is Knowing of what you do. (2:283)

COMMENTARY°

LOAN ARRANGEMENT AND DOCUMENTATION

Let us now take a closer look at the Quranic principles established with respect to loans: (2:282)

The general rule is that details of all fixed-term loans must be in writing and that a third party must do the recording in order to ensure total impartiality and fairness. The writer is required to record the agreed terms of the loan faithfully, without interference, bias or prejudice. He is obliged to do his job fully and competently as a duty to God who has blessed him with the ability to write, and for which he will be appropriately rewarded: (2:282)

Having established that the terms of loans should be committed to writing by an independent document writer, the Chapter goes on to explain how the writing should be carried out: (2:282)

The party incurring the liability, the borrower, is the one to dictate to the writer, acknowledging the amount borrowed and his commitment to the terms and conditions of the loan, as a safeguard against any injustice to him. As the weaker party to the transaction, he would be less liable to alter the terms and conditions. This would reinforce the borrower's commitment to the liability. For, were the creditor to dictate, there would be no guarantee that he might not tamper with the terms and conditions of the loan to his advantage. Furthermore, the Chapter appeals to the borrower's conscience to be scrupulous and faithful in dictating the terms of the loan. It goes on to advise that if the borrower is feeble-minded, under age, or unable to dictate through ignorance or an impediment of speech, or any other reason, his guardian, attorney or trustee, may do so on his behalf, showing the same, if not greater, scrupulous fairness.

The Chapter gives detailed instructions concerning the witnessing of the contract: For the contract to be valid, it must be witnessed by two men or, if they are not readily available, one man and two women, all of whom should be of good standing in the community and deemed acceptable as witnesses by both parties. (2:282) The reason for recommending men witnesses in the first instance is that, in a Muslim society, the majority of marketplace attendants are normally men. Nevertheless, if two men cannot be found to witness a contract, a person and two women will do. But why two women? Since this is a legal matter, the Chapter does not leave the answer to speculation; and explains: *so that if one of them (f) goes astray, then, the other one of the two will remind her.* (2:282)

The Chapter calls on people not to refuse to act as witnesses if invited to do so, as it did with the writer earlier, saying: (2:282) It is an obligation, rather than a privilege, because it is a means of estab-

lishing justice and preserving rights. Witnesses must carry out their duty willingly, honestly and without any condescension or deference towards either of the parties.

The Chapter moves on to another, more general, aspect of legal and business transactions: (2:282) In spot trading, executed immediately and frequently, there is no need for writing dawn the details and the mere presence of witnesses will suffice. The Chapter proceeds to specify the rights of contract writers and witnesses, assuring them of the protection they deserve.

Finally the Chapter, in keeping with the Quranic way of igniting the inner powers of the human conscience, calls on believers to fear God and reminds them of His grace and favor in giving them knowledge and understanding, so that they may conduct their affairs in accordance with His will and guidance.

The Chapter rounds off the subject of loans by dealing with the special case of borrowing money while on a journey, when scribes may be difficult to find. Under these circumstances, to facilitate the transaction and ensure repayment of the loan, a verbal agreement is valid and binding provided a tangible article is given, and accepted, as security for the loan: (2:283)

Both creditor and borrower are trustees: the former entrusted with the security and the latter with the money he has borrowed, and they are both called upon to fulfil their trust and fear God, the ultimate master and ruler and judge over all.

With all these principles in mind, the Chapter speaks about giving evidence in cases of litigation. Transgression in this instance is attributed to the heart, where a person's intention to do or not to do things originates, but the statement contains a veiled threat in stressing that God has full knowledge of all you do.

WHERE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY LIES

The Chapter goes on to elaborate this point further, arousing deeper fear and consciousness of God, to whom everything belongs and who is aware of every thought, whether concealed or stated. He is sure to bring everyone to account, and He has full control over people's ultimate destiny: (2:284)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with teachers about any study problems

LESSON 87(30) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*umma* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH) QURANIC SIGNS 2:284-2:286

Madinah: *To God belongs what is in the heavens*
and in and on the earth. Whether you show
what is within yourselves, or conceal it, God will make a reckoning
with you for it. And He will forgive whom He wills.
And He will punish whom He wills.
And God is Powerful over everything. (2:284)
The Messenger believed in what was caused to descend to him
from his Lord as do the ones who believe.
All believed in God and His angels and His Books
and His Messengers saying: We separate and divide not among
anyone of His Messengers.
And they said: We heard and we obeyed,
so grant Thy forgiveness, Our Lord!
And to Thee is the Homecoming. (2:285)
God places not a burden on a soul beyond its capacity.
For it is what it earned and against it is what it deserved.
Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forgot or made a mistake.
Our Lord! Burden us not with a severe test like that which ***You*** *had*
burdened those who were before us.
Our Lord! Load us not such that we have no energy for it
and pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us.
You *are our Defender so help us*
against the folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (2:286)

COMMENTARY°

These two signs make up the final passage of this comprehensive and remarkable Chapter, the longest in the Quran. Its subject matter covers a wide range of issues and fundamental Quranic concepts, rules and principles. It outlines the nature and role of the Muslim community in the world, and identifies its enemies and detractors, their attitudes and the methods they use to undermine and

weaken it, and the means the community has to use in order to combat their intrigues and thwart their schemes. The Chapter then elaborates on the nature and scope of the human being's role in the world, as well as his weaknesses and shortcomings.

Throughout the Chapter we have found frequent references to the recognition and endorsement of the Quranic message of all divine messages revealed to earlier Prophets and Messengers. Now the Chapter gives the final summation: (2:285) The two passages coalesce beautifully as if to form the frame of a single work of art.

The Chapter covers quite extensively many of the laws and rules governing all aspects of personal and communal life. It has described at length the excesses and the impertinence of some communities of the Children of Jacob. Here it concludes with a clear statement regarding the fulfilment, or otherwise, of one's obligations in this life. It stresses that God neither wishes to overburden the believers who uphold the faith; nor to favor them with any concessions or privileges, as some Children of Jacob had claimed for themselves. Nor does He leave them to their own devices. (2:286)

The Chapter has related various episodes of their history, pointing out the grace God accorded them and how some of them had received that grace with insolence and ingratitude, for which they had to pay a heavy price amounting, in certain cases, to their own lives. Here it concludes with a moving and passionate prayer in which believers plead with God Almighty.

The Chapter has instituted jihad and generous donations for God's cause to combat aggression. It ends with believers seeking God's help and support, saying: (2:286)

These concluding signs are precisely formulated, and every word has its place and significance in the text. Taken as a whole, they reflect the central aspects of faith and define the position of believers, their relationship with God and their perception of His will and purpose in the world, which they accept and willingly submit themselves to Him. The signs are a superb example of the excellence of the Quranic style and approach, which remain fascinating even to those who are well acquainted with the Quran. Let us now look more closely at these two signs.

ONE TRUE FAITH

The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him by his Lord, and so do the believers. Each one of them believes in God, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers. We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. And they say: (2:285)

The Quran refers to that privileged community of believers who

are the archetype of faith, and to all succeeding communities modelled on their example. This community is honored by, and greatly appreciates, being mentioned in the same breath as God's Messenger.

The Messenger's faith springs directly from the revelations he receives from God, the ultimate truth. It is a degree of faith that cannot be described except by one who has experienced it; it remains beyond comprehension for those mortals who have not experienced divine revelation and is, therefore, totally unique and exclusive to God's Messenger himself. That is why it is such an honor for ordinary believers to he mentioned side by side with God's Messenger.

The Chapter defines the nature and parameters of this faith. It is a comprehensive and universal faith, commensurate with the far-reaching and historic role the Muslim community is destined to inherit and take on in the world. It is a commitment that identifies humanity, throughout its history, as being of only two main groups: the believers who represent the party of God, and the unbelievers who constitute the party of Satan.

According to the Quranic message, belief in God is the foundation of a Muslim's understanding of life, and of the code governing his life, morals, economic and all other activities. It means believing in God as the Supreme Being, the Lord of everything and the sole object of reverence and worship. He is the ultimate authority over the human conscience and behavior in every single aspect of his life.

... *and His angels* ... is an important aspect of belief in the unseen, the unknowable which lies beyond human perception or understanding, or, to use the Islamic term *ghayb*. The human being's ability to perceive and accept a world above and beyond the physical world whose existence he can discern and verify sets him above the rest of creation and confers on him his human qualities. This belief puts into proper perspective the human being's natural curiosity for what lies beyond the material physical world, which he instinctively and clearly perceives to exist. Without this clear perspective and vision, person resorts to myth and superstition, leading to imbalance and instability.

Like other aspects of *ghayb*, belief in the angels widens human perception and understanding of the world around him. It is no longer restricted to what he can see and feel, which is only a small part of reality. He feels safer in the company of these faithful creatures, fellow believers in God's Oneness, who pray constantly for human redemption, and in the comforting thought that they are there to help and guide him spiritually. Furthermore, the mere knowledge of this fact is a blessing from God to those who believe in Him and His angels.

... and His Books and His Messengers. We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. According to the Quranic view, belief in God's Books and Messengers follows logically and naturally from belief in God Himself. To believe in God is to believe in the truth of all that is revealed by Him, and in the honor and integrity of all the Messengers He has commissioned, and in the unity of the source of the messages they have preached. A Muslim has no notion of discrimination between God's Messengers. They all preached Islam in various versions, suited to the circumstances of the communities they addressed. Muhammad was the last and final of those Prophets and Messengers who has delivered the final, complete and universal version of the Quranic message, which will remain valid for the rest of time.

THE ULTIMATE END

Those who truly believe in God and His angels, Books and Messengers, know well that they shall return to their Lord, and so they turn to Him in obedience and submission, seeking His mercy and forgiveness. (2:285) This submission is an expression of their faith. They heed and obey every commandment received from God in affirmation of His Oneness and in recognition of the validity of His order in every aspect of life. No submission can be sincere without adherence to God's guidance and implementation of His rule in every sphere. Faith cannot be complete if he turns his back on God's teachings and seeks moral, social, economic or political guidance elsewhere. Faith is a quality firmly entrenched in a person's heart and is only given credence when expressed in actions.

With submission and obedience to the Lord comes a feeling of inadequacy and deficiency in paying one's dues towards God. Thus believers appeal to the merciful God to overlook their failures and shortcomings: (2:285)

The appeal for forgiveness follows the assertion of total submission and obedience. It is then followed by certainty in one's fate here in this life and in the life to come. God's word is the final and ultimate truth; everything shall return to Him; He is omnipotent; His will is done and His power unchallenged; His forgiveness, mercy and grace provide the way to escape punishment for sins we commit.

This short Quranic sign (2:285) encapsulates the basic concept of the unity and integrity of Quranic belief. It is a simple and clear belief in the unity of God, His angels, His Books and Messengers, with no distinction among those Messengers whatsoever, based on total obedience and submission to God and an unshakeable faith in the Day of Judgment.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Chapter continues: (2:286) It is within this framework of divine mercy and justice that a Muslim views, with total confidence and satisfaction, his obligations as God's vicegerent on earth, the challenges he faces in fulfilling those obligations, and the ultimate reward he receives. He is content in the belief that God is fully aware of his abilities and limitations, and will not overburden him or subject him to any duress or coercion. Not only does this fill a believer's heart with contentment and peace of mind, but it also inspires him to discharge his duties to the best of his ability. He is fully aware that any weakness he may experience is not because the task is excessive, but due to his own shortcomings, and this, in turn, motivates him to strengthen his resolve and strive for excellence in his actions.

The second part of the statement emphasizes individual responsibility for action: (2:286) Every individual is accountable for his own actions. No responsibility can be transferred from one person to another, nor can any person come to the aid of another in the matter of accountability. Once people appreciate this principle, each and every one of them becomes a positive and active force in society. They become responsible human beings ready to defend God's right over them, unwilling to concede it to anyone else. They will resist submission to temptation, tyranny, transgression and corruption, and submit their whole physical and spiritual being to God Almighty. Those who give in to powers other than God's, except those people subjected to duress or coercion, have only themselves to blame and shall have to face the full consequences of their actions.

A FINAL PRAYER

As the believers understand and appreciate the significance and implications of these principles, they make their earnest plea to God. The Quran, in its fine and highly expressive style, quotes their moving, passionate prayer. The reader can almost see the multitudes of believers reciting in unison throughout the generations this prayer, evoked by a dual feeling of hope and fear: (2:286)

It is a prayer that clearly defines the relationship between the believers and their Lord. In its soft tone and poignant rhythm it implies an admission of weakness and helplessness, and a recognition of the need for God's aid, support, forgiveness and grace.

Error and forgetfulness (2:286) are two defining characteristics of human behavior. In recognition of this, a Muslim never boasts of his faults, nor deliberately exploits them, nor places himself above God's will, but always seeks God's help and turns to Him in repentance. (2:286) This plea stems from an appreciation of the gravity of

the responsibility placed upon the Muslim community as heirs and custodians of God's message to humanity. It also reflects full absorption of the lessons and experiences of earlier nations who had received God's revelations, as related in the Quran.

The plea reflects the believers' gratitude for the freedom God has provided, as well as their fear of relapse. (2:286) This is not an excuse for negligence or a justification for dereliction of duty, but a plea by the weak to the powerful, for consideration and forbearance. A conscientious believer does not wish to fail in serving his Lord and Creator, and so he asks for leniency and tolerance. While acknowledging his weakness, a true believer remains vigilant and tries to compensate for his shortcomings by seeking more of God's grace and forgiveness.

This (2:286) is the only true guarantee of success and deliverance. No matter how hard a person strives to live up to his obligations and responsibilities towards God, he will not fulfil them satisfactorily. God shows grace by treating person with mercy and forgiveness.

The Chapter closes with a statement asserting that believers put their full trust in God to come to their help in establishing His order on earth and defending it against its foes. God is the source of their strength and their ultimate triumph. (2:286) These words encapsulate the essence of the Chapter as well as the Quranic message. They reflect the mind of true believers and define the eternal relationship between them and their Supreme Lord.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across

in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

APPENDIX 1
SIGNS REVEALED ON THE MIGRATION
SIGNS 22:52-55

MIGRATION: *And We sent not before you any Messenger*
nor Prophet,
but when he fantasized, Satan cast fantasies into him.
But God nullifies what Satan casts.
Again, God set clear His signs.
And God is Knowing, Wise, (22:52)
for He makes what Satan casts a test
for those who in their hearts is a sickness
and their hearts, ones that harden.
And, truly, the ones who are unjust are in a wide breach. (22:53)
And those who were given the knowledge
*know that it is The Truth from **your** Lord,*
so that they believe in it and humble their hearts to Him.
And, truly, God is One Who Guides
those who believed to a straight path. (22:54)
And those who were ungrateful cease not to be hesitant about it
until the Hour approaches them suddenly
or the punishment approaches them on a withering Day. (22:55)

SIGN 28:85 REVEALED ON THE MIGRATION

*Truly, He Who imposed the Quran for **you***
*will be one who restores **you** to the place of return.*
Say: My Lord is greater in knowledge
of whoever drew near guidance
and whoever is clearly wandering astray. (28:85)

COMMENTARY°

This sign is made when the Messenger had been driven out of his home town, was being chased by his people who wanted to kill him, and had not yet reached his new base, Madinah. He was at al-Juhfah, close to Makkah where the danger was very close. His eyes frequently turned to his home town which he so dearly loved. He only left it for the sake of his message. Otherwise, Makkah was the place where he had spent all his life, the place of his memories, and where his relatives lived.

In this desperate situation he is told: (28:85) God, who has given you the Quran and the task of delivering His message will not aban-

don you, or allow the unbelievers to chase you out of your place and home town. He will not allow them to impose their will on you or to oppress the believers with you. He has made the Quran binding on you so as to give you support through it at the time He judges to be right. If you are driven out today and being chased in all directions, you will certainly return with larger support.

God, in His infinite wisdom, decided to give Muhammad, His servant, this true promise at such a stressful time, so that he could go along his way comforted, confident and reassured by Gods promise. He does not entertain the slightest doubt that Gods promise will come true.

Indeed, Gods promise applies to all those who follow the same way. Anyone who suffers hardship and adversity for Gods sake and bears this with patience and perseverance will ultimately be given support against the oppressors. God will take over the battle on their behalf when they have given all that they can in fulfilment of their duty. (28:85)

He had formerly returned Moses to the land from where he fled, and with his return he saved the oppressed community and destroyed Pharaoh and his noblemen. It was the God-fearing who ultimately triumphed. Hence, you also, Muhammad, should go along your way, leaving the question of judgment between you and your people to God Almighty: *Say: My Lord is greater in knowledge of whoever drew near guidance and whoever is clearly wandering astray.*(28:85) That is, leave the matter to God and He will requite both those who follow right guidance and those who remain in error.

SIGN 47:14 REVEALED ON THE MIGRATION

And how many a town had there been
which was stronger in strength
than your town which drove you out,
that We have caused to perish?
And there was no one who helps them!(47:13)

COMMENTARY

This series of comparisons between believers and unbelievers is interrupted by a reference to the city that drove the Messenger out, comparing it with other cities and communities that perished even though they were far more powerful: (47:13) This verse is reported to have been revealed when the Messenger was on his way from Makkah to Madinah, having been driven out by the ungrateful Quraysh. It was revealed by way of consolation to him, reminding

him that those unbelievers who had opposed his message so determinedly, until he and his followers had to abandon their land and property and migrate for the sake of their faith, are truly powerless. In the end, they are subject to Gods power.

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE PRELUDE AND TEXT

PRELUDE

1. According to 19th century visitors to the Hijaz: The Taiyara or Flying Caravan goes in less time. It is a dromedary caravan, in which each person carries only his saddle bags. It usually descends (from Madinah) by the road called El Khabt, and makes Makkah on the fifth day. The stages by the Najd, or eastern route, traveled by Burton, are given as eleven, and the distance estimated at 248 miles.

2. We have no exact statement of the numbers of those who emigrated before the Messenger himself left Makkah. Eighteen months later, at the battle of Badr (when every emigrant but a very few unavoidably detained was present), the Messenger had 314 fighting-men, of whom eighty-three were Emigrants from Makkah. A few of these may have joined the Messenger after he reached Madinah.

3. See Ibn Ishaq.

EPILOGUE

1 Tabari, i. 1227; Ibn Hisham, p. 323. The guide was Abd Allah ibn Arqat [or Al-Urayqit]. His mother was a the Qurayshite. His father was from a tribe affiliated to the Quraysh. He was still an idolater and Waidi (anticipating the era when war was waged against all idolaters) adds, but the Messenger and Abu Bakr had given him quarter, or pledge of protection.

2. During the two months elapsing between the Pledge of Aqaba and the Prophet's departure, he was kept informed of what was going on at Madinah. During this interval, some of the Madinah converts revisited Makkah, with the view, no doubt, of making further arrangements with the Messenger. These Madinah converts had thus the meri of being not only Helpers at Madinah, but also Emigrants, as having in a sense also emigrated from Makkah when they returned to Madinah.

3. Ibn Hisham, p. 324.

4. The Ghanam Clan emigrated in a body, men, women, and children, and left their houses locked: not a soul was to be seen in the quarters of the Ghanam Clan, Abu al-Bukayr, and Mazun. Utba, Abbas, and Abu Jahl passed by the dwelling-place of the Jahish Clan, and the doors were locked, and the houses deserted. Utba sighed heavily, and said: Every house, even if its peace be lengthened, at the last a bitter wind will reach it. The quarter of the Jahish Clan is left without an inhabitant! This is the work of our pestilent nephew, who has dispersed our assemblies, ruined our affairs, and made a split amongst us. Ibn Hisham, p. 317.

5. Ibn Hisham, p. 328; Tabari, i, 1236. The following is from Burckhardt: Mount Thaur. About an hour and a half south of Makkah, to the left of the road to the village of Hussaynye, is a lofty mountain of this name, higher it is said than Mount Nur. On the summit of it is a cavern, in which the Messenger and his friend Abu Bakr took refuge from the Makkans before he fled to Madinah. But he did not visit the spot, nor did Ali Bay, Begum of Bhopal's *Pilgrimage to Makkah* (1870).

The path way from Makkah is excessively rugged and difficult, the pilgrim being obliged sometimes to crawl over the great rocks on his hands and knees. The entrance to the cave is still preserved in what is believed to be its original state and the pilgrim acquires merit by forcing himself with difficulty, as the Messenger must have done, through the aperture, which is, not more than 1 1/2 span in breadth; but a wide passage

has been opened out at the other end of the cave. The hills are wild and bare; huge masses of rock lie scattered about; and nothing green is in sight, save occasionally wild thorny bushes.

6. Ibn Hisham, p. 329.

7. Ibn Hisham, p. 231.

8. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, pp 212-220.

9. Tabari, p 193: They took this road after passing Thaniat al-Marrah. It lay between the Amq and Ruha roads. The names of the stages are preserved, but few of the places are now identifiable.

10. *Kitab al-Waqidi,* pp 212-220: The Wadi al-Aqiq has a north-westerly direction and discharges its waters into al-Ghaba, the basin in which collects the drainage of the Madinah plain. The travelers appear to have proceeded along the valley eastward for some space until they reached Aljathjatha, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 44.

11. The approach to Madinah described in the 19th century, ii, pp 18-27: The mountains are composed of inhospitable rocks, pinnacle-shaped, of granite below, and in the upper parts, fine limestone; but about the Wadi al Aqiq the surface is black scoriaceous basalt. The author says that all the rocky places about Madinah, as well as the lower ridge of the northern mountainous chain, are covered by a layer of volcanic rock; it is of a bluish black color, very porous, yet heavy and hard, not glazed, like Schlacken, and contains frequently small white substances in its pores of the size of a pins head, which I never found crystallized. The plain has a completely black color from this rock, and the pieces with which it is overspread. I met with no lava, although the nature of the ground seemed strongly to indicate the neighborhood of a volcano. The author adds the account of a volcanic eruption, CE 654, the stream of lava from which passed not far from Madinah, on the east; but he attributes the volcanic substances about the town and the valley Aqiq to some earlier eruption: vol. iii. 858-360. Also, Burton, ii. 30.

12. Quba is about ten miles south, southeast of Madinah.

13. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 44.

14. From the Awsite tribe which inhabited Quba, the quarter was called Aliya or Upper Madinah from its more elevated position. Upper Madinah included Quba and Khatma and some other tribes with the Jewish settlements of the Qurayza and Nadir. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, pp 101-282.

15. It was Monday Rabi I, H. When the Messenger arrived he was on Abu Bakr's camel. Few persons present knew which was the Prophet, till the suns rays fell upon him, and then Abu Bakr rose to place him in the shade. Out of this has grown the tradition that the people of Madinah recognized the Messenger from his body casting no shadow. Abu Bakr was known to some of the citizens, as he used to pass through Madinah on his mercantile trips to Syria, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

16. It can be traveled by swift dromedaries in five days. Burton, ii. pp 329-331.

17. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

18. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45 and p. 299; Hishami, p. 172. The bachelor refugees were accommodated in great numbers in Saad's house, so that it went by the name of the bachelors hostelry: he was himself a bachelor, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 229; Tabari, p .200.

19. That is to say, his wife remained there, and he used to visit her there when it was her turn to enjoy his society; for he had other wives. Kharija belonged to the Harith

ibn Khazraj clan. He was joined in brotherhood (the practice will be explained below) to Abu Bakr, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 212. Others say that Abu Bakr first alighted at the house of Khubayb or Hubayb ibn al Asaf.

20. Some accounts extend Muhammad's residence at Quba to two weeks. The discrepancy arises from a diversity in the traditional date of departure from Makkah; some giving the second, others the twelfth, of the Rabi I as the day of arrival at Quba. Those who adopt the former date are obliged to add ten days to the stay at Quba, in order to adjust their chronology, and hit the right day of the Prophet's entry into Madinah. The discrepancy in so late an event, and one so public, is not creditable to tradition. It shows what elements of uncertainty, supposition, and calculation, are mingled as fact with what is really good tradition.

21. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 47.

22. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

23. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45; Hishami, p. 172; Tabari, p. 215.The Friday Mosque or al-Anikah—of the Sand heaps—is in the valley near Quba where the Messenger prayed and preached on the first Friday after his flight from Makkah.

24. Tabari, vol. 7, p. 2.

25. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

26. Hishami, p. 173.

27. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45. Abu Ayyub or Khalid ibn Zayd used to tell a story that he and his wife accidentally broke a water pot in the upper story. Having wiped up the water as best they could with their clothes, hurried down to the Messengers apartment in great alarm lest any of it should have dropped on him. Hishami, p. 174.

28. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

29. The orphans were called Sahal and Suhayl. They belonged to the Malik branch of the Najjar. The Messengers relationship was with the Adi branch. Asad was one of the leaders. He is said to have held regular Friday services on this spot before the Mes sengers arrival. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 46, 297.

30. According to a 19th century visitor to Madinah: The court in the time of Ib Jubayr contained fifteen date trees. They are now reduced to a dozen which are contained in a railed-in and watered space called: Fatima's Garden. It also contains the remains of a venerable lote-tree. The Prophets well is close by.

31. He was a servant of Abbas who gave him to the Messenger who is said to have freed him on his bringing tidings of the conversion of Abbas. he was also called Aslam, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 46.

32. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 46. Tabari relates that Abdullah ibn Arykat, the guide, brought back to Makkah news of Abu Bakr having reached Madinah on which is family set out to join him. Zayd probably went back to Makkah with this guide.

33. From October till April, Burton, ii. 172; Burkhardt, 398.

34. Burkhardt, 322.

35. This pestilence was so universal that at one time the Messenger is said to have been almost the only one at prayers able to stand up; but he said: The formal prayer of one who sits is worth only half the prayer of him that stands, so they all made violent efforts to stand up. Hishami, p. 206.

36. Ali Shariati, *Ummat and Imamate.*

37. When Umar compiled the registers in Syria, Bilal had gone there and remained as a combatant. He asked him with whom he wished to be grouped and he said with

Abu Ruwayha. I will never leave him, for the Messenger established brotherhood between us. So he was linked with him and the register of the Abyssinians was linked with Khatham because of Bilal's position with them, and this arrangement continues to this day in Syria.

38. This was probably removed when the *qibla* was turned towards the south. It corresponded with the Salam Gate, afterwards opened out to the north.

39. In later years, as the number of wives increased, the Messenger provided for each a room, or house, on the same side of the mosque.

40. A building 150 feet square must, in the then simple state of Arab society, have been viewed as a spacious edifice. It was amply sufficient for all the purposes of the Messenger, religious and political, as well for a house of prayer as for a place of council and assembly, and a hall of audience.

41. See 61:14, 3:52, 8:72, 9:100, 9:117.

42. See 2:143.

43. See Ibn Ishaq.

44. Hishami, p. 205.

45. Ibn Ishaq thus describes this class: Then the Jewish doctors were filled with hatred and envy of Muhammad, because God had chosen a Prophet from amongst the Arabs. And there joined themselves unto these Jews certain men of the Aws and Khazraj, who were in reality little removed from the idolatry of their fathers and rejection of the true faith, only that Islam had by its prevalence overpowered them—the mass having already gone over to it. So they ostensibly joined Islam, and took it as a shield unto them from death; but in secret they were traitors, and their hearts were with the Jews in their rejection of the Prophet. Hishami, p. 183.

46. This text is taken from A. Guillaume, *The Life of the Messenger — A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1955; pp 231-233. Numbering added.

47. Tabari: In the territory of Juhayna.

48. The Messenger did not send the Madinah Helpers on any hostile expedition against the Quraysh idolaters until they had warred with him at Badr and the reason is that they had pledged themselves to protect him only at their homes, *Kitab al-Waqidi,* p. 48.

49. The names of the deserters are Miqdad and Utba, both Quraysh. Miqdad carried the standard in the next expedition under Saad. *Kitab al-Waqidi,* p. 98; Hishami, p 207, Tabari, p. 226.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. Ali Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima.*
2. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*
3. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 15

Laleh Bakhtiar

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 1 of the Revelation (2 AH/623-624 CE)

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 15

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Muharram 1-Dhu al-Qada 30, 2 AH
ca. July 5, 623 CE-June 23, 624 CE

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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *The Year 1* to *The Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections (*ruku*) (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter in chronological order). The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation.

Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators. Then, the history at the time of the specific Quranic section in question is given. Finally, at the end of each section (*ruku*) there is an exercise and assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they learn HOW the Quran teaches thinking.

Book Year 15, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 2 AH/ca. July 5, 623 CE-June 23, 624 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates: *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr* and *Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.*

The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, Book 30 has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (*tafsir*) by Sayyid Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran* (available online) in this *Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series* is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to

think using self-realization (*tahqiq*) and critical thinking (*furqan*) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran*. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of *The Sublime Quran*, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (*Book 25*, *Book 26*, *Book 27* and *Book 28*) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and

"ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well intentioned a person may be, the use of the word Allah instead of God when speaking English, first of all, does not follow the Quranic sign that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (*tawhid*). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: *anta* where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the

Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By indicating the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (*furqan*, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (*tawhid*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), virtuous conduct (*birr*) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy (*'azm*) and courage, persevering in goodness (*sabara*), love (*hubb*) or empathic altruism (*ihsan*) and being fair and just (*rashad*). The signs (*ayat*) in each section (*ruku*) teach the one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the var-

ious individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (*sira*). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

The Nine Intellectual Standards

1. Logic (reasonable: *'aqala, 'aql*)
2. Definitiveness (to be precise: *muhkama*)
3. Connectedness (containing complexities and interrelationships: (*muqtarin*)
4. Appropriateness (to make relevant: *sadid*)
5. Worthiness (Focusing on the important, not trivial, to be significant: *ahl*)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: *'dhara'a*)
7. Right Judgment (*rushd*)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: *tabayyana*)
9. Being Fair and Just (*'aql*, right-minded (*rashad*))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: *tadhakkur*)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: *ra'a*)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions

CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: *TAFAKKARA*)
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
DEEP QUESTIONING

4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: *BASIRAH*)
DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT FACTS
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: *TABASSUR*)
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: *IDHDHAKARA*)
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: *ZUNUN*)

8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: *TADABBUR*)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of

view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are. . . ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvan-

tages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: *QANATA*, GOODNESS, *BIRR*)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (*'AZM*)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: *SABARA*)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: *HUBB*)
7. FAIRNESS (*NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA*)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in *A History of Muslim Philosophy* and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

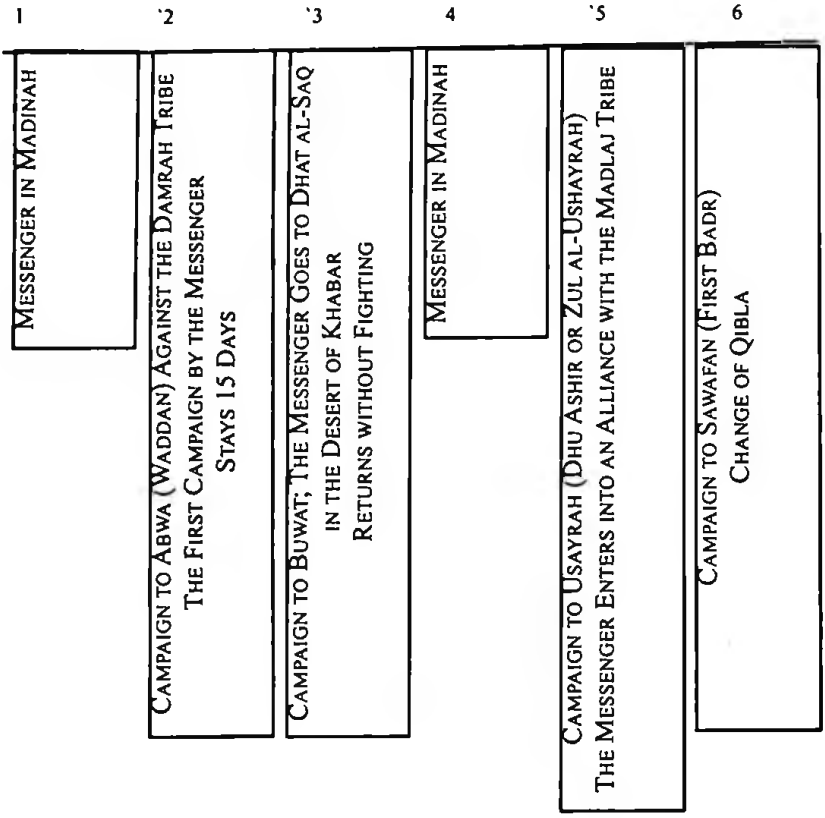
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (*furqan*), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, *In the Shade of the Quran*, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 15*

TIMELINE

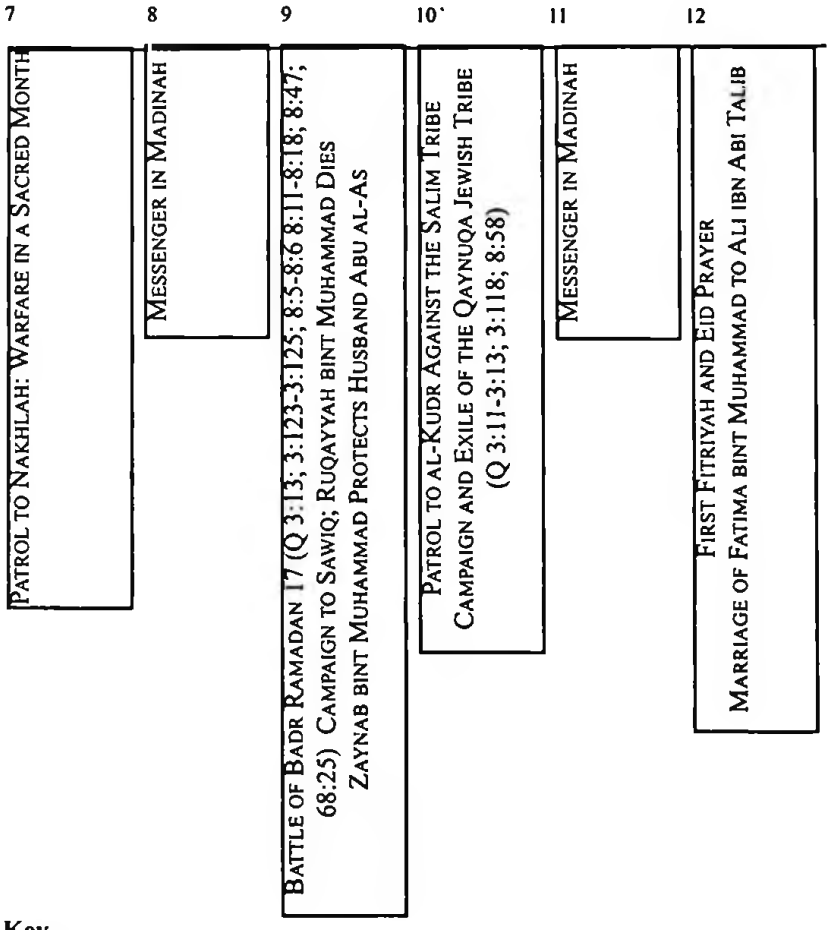


Key
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS
A COMPANION TO LEAD

Preview *Book Year 15*

Timeline



Key
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 15* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 15*, we include Lesson 88 and Quran Chapter 8 which is the 88th Chapter revealed.

LESSON 88(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STRATEGY THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking. God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the Creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not cre-*

ated this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)
SIGNS 8:1-8:10

Madinah: *They ask **you** about the spoils of war.*
Say: The spoils of war belong to God
and the Messenger so be God-conscious
and make things right among you
and obey God and his Messenger
if you had been ones who believe. (8:1)
The ones who believe are only those whose hearts
took notice when God was remembered.
When His signs were recounted to them,
their belief increased and they put their trust in the Lord— (8:2)
those who perform the formal prayer
and spend out of what We provided them, (8:3)
those, they are the ones who truthfully believe.
For them are degrees with their Lord
and forgiveness and generous provision. (8:4)
*Just as **your** Lord brought **you** out from **your** house with The Truth,*
and, truly, a group of people among the ones who believe
were the ones who dislike it. (8:5)
*They dispute with **you** about The Truth—after it became clear*
as if they had been driven to death and they look on at it. (8:6)
And when God promises you, one of the two sections:
It will, truly, be for you.
And you wish that the one that is unarmed should be yours.
And God wants that He verify The Truth by His Words
and to sever the last remnant of the ones who are ungrateful (8:7)
that He may verify
The Truth and render the falsehood untrue
even if the ones who sin disliked it. (8:8)
Mention when you cry for help from your Lord
and He responded to you:
Truly, I am One Who Reinforces you with a thousand angels,
ones who come one after another. (8:9)
And did God make this as good tidings for you
so that with it your hearts will be at rest in it?
And there is no help but from God alone.
Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (8:10)

COMMENTARY°
OVERVIEW

This opening passage of the Chapter provides God's ruling over

the booty that Muslims may gain in their campaigns to serve God's cause. Those who fought in the first major battle that took place at Badr between the newly-established Muslim state and the pagan Arabs disputed among themselves over its distribution. God gives here His ruling and reminds them of their need to fear and obey Him, and also obey His Messenger. He reminds them of their faith and that they need to live up to its values.

God also reminds them that they had hoped to gain a trade caravan, but God wanted something much better for them: strength and victory. He further puts before their eyes the factors that made the battle go in their favor when they were facing an enemy who was far superior to them in numerical strength and equipment. They were given support by angels. Rain gave them water to drink, and made the terrain firmer so that they were not impeded by a sandy battleground. Slumber overwhelmed them to give them calmness and reassurance. Their enemies were overwhelmed with fear, and ended up suffering stern punishment.

The believers are commanded to remain steadfast in every battle, no matter how strong and unassailable their enemies may initially appear to be. It is God who plans, acts and kills. They are merely a means with which He accomplishes His will. He may do with them what He pleases.

The Chapter then ridicules the ungrateful who, before the battle, were keen to precipitate God's will, appealing to God to bring about the defeat of the party which was far more astray and ready to sever relations of kinship. He tells them that their appeal is granted. It also warns the believers against behaving like the hypocrites who hear God's message but do not listen or respond to it.

The passage concludes with appeals to the believers to respond to God and His Messenger when he calls on them to follow the path that gives them life, although it may appear at first sight to involve death and being killed in battle. It reminds them of the days when they were few in number, oppressed, living in fear, but God gave them shelter and granted them support and victory. It promises them that God will give them a clear criterion if they continue to fear Him. That will be in addition to forgiveness of their sins and abounding grace that makes all spoils of war appear petty and trivial.

DISPUTE OVER THE SPOILS OF WAR

Some of us may wonder at the fighters at Badr disputing over the spoils. These fighters were the followers of the Quranic message in its very early days. They belonged either to the Emigrants, who migrated from Makkah, their hometown, leaving behind all their pos-

sessions for no reason other than to serve God's cause, or to the Helpers of Madinah who received the Emigrants and shared with them their homes and property, denying them nothing. These were the ones who are described by God in the Quran as ones: *And those who had taken their abodes and had abided in belief before them, love them who emigrated to them and they find not in their breasts any need for what the emigrants were given and hold them in greater favor over themselves even though they themselves had been in destitution. And whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then those are the ones who prosper.* (59:9)

Being given something of the spoils of war was in itself a testimony for having fought hard. Those people were keen to have such a testimony from God's Messenger and from God Himself, in the first major battle which saw them triumph over the ungrateful. That keenness overshadowed something of great importance, namely, to maintain kindly relations and to promote bonds of brotherhood among themselves. When these signs were revealed, they recognized their fault.

God gives them a verbal and practical lesson. The whole question of dividing the spoils of war was taken away from them and given to the Messenger himself. Then He revealed His verdict on how all spoils of war should be shared out. It was no longer the right over which they might dispute. It was something that was given to them by God's grace, and the Messenger would divide it among them in accordance with his Lord's instructions. In addition to this edifying experience, they were given directives that begin with this opening sign: **(8:1)**

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF BELIEVERS

Thus, the opening sign of the Chapter reminds the hearts of those who disputed over the booty that they should maintain God-consciousness. Glory be to the Creator who knows all hearts' secrets. It is only the fear of God and the desire to earn His pleasure in this life, as well as in the life to come, that turns human hearts away from valuing the riches and pleasures of this world and disputing over them, even though such a dispute should also have an overtone of having a testimony for fighting hard to serve God's cause. A heart that does not turn in its totality to God, conscious of incurring His anger and seeking to earn His pleasure, will never be able to get rid of the temptation of worldly comforts and riches. God-consciousness is what makes people's hearts willing to be guided with ease and humility so that they can maintain friendly relations and promote bonds of brotherhood between them: **(8:1)** It is through God-consciousness

that they are led to total obedience of God and His Messenger: **(8:1)**

The first aspect of obedience in this connection is to submit to His ruling over the spoils of war. It no longer belonged to any one of the fighters. The entire booty belongs to God and His Messenger, and they have sole discretion over its use. Those believers could only submit to God's ruling and the Messenger's division of the booty with easy hearts and happy minds. They also needed to maintain their brotherly relationship which nothing could weaken, provided that *you are true believers*. **(8:1)**

Faith must have a practical example to testify to its applicability and to demonstrate how it works. The Messenger says: Faith does not come about through wishful thinking or maintaining appearances. True faith is that which establishes roots in people's hearts and to which action gives credence. This is the reason for frequently repeating this final phrase in the Quran in order to stress the meaning of faith revealed to the Messenger. It thus becomes a practical definition of faith so that it is no longer thought to be a mere verbal statement that has no practical correlative.

This is followed by an outline of the qualities of true faith, as God wants it to be: **(8:2-8:4)** The Quranic style is extremely accurate in its choice of words, in order to provide a very clear statement of the meaning it wants to impart. Here we have the phrase *"only those"* in order to limit the meaning of having faith to those who have these qualities. When we have such a limiting expression, no one could try to give a subjective interpretation of these qualities, claiming for example that they refer to people with complete faith. Had God meant it that way He would have said it.

What we have here is a highly definitive statement which tells us that only the people who have such qualities and who act and feel in this way are believers. Those who do not have all these qualities are not believers. At the end of these opening signs, a repeat statement is given to re-emphasize this fact: **(8:4)** People who are not truly believers do not believe at all. Quranic expressions and statements interpret one another. God says elsewhere in the Quran: *What may differ with the truth other than error.* Therefore, only error stands opposite to the truth. Those who do not belong to the truly believers cannot be described as having faith, though it may be less than complete. A definitive Quranic statement cannot be interpreted at will in such an ambiguous manner.

The early Muslims realized that a person who does not have such qualities and whose actions do not conform to these descriptions is not a believer at all. God describes the believers by saying: *True believers are only those whose hearts are filled with awe whenever*

God is mentioned. Therefore, they do the duties He requires them to do. And whose faith is strengthened whenever His revelations are recited to them. They feel the truth of these revelations as they listen to them. In their Lord do they place their trust. They rely only on Him, seeking nothing from anyone else.

As we proceed with our commentary, we will see clearly that without such qualities, faith does not exist. It is not a matter of having complete or less than complete faith, but whether faith exists or not.

It is a feeling of awe **(8:2)** that fills a believer's heart when God's name is mentioned in connection with any duty. The believer feels God's greatness and majesty, and he remembers God's greatness and how imperfect his own attitude is. All this provides strong motivation for him to act. It is a situation that leaves its effect on people's hearts, and they need to appeal to God for comfort. This is exactly what a believer experiences when he is reminded of God in connection with any order. He will then do what he is bid and refrain from what he is forbidden.

A believing heart **(8:2)** is sure to find in the Quranic signs what gives him strength of faith and reassurance. The Quran deals directly with human hearts, without any intermediary. Only ingratitude can place a barrier between human hearts and the Quran. When the barrier is removed by faith, a believing heart will begin to appreciate the Quran and watch his faith grow stronger until he finds complete reassurance. Just as the Quranic effect strengthens the faith of a believer, a believing heart is the only one to appreciate the Quranic directives. Therefore, this fact is often stressed in statements like: *Surely, in this there are signs for believers.* And *Certainly, in this there are signs for people who believe.*

PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH

The Messenger's Companions were models of true believers. The Quran had a special effect on them, enhanced by the general atmosphere in their community in which people tried their best to practically live by the Quran and not confine themselves to an intellectual appreciation of its meaning. They lived with their Lord and with the Quran which was being revealed. That was great indeed, taking place in a remarkable period of human history. Those Companions of the Messenger were thus able to appreciate the Quran in their own exemplary way. The fact that they conducted their own practical affairs, guided by the Quranic directives made their own appreciation of the Quran both practical and highly effective. While no repeat of the first aspect is possible in the sense that no human community could receive the Quran directly anymore, yet the type of interaction with

the Quran that characterized the community of the Messenger's Companions can certainly be repeated.

It only requires a community of believers to try to establish this Quranic message in practical life just like the first Muslim community did. Such a community of believers will certainly have the same type of appreciation of the Quran and will have their faith increased whenever it is recited, because, to start with, it is a believing community. For them, true faith requires that they take action to establish this religion in practice after *jahiliyyah* had regained control over the whole world. To them, faith is not confined to wishful thinking, but it means something that is deeply rooted in one's heart and to which credence is given through action.

The way this statement **(8:2)** is phrased signifies that they rely on God alone, associating no one with Him from whom to request help. This is the practical meaning of pure faith in God's Oneness, addressing all worship completely and purely to Him alone. It is not possible for any person to have true faith in God as the only Lord in the universe and yet rely on someone other than Him. Those who find themselves relying on someone other than God must first of all search in their own hearts to discover whether they truly believe in God.

To rely on God alone does not prevent anyone from taking action or precaution. A believer takes precautions against any eventuality as a sign of believing in God and obeying Him, as He has ordered us to do so. But a true believer does not consider his actions and precautions as the only causes to give the effects they produce, to the extent that he relies only on such actions and precautions. What produces these effects, and indeed brings their causes into being, is God's will. In a believer's heart, the cause and effect relationship is not self-enforcing. A believer takes action in order to obey God. But the results and effects come about by God's own will which is totally independent from the causes leading to it. Such will is determined by God alone. In this way, a believer does not feel controlled by such actions and causes. Nevertheless, he tries his best to take every precaution hoping that he will be rewarded for doing so in obedience to God.

Modern *jahiliyyah* which describes itself as scientific has tried hard to emphasize the inevitability of natural laws, in order to deny God's will and whatever God has chosen not to make known to us. All its attempts and the manipulation of all means at its disposal have shown it to be powerless in the face of God's will. It was eventually forced to admit its inability to make future predictions with any degree of certainty or inevitability. It then resorted to what it terms the

theory of probabilities in the material world. Whatever used to be inevitable in its lexicon has come to be considered only probable.

Ghayb, which is the Quranic term for what lies beyond the reach of human perception, remains a sealed secret. Furthermore, God's will remains the only true certainty. The only inevitable law is that expressed in the Quranic statement: ***You are not informed so that perhaps God would cause to evoke something after that affair.*** (65:1) This statement refers to the fact that God's will is free, unrestrained. It lies behind the natural laws which God has set into operation to control the universe according to His will.

When a person has rid his mind of the pressure of apparent causes, it is left with the only alternative of relying completely on God. It realizes that God's will is the only cause for all that happens, and that this is the only true certainty. Apparent causes produce only probabilities. With this truth, the Quranic message enables the human mind to bridge a great gulf. Modern *jahiliyyah* has spent three centuries in order to arrive at the first intellectual stage in bridging that gulf. But it has not made any progress towards bridging it in as far as beliefs are concerned, or with regard to the far-reaching practical effects that result from it, in accepting God's will and dealing with it as apparent causes and forces.

Bridging that gulf means the total liberation of humanity, intellectually, politically, socially and morally and, above all, in matters of faith. It is not possible for the human being to achieve this freedom if he were to remain under the yoke of inevitabilities that would undoubtedly lead him to submission to the will of human beings or the will of nature. Any inevitability other than that of God's will serves as a basis for submission to something else. Therefore, the Quran emphasizes the need to rely on God alone, making it an essential condition of faith. With the Quranic message, the basic concept of belief is a complete whole. It must interact as such in the practical model which this religion of Islam provides for human life.

In this quality we find a visible aspect of faith, after we had seen some of its invisible ones. **(8:3)** Faith is defined as that which is deeply rooted in one's heart and to which credence is given through action. Action is, therefore, the practical aspect of faith which appears to all people signifying that the person who takes such action is a person of faith. Regular attendance to prayer does not signify its mere performance. It is the performance which befits a servant standing in the presence of his Master. It is not the mere recitation, movement, bowing and prostration when one's mind is totally oblivious to what one is actually doing. In its proper performance, prayer is a true evidence of faith.

This **(8:3)** applies to the purifying alms (*zakat*) and other forms of charity. These people spend on others some of what We have provided them with. It is God who is the provider, and whatever they donate is part of His provision. Quranic statements are always rich in their connotations and the impressions they leave. Those people have not created their wealth. It is only part of the countless abundance which God has provided for them. Whatever they may spend is only part of it. They retain the rest; for whatever they have has been provided for them by God alone.

These are the qualities God mentions here as signifying faith. They include believing in God's Oneness, responding to the mentioning of His Name, being influenced by His revelations, placing one's trust only in Him, offering formal prayer to Him alone and donating to others some of what He has provided for them. These qualities do not represent the details of faith as they have been explained elsewhere in the Quran; but they deal with a certain situation when the Messenger's companions disputed with one another over the spoils of war, allowing ill feelings to develop between themselves. Therefore, only those qualities of the believers which are particularly relevant to dealing with such a situation are mentioned here. At the same time, they outline certain essential qualities of proper faith. If all these qualities are lacking, a person cannot be a true believer. It is not necessary to enlist all the qualities of faith here. The Quranic method of cultivating the finer human qualities with the Quran tackles only those aspects and provides only those directives that are useful in dealing with certain practical situations. Besides, the Quran provides a practical method for human life, not a mere theory that it wishes to present. Therefore, the final comment on these qualities is as follows: **(8:4)**

Here we find highlighted those qualities of true believers which are particularly relevant to the situation prevailing at the time of their revelation. The Chapter also refers to the dispute over the spoils of war that took place after the battle, stating that people with such qualities of true believers shall have generous provisions given to them by their Lord. Thus, all aspects of the situation are covered, whether they appeared in practical attitudes or were confined to feelings only. At the same time, this passage makes it very clear that a person who does not have any of these qualities is certainly not a true believer.

The first Muslim community was being taught that faith has an essence which must be felt by every believer. **(8:4)** Faith is not merely a claim or a verbal statement, or wishful thinking.

BETTER THAN THE BELIEVER'S DESIRE

Now that the Chapter has established at the outset the nature of true faith, it refers to the battle which allowed the Muslim community to gain the spoils of war that became the subject of their dispute to the extent that their behavior was not all that becoming. The Chapter refers in a general way to the various events that took place, and how the Messenger's companions felt and behaved in response. This reference makes it clear that the Messenger's Companions were merely the means through which God's will was accomplished. It is clear that all those events, and the situation that arose from them, including the spoils of war over which they disputed, were only made possible through God's will, His planning and the help He gave to those believers. What they had hoped to achieve from this battle was only a small, limited gain. It could not be compared to what God wanted for them, to be the ones through whom the great divide between truth and falsehood is established in the heavens and on earth. It is this great criterion which is the main preoccupation of the Supreme Society in heaven as well as the preoccupation of the people on earth and human history generally. The Chapter reminds them that a group of them went into the battle against their preferred choice. Another party did not like that the spoils of war should be divided among them. Now God wanted them to realize that what they had preferred is not to be compared with what God prefers or what He chooses to accomplish. He knows the results of all matters.

God willed that the spoils of war be totally left to God and His Messenger, **(8:5-8:14)** so that the Messenger would distribute them equally among them after retaining one-fifth which would be spent in a way to be outlined later in the Chapter.

That would ensure that the community of believers would no longer entertain any thoughts about the spoils of war, which would mean that no dispute would ever arise over them. The Messenger would have complete authority over their distribution, in accordance with what God taught him. Thus, those who actually took the spoils of war and found themselves receiving the same shares as others would not entertain any ill feeling.

God gives them this example of what they wanted for themselves and what He wanted for them, and accomplished through them. Thus, they know now that God's choice is best for them, whether it relates to the spoils of war or to anything else. People know only what they have in front of them. Their knowledge does not stretch far beyond their own immediate world. The example given is taken from their practical situation, the battle that gave them their booty. What did they hope for when they went into battle? What

did God want to establish for and through them? How do the two compare? The gulf between the two eventualities is wide indeed, stretching far beyond what human beings can visualize. **(8:5-8:6)**

Giving authority over the spoils of war to God and His Messenger, their subsequent distribution equally among all soldiers, despite expressed reservations by some of them is similar in a sense to the fact that God brought His Messenger forth from his home to fight the well-armed host when some of the believers were very reluctant to go into such a battle.

Fighting was unwelcome among many in the early community.. The Quran describes their attitude in these words: *As if they had been driven to death and they are looking at it.* **(8:6)** That was the situation when the truth was clearly manifest, and when they knew that God had promised them that one of the two enemy hosts would fall to them. They realized that they had no choice left after one host, the trade caravan, had escaped them. Their only choice was to confront the other host, the idolaters' army, which God willed to fall to them, regardless of the disparity between the two parties in terms of fighters and military equipment.

This is a situation where human weakness is exposed in the face of imminent danger. Here we see the effect of actual confrontation, despite firm conviction. The picture the Quran paints should make us more realistic when we assess the requirements of conviction in the face of practical pressures. We must not overlook human ability at the time of confrontation. We must not despair when people generally, including our own group, shake as they face danger, although they are true believers at heart. It is sufficient that people proceed along the proper way and face up to the danger, making a solid stand after the initial hesitation. Those people were the ones who fought the Battle of Badr and concerning whom the Messenger said: How can you tell? It may be that God has looked at the people of Badr and said: Do as you please, for I have forgiven you all. That is all that may be said here.

AN AIM SUPERIOR TO ALL HUMAN HOPES

The Muslim group continued to wish that they would have to face the less powerful host, rather than the idolaters' army. **(8:7)** This was their wish, but God wanted a different prospect for them. He wanted to accomplish a different purpose through them: **(8:7-8:8)**

By His grace, God did not want the encounter to be one that brings materialistic gains. He wanted it to be a full-fledged battle between truth and falsehood, so that the truth could triumph and be well established, and falsehood be proven and seen as false. He wanted

the ungrateful to be routed, suffering heavy losses and many of them to be taken captive. Thus, they would be humiliated and their power greatly weakened while the Quranic message would remain hoisted high and God's will enforced. In this way, God gives power to the Muslim community which implements the code of living God has revealed. Through such implementation, the principle of God's Oneness is firmly established, while tyranny and falsehood are completely shattered. God wanted all this to be earned and merited through endeavor and hard struggle both in practical life and on the battlefield, not to be a gift granted haphazardly, for God does not do anything haphazardly.

Yes, God willed that this Muslim community should become a nation and a state having power and authority. He wanted it to measure its true power against that of its enemies, and to gain the upper hand using only a portion of its power. Thus, it would learn that victory is not guaranteed by numerical strength, heavy armament, material power or wealth. True victory is guaranteed by the strength of the bond that links believers' hearts and minds with God's might which overpowers everything. God's will was such that all this should come through practical experience, and not be limited to a conceptual belief. Such an experience would give the small Muslim community a guiding line for its whole future. Every Muslim group, whenever and wherever it lives, can be certain that it can overcome its enemies, no matter how greatly superior they may be in numbers and equipment. This fact could not have been so profoundly impressed on the believers' minds without that experience of a decisive battle between faith and tyranny.

Anyone can see at any time the vast gulf between what that small Muslim community wanted for itself and what it thought to be of benefit on the one hand, and the much better outcome God willed for it on the other. As he appreciates the difference, he knows how mistaken people are when they think that they can choose for themselves better than what God chooses for them, or when they are deeply hurt by taking some small risks or experiencing minor harm to which God may expose them, while it is calculated to bring them unthinkable and immeasurable benefit.

How do the hopes of that Muslim community compare with what God willed and chose for them? Had they been given the trade caravan, or the band with little power, their encounter would have been nothing more than a small raid that gained them a caravan. The Battle of Badr, on the other hand, remains and will always be remembered in history as a story of faith, a profound victory that distinguishes truth from falsehood. It is the story of the triumph of truth,

supported by a small, poorly equipped host over enemies that boasted great superiority in numbers and equipment. It is the story of the triumph of hearts that have been purged from their own weakness and that have established a firm bond with God. Not only so, but it is the story of the triumph of a small band of hearts that included quite a few who were reluctant to fight. As these hearts still had firm conviction of the soundness of the values of the message they believed in and were certain where true power lay, they were able to triumph first over their own desires. They went into the battle when every indication showed the side of falsehood to be overpowering, but through faith that community overturned the scales and the truth was triumphant.

In all its particular circumstances, the Battle of Badr sets a great example in human history, setting out the law that brings victory or defeat and revealing the true factors of each. It is an open book to be read by all generations at all times and in all places, giving the same message that remains always true. It speaks of a law that God willed to remain operative as long as the heavens and the earth remain in existence. The Muslim community that struggles today for the rebirth of the Quranic message on earth, after the whole world has succumbed to *jahiliyyah*, should reflect deeply on Badr and the decisive values it presents. This community must reflect on the great difference between what human beings may wish for themselves and what God may will for them: **(8:7-8:8)**

The Muslim community which tries today to re-establish the Quranic message in human life may not have attained the standard of that small Muslim community that fought the Battle of Badr. However, the standards, values and general directives that applied to Badr, its circumstances and outcome, as well as the Quranic comments on that Battle, remain applicable to it. They point out the attitude the Muslim community should adopt at every stage, because those standards, values and directives remain valid as long as life continues in the heavens and on earth, and as long as there remains on this planet a Muslim community facing up to *jahiliyyah* and trying to re- establish the Quranic message in practice.

AN APPEAL AND A RESPONSE

At this point, the Chapter recalls the atmosphere of the Battle of Badr, the circumstances leading to it and the attitudes adopted prior to the Battle and during it. It paints a complete picture of the conditions that the Muslims were in, what God planned for them and how the victory they attained was part of His planning. In the inimitable style of the Quran, the whole situation is brought back to them with

its different scenes, events, feelings and reactions so that they could relive it, but this time in the light of Quranic directives. Thus they are able to appreciate its true dimensions that go far beyond Badr, the Arabian Peninsula and the whole earth to stretch across the universe and reach up to the Highest Society. It also goes beyond the day of Badr, Arabian and human history in general, and beyond this life to reach to the time of reckoning in the life to come and the perfect reward. The Muslim community is thus enabled to appreciate its value in God's sight, and how He values the moves and actions of individuals and communities in the service of their faith: **(8:9-8:14)**

The whole battle is conducted by God's will and according to His careful planning. The actors are God's soldiers whom He directs and commands. The whole scene is painted so vividly through the Quranic expressions that bring it alive as if it is happening here and now.

Their Lord, then, answered their appeal and informed them that He had decided to reinforce them with a thousand angels moving in close ranks. **(8:9-8:10)** Greatly significant as this decision is, indicating the great value assigned by God to those believers and the Quranic message, God does not want the Muslims to understand that there is a mechanical process of a direct cause leading to a definite effect. The whole matter is referred back to Him so that the Muslims maintain the right beliefs and concepts. This whole response, enforcement, and the revelation announcing it were merely given as happy news to reassure the believers' hearts. Victory itself comes only from God. This is a basic fact of faith restated here so that Muslims do not attach undue importance to any particular cause or factor.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 88(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STRATEGY MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)
SIGNS 8:11-8:19

Madinah: *Mention when a sleepiness enwraps you as a safety from Him. He sends down water from heaven for you and He purifies you by it and causes to be put away from you the defilement of Satan. He invigorates your hearts and makes your feet firm by it.* (8:11)

Mention when thy Lord reveals to the angels: I am, truly, with you, so make those who believed firm. I will cast alarm into the hearts of those who were ungrateful. So strike above their necks and strike each of their fingers from them. (8:12)

That is because they made a breach with God and His Messenger.
And to whomever makes a breach with God and His Messenger;
then, truly, God is Severe in repayment. (8:13)
That is for you, so experience it,
and, truly, for the ones who are ungrateful,
the punishment of the fire. (8:14)
O those who believed!
When you met those who were ungrateful marching to battle,
then, turn not your backs to them in flight. (8:15)
And whoever turns his back that Day—but one who withdraws
from fighting for a purpose—or one who moves aside to another
faction, he, surely, drew the burden of the anger from God
and his place of shelter will be hell.
And miserable will be the Homecoming! (8:16)
Then, you kill them not, but God killed them.
*And **you** had not thrown when **you** had thrown but God threw.*
He tries by experiment the ones who believe
with a fairer trial from Him.
Truly, God is Hearing, Knowing. (8:17)
That is so, and, truly, God is One Who Makes Frail
the cunning of the ones who are ungrateful. (8:18)
If you seek a judgment then, surely, drew near to you the victory.
And if you refrain yourselves, then, that would be better for you.
And if you revert, We will revert. And your factions will not avail
you at all even if they were many.
And God is with the ones who believe. (8:19)

COMMENTARY°

This, then, the task assigned to them. **(8:11-8:19)** We need not go into any details beyond this statement. It is sufficient for our purposes that we should know that God did not abandon the Muslim community to their own devices on that day, when they were much inferior in number to their enemies. The Highest Society played an active part in the determination of what happened to the Muslim army and to Islam, along the lines described by God Himself in the Quran.

This slumber **(8:11)** that overcame the believers before the battle is a manifestation of a remarkable state that can only take place by God's will. The Muslims were shaken when they saw themselves facing a much superior force and taking a risk they had not reckoned with and for which they had not prepared themselves. Slumber momentarily falls upon them and they presently wake to find themselves in complete reassurance, with their hearts set at rest.

GOD'S SUPPORT IN ALL FORMS

This slumber and reassurance were part of the reinforcement God granted to the Muslim host at Badr. **(8:11)** The wording here is very significant; *fall upon you, slumber, assurance* are all words that impart a feeling of confidence and friendliness. The Chapter paints the complete picture and highlights the great value of that moment which separated two opposite situations experienced by the Muslim host.

The water or the rain was, then, another form of support given to the Muslim fighters. When the Messenger marched towards Badr, he and his Companions stopped at a barren area with the ungrateful closer to the wells. The Muslims were apparently exhausted. Satan began to whisper into their ears trying to create doubts and suspicions. He said: How can you claim that God is your patron and His Messenger is among you, when the idolaters have beaten you to the water to the extent that you now offer your formal prayers when you are in the state of ceremonial impurity? God sent rain pouring down which enabled the Muslims to drink and cleanse themselves. God thus removed Satan's filth from them. The sandy area where they were became much firmer to enable people and animals to walk easily. They marched towards their enemies. God then supported His Messenger with one thousand angels, with the angel Gabriel leading five hundred of them on one side, and the angel Michael leading another five hundred on the other side.

When people go into a battle experiencing worry and doubt of this type, they can easily be defeated. At this moment, support is very timely: **(8:11)** Thus, the spiritual support comes together with the material one. The worry is removed as water becomes abundant, and uncertainty is replaced by assurance after they had cleansed themselves. Their march is steadier as the land becomes firmer.

In addition to this, God inspired the angels to encourage the believers and promised to strike fear in the hearts of the ungrateful. He also commanded the angels to take an active part in the battle: **(8:12)**

This is indeed the greatest aspect of this whole battle. It is the fact that God Almighty was with the angels in this battle, and the angels took part in it alongside the Muslim army. We must not lose sight of the importance of this fact by trying to find out how the angels took part. How many enemy soldiers did they kill? Or how they killed them? The great fact is that when the Muslim community takes action to establish God's faith in the land, their action is valued so highly as to deserve God's presence with the angels in battle and the angels' participation in it.

We believe that among God's creation there is a type called the

angels. We know of their nature only what God, their Creator, has told us. We cannot fathom how they participated in the Muslim victory at Badr except in as far as the fact is stated in the Quran. Their Lord inspired them saying that He was with them and commanded them to encourage the believers. They complied, because they always do what they are commanded. We, however, do not know how they fulfilled this task. God also ordered them to strike the ungrateful over their necks and strike off their fingertips. So they did all this, but in a fashion unknown to us. Knowledge of all this is merely a detail of knowing the nature of the angels, but we know of this nature only what God has chosen to tell us. Furthermore, God promised to strike terror in the hearts of the ungrateful, and this was certainly the case because God always fulfils His promises. However, we do not know how this was done. It is God who is the Creator, and He knows His creation. Indeed, God may cause a split between a person and his heart, and He is closer to any person than his own jugular vein.

To try to go into the details of all these matters is contrary to the serious nature of this faith and its practical approach. But these questions have featured prominently among the concerns of different Muslim schools and scholastic theology generally in later generations when people were no longer seriously interested in this faith. Instead, they pursued intellectual luxury. Reflection on the great significance of God's presence with the angels in the battle and the active participation of the angels in the battle itself is much more beneficial.

At the end we have a statement clarifying the reality beyond the battle and the rule that shapes events to bring about victory or defeat: **(8:13)** It is not by mere coincidence that God has granted support to the Muslim army and has stricken terror into the hearts of its enemies and commanded the angels to fight them in support of the Muslims. All this took place because they had defied God and His Messenger, adopting a line of action and an attitude that was in opposition to those of God and His Messenger, trying to prevent the code of living God had revealed from being established.

He is certainly able to punish severely those who defy Him and His Messenger. **(8:13)** They are too weak to show any resistance.

This is an established rule, not merely a coincidence. Whenever a Muslim community takes active steps to establish the principle of God's Oneness and to implement His message, it will be granted victory against any enemy that opposes it in defiance of God and His Messenger. Terror will be stricken in the hearts of those engaged in such defiance, and they will end up in defeat as long as the Muslim community holds on to its principles, relying totally on God, certain of His support.

At the end of the scene, the ungrateful who defied God and His Messenger are told directly that the terror they felt and the defeat they experienced were not all. The whole question of this faith, its implementation, and the opposition to it are not of the concerns of this world alone. It goes further, extending to the life to come. Its dimensions go far beyond our immediate world: **(8:14)** This is the real end. That torment is incomparable to what they had already experienced of terror, defeat and the striking off of their necks and their fingertips.

Thus far, the Chapter has reminded the Muslims of the conditions in which the Battle of Badr took place, showing them different scenes of the battle itself and what preceded it. It makes clear to them that at every step, it was God who dictated events and moved them in the direction He wanted, in order to accomplish His purpose.

EXCEPT FOR TACTICAL REASONS

Now that the decisive victory has been attributed to its true factors: God's planning, support, the believers' reliance on Him alone and acceptance of whatever eventuality He determines—now with all minds visualizing the whole event, and all hearts ready for the best response, the believers are given an order to remain steady whenever they meet ungrateful in battle. They must never run away, since victory or defeat are determined by God's will and the factors contributing to either of them are different from the factors people may see. The whole battle and all its events are of God's own making and planning: **(8:15-8:16)**

These signs begin with a strong warning, a fearsome threat. Should the believers face their enemies who may in essence present themselves in a great show of power, they must not, under any circumstances, turn away, except for tactical reasons. These may include choosing a better position, carrying out a more effective plan, joining another group of believers, or moving to another Muslim stronghold in order to resume the fight. Deserters and people who turn away in flight deserve the most terrible double punishment of incurring God's wrath and being thrown into hell.

It has been said that they were not permitted to join any other group on that day because the Messenger was with them and they were not allowed to leave him, as God says in the Quran: *It had not been for the people of the city and those of the nomads around them to stay behind from the Messenger of God nor prefer themselves more than himself.* (9:120) This shows that they could not let God's Messenger down or abandon him, even though God had taken it upon Himself to protect him as He clearly states in the Quran: *God will*

save you from the harm of humanity. (5:67)

That was imperative on them, whether their enemies were small or large in number. Moreover, the Messenger himself was the rallying force for the Muslims on that day. Anyone turning away could only do so for tactical reasons, in an endeavor to join a company of believers. On the day of Badr, they could only join the Messenger. *And those of you who turned away on a day two multitudes met one another, only Satan caused them to slip back for some of what they had earned.* (3:155) This is due to the fact that they turned away leaving the Messenger in battle.

Similarly, on the day of Hunayn, they deserved God's punishment for leaving the Messenger and turning away: *On the day of Hunayn when you were impressed with your great numbers, but it avails you not at all.* (9:25) This was then the ruling applicable when they were with the Messenger fighting any enemy that mustered small or large forces. In another sign, God says: **(8:65)** This applied perhaps—and God knows best—to a situation when the Messenger was with them. A company of twenty had to fight two hundred, remaining steadfast. If the hostile force was greater than that, then they were allowed to try to join another group in order to resume the fight. But this was later abrogated by the Quranic statement: **(8:66)**

The sign **(8:15)** makes it compulsory for a Muslim soldier to fight when he faces two pagans. If they are more than two, then it is permissible for a single soldier to try to join a company of Muslims that may give him support. If he wants to join a group of Muslims who will not support him in the fight, he is under the threat mentioned in the Quranic sign: **(8:16)** For this reason the Messenger says: I am company to every Muslim.

To flee from battle deserves such condemnation because of the magnitude of its serious consequences on the one hand, and because it has a bearing on the very question of having faith. A believer should be firm and resolute, able to resist any force on earth, since he believes that God's power can overcome all powers. If a believer's heart experiences a tremor at a moment of danger, such a tremor should not go as far as making him flee from battle. The moment of anyone's death is determined by God alone. Therefore, no believer may flee from battle fearing for his life. This should not constitute too much of a burden for anyone. A believer is a human being who encounters an enemy, who, in turn, is a human being. Therefore, they are of the same nature. The believer, however, has the advantage of relying on the overpowering might of God Himself. Moreover, he is under God's care while he is alive, and he entrusts himself to God's care when he dies. This means that in all situations he is stronger

than his enemy who defies God and His Messenger. Therefore this absolute ruling: **(8:16)**

GOD'S PLANNING AND HUMAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Chapter then moves on to show God's hand as He dictates events, killing the enemies of the believers, and throwing whatever is thrown. The believers, nevertheless, receive the reward, because God wants to perfect His grace on them, helping them to pass well the test He has set for them, and to reward them well for it: **(8:17)**

This follows on the heels of the first aspect of grace. **(8:18)** God's planning does not end by letting you kill your enemies with your own hands, hitting them with what His Messenger threw at them. Nor is it over with granting you strength to enable you to make a good showing in the test He set for you, and to reward you handsomely for it. He adds to all that the frustration of the designs of the ungrateful. There is no room, then, for fear or defeat. Nor is there any reason for the believers to turn their backs to the ungrateful in flight.

These statements are related to all the circumstances of the battle. Since it is God who killed the ungrateful, threw everything at them, helped the believers to put up this good show, and frustrated the designs of the ungrateful, then how come that they dispute over the spoils of war? The whole battle was conducted according to God's plan and by His will. Their role in it was merely to act as a manifestation of God's planning and His will.

MUCH POWER, LITTLE AVAIL

When the Chapter has clearly stated that God is certain to make feeble the ungrateful' scheming it directs its address to certain people among the ungrateful. Just before the start of battle, those ungrateful sought a divine judgement, praying that the party which they described as more astray, fabricating what was unheard of and severing ties of kinship should end in miserable defeat. That was exactly Abu Jahl's prayer, seeking God's judgment. Defeat was then the outcome of the endeavors of the ungrateful. Now they are addressed directly and their prayer for a judgment is decried. They are assured that what happened at Badr was the rule not the exception. Their forces, numerous as they may be, will avail them of nothing, because it is a consistent rule that God will always be on the side of the believers: **(8:19)**

You have sought God's judgment between the Muslims and yourselves, and you have prayed to Him to destroy the party which was in error and which severed ties of kinship. God has responded,

and defeat was your lot, as you have requested. Now you know for certain which party is more erring and which severs ties of kinship.

With facts giving clear pointers, they are invited to abandon their rejection of the truth and their hostile attitude to Muslims, as well as their defiance of God and His Messenger: **(8:19)** These are words of persuasion coupled with a clear warning: The outcome is well known and cannot be changed by any gathering of forces and equipment no matter how great these are: **(8:19)** Of what use can any great force be, when God is decidedly on the side of the believers? **(8:19)** Such a battle will never be even. On one side there will be the believers who have God Himself with them. On the other, there will be the ungrateful who have only human beings fighting with them. The outcome of such a battle is a foregone conclusion.

It is true that the idolaters worshipped idols, but they never attributed to those idols any concept of godhead similar to that which they recognized as belonging to God. The Quran explains their concepts of such idols and the basis of their rituals of worship which they offered to them: *And those who take to themselves protectors other than Him say: We worship them not but that they may bring us near to God.* (39:3) This then was the basis of their idolatry: they felt that their idols could intercede with God on their behalf.

But the essence of their polytheistic beliefs were not these. Nor was it enough for any of them to simply abandon such a concept of intercession by those idols in order to be a Muslim. Otherwise, the person known as *al-hanif*, or the pure, who dissociated himself from the worship of those idols and believed in God alone, would have been considered Muslim. But they were not. The Quranic message comprises conceptual beliefs, the offering of worship to God and attributing all sovereignty to Him alone. Those who do not acknowledge Him as the overall sovereign, wherever and whenever they may happen to live, are polytheist, even though they acknowledge that there is no deity other than God and offer worship to Him. When they stop at that, they are the same as those people known as *al-hanif* whom no one describes as Muslims. People become Muslims when they complete the circle and add to their concepts and worship the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty which entails a rejection of any law, set-up, value or tradition that is not derived from God. This is the only true meaning of the Quranic message because it is the true import of the declaration that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is His Messenger. Moreover, those people who have this understanding of the declaration must join a single movement under a Quranic leadership that separates itself from the society of *jahiliyyah* and its leadership.

This must be fully understood by those people who want to be Muslims so that they are not deceived by the thought that they are Muslims in belief and practice. This is not sufficient for people to become Muslims unless they acknowledge that all sovereignty belongs to God alone. This is represented in practice by rejecting all claims that sovereignty belongs to anyone else and until they have no loyalty whatsoever to *jahiliyyah* societies and their leaderships.

Many good-natured and well-meaning people who want to be true Muslims fall prey to this trick. It is important, therefore, that they make certain of the only true form of the Quranic message. They should also know that the idolatrous Arabs were no different from them. They knew who God was and made of their idols partners who could intercede with Him on their behalf. Thus, their true disbelief centered around sovereignty and to whom it belonged.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-

18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

Lesson 88(3). Critical Thinking Quranic Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

Quranic Chapter 8: The Spoils (al-Anfal)
Signs 8:20-8:28

Madinah: *O those who believed! Obey God and His Messenger*
and turn not away from him when you hear his command. (8:20)
And be not like those who said:
We heard, when they hear not. (8:21)
Truly, the worst of moving creatures with God
are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak,
those who are not reasonable. (8:22)
If God knew any good in them
He would have caused them to be willing to hear.
And even if He had caused them to be willing to hear,
truly, they would have turned away,
and they are ones who turn aside. (8:23)
O those who believed! Respond to God and to the Messenger when
He called you to what gives you life. And know, truly, that God
comes between a man and his heart

and that to Him you will assemble. (8:24)
Be God-conscious of a test which will not light on those of you,
particularly, who did wrong.
And know that God is, truly, Severe in repayment. (8:25)
And remember when you were few, ones taken advantage of due to
weakness on the earth. You fear humanity would snatch you away
so He gave you refuge and confirmed you with His help
and provided you with what is good
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (8:26)
O those who believed! Betray not God and the Messenger
nor betray your trusts when you know. (8:27)
And know that your wealth and your children
are a test and that God,
with Him is a sublime compensation. (8:28)

COMMENTARY°

RESPONSE TO A CALL TO LIFE

Earlier, the Chapter mentioned the believers making it clear that God is on their side. Now they are addressed repeatedly to encourage them to obey God and His Messenger and to warn them against turning away from Him. Should they do so they will be in the same position as those who hear God's revelations being recited and who pay no heed to them. They are deaf and dumb although they may have ears to hear with and tongues to speak with. These are the vilest of all creatures on earth because they are not guided by what they hear. **(8:20-8:23)**

The believers are asked to obey God and His Messenger and not to turn away when they listen to His revelations. This address follows a number of inspiring introductions and an account of the events of the battle in which God's hand was clearly seen at work as He determined the course of events and provided help and support. All this reassured the believers that God was with them and He was certain to foil the schemes of the ungrateful. Thereafter the only proper course of action was for them to listen and obey. To turn away from God's Messenger and pay no heed to his orders after all that had happened would clearly be seen as totally unbecoming of anyone who has a mind to think and reflect.

The mention of animals occurs at its appropriate place. The Arabic term used here to refer to animals includes human beings because this is derived from the act of walking. Human beings also walk on earth. However, the term used here is most commonly used for quadruped animals. Therefore, its usage gives clear connotations so as to make those who are 'deaf, dumb and devoid of reason' appear

like animals. Indeed, they are the worst type of animals. Animals do have ears, but they only hear unintelligible words, and they have tongues but they can only make unintelligible noises. Yet by their nature, animals are guided to what is needed for their lives. Those humans, on the other hand, do not make use of their faculty of understanding. As such, they are fittingly described in the Quranic sign: **(8:22)**

This means that He would have made their minds receive well what they hear with their ears. **(8:23)** But He—limitless is He in His Glory—does not know of any goodness in them or any desire to follow proper guidance. They have perverted their natural receptive faculty. Therefore, God does not open their hearts which they have shut down or repair their nature which they have perverted. Even if God made them understand the truth of what is being presented to them, they would not open their hearts to it and they would not respond to what they understood. **(8:23)** A person may understand something with his mind, but he may still keep his heart closed, unresponsive. Even if God were to make these people understand, they would turn away and refuse to respond. A positive response is the outcome of proper listening. Many are those who may understand or choose to keep their hearts closed, unresponsive.

A further address is made to the believers calling on them to respond to God and His Messenger, providing encouragement for a positive response and warning them against turning away. They are reminded of God's blessings which they have enjoyed when they responded to God and His Messenger. **(8:24-8:25)**

God's Messenger calls on them to follow what would certainly give them life. It is a call to life in its fullness, with all its connotations. He calls on them to believe in a faith that keeps hearts and minds alive, free from the restrictions of *jahiliyyah*, ignorance and superstition, the pressures of legends, misconceptions and submission to superficial causes and inevitabilities. It is a faith that frees them from submission to anyone other than God and from being humiliated or subjugated by human beings or desires.

God's Messenger also calls on them to implement a divine law that proclaims the human being's freedom. In itself, this imparts a great honor to people because he will then believe in something that comes from God directly, and before which all human beings are equal. There is no room for the tyranny of a single person over a whole community, or a race or nation over another. All human beings are made free, enjoying equal status before the law that has been formulated and laid down by God, for the benefit of humanity. God's Messenger also calls on them to adopt a code of living and a set of

thoughts and beliefs that set them free from every bondage other than checks of nature established by God. It is He who created the human being and knows what He has created. These checks are meant to preserve the constructive potential of the human being and make the best use of it, without wasting any part of it or deviating from its constructive operation.

He also calls on them to have power and to feel exalted through their faith and constitution, having full confidence in their religion and their reward. This will enable them to fulfil their duty, to take appropriate initiative aiming at the liberation of the human race as a whole, breaking the chains of submission to creatures in order to acknowledge submission to God alone. Thus the honored position of man which tyrants have taken away will be retrieved and re-established.

God's Messenger further calls on them to strive for God's cause so that the position of God as the Supreme Lord in this world and in human life will be re- established. All claims to Godhead would thus be refuted. Usurpers of God's authority, sovereignty and power would be chased away, until they have submitted to God's sovereignty. When this takes place all submission is acknowledged to God alone. If believers die when they strive in this way, they achieve martyrdom. A new life is thus imparted to them.

This is in a nutshell what God's Messenger calls on them to do. This is indeed a call to life in the full sense of the word. This religion is a complete way of living, not a mere concept of belief. It is a practical method that allows life to flourish and prosper. Therefore, it is a call to life in all its connotations, forms and aspects. The Quran sums up all this in a few inspiring words: **(8:24)** Make this response willingly, with obedience. After all, God is able to force you to follow His guidance if He so desires.

This **(8:24)** is an awesome picture of God's power and its subtle operation. He thus forces a split between a human being and his heart and mind, making that heart His property, so that He directs it wherever He wishes. The person himself will be totally unable to influence the heart that beats within him. This is certainly an awe-inspiring image that our hearts can contemplate as we listen to it in the Quran. Human expression, however, cannot describe its effects on our hearts and how we respond to it. But the ultimate message of this statement should always keep us on the alert, so that we watch our feelings and guard against any tendency that may lead us to slip, or any fleeting thought that may push us along the way to disobedience of God. We must always be on guard so that we maintain the path that earns God's pleasure and not deviate from it during

any moment of self-indulgence or negligence.

God's Messenger who was immune to sin often used to say in his supplication: My Lord. You are the One who changes people's hearts. Make my heart constant in following Your faith. Compared to this, what should the attitude of ordinary people be when they are neither given a message, nor granted immunity to sinful temptation?

A believer is bound to feel his heart shiver as he contemplates this image, looking at his own heart placed in God's own hand, while he himself has no power to influence it in any way, although it remains inside him beating all the time.

This image is presented to the believers as they are called upon to respond to God and His Messenger when He calls on them to accept what will give them life. He is thus telling them that God can make them give the response He wants and force them to follow His guidance. But God honors them by giving them the choice and calling on them to respond willingly, so that they can earn a reward from Him, and exercise their own will which enhances their position and brings them up to the level worthy of God's trust. This is the trust of following God's guidance and exercising the role He has assigned to them on earth, as He placed them in charge of it. When people do this, they exercise their freedom of choice on the basis of clear knowledge and well-defined objectives.

You cannot escape Him, either in this world or in the Hereafter, because your hearts are in His hands and to Him you shall all be gathered. Nevertheless, He calls on you to respond to Him by your free choice to earn His reward. A forced response is not worthy of a person. **(8:24)**

VICTORY COMING ON THE HEELS OF HARDSHIP

They are then warned against adopting a negative attitude to jihad, or making a negative response to the call to life, or refraining from the fulfilment of their duty to change what is wrong, whatever form it may take: **(8:25)** A community that allows a section of its members to be unjust will be guilty of injustice or wrongdoing. When a community does not stand up to wrongdoers, when it does not take any positive steps to punish transgressors, it deserves to share in the punishment of those wrongdoers and transgressors. It should be said that the worst type of wrongdoing is to abandon God's law which He has laid down to be implemented in human life. As a system, the Quranic message has a serious outlook based on mutual help and solidarity within the community. The Quranic message does not allow its followers to sit idle when injustice, corruption and wrongdoing continue on the rampage, let alone sees God's faith abandoned and

His Godhead denied in order to be substituted by false claims. Such people cannot hope to be spared trial and temptation simply because they are good within themselves.

Since resistance to injustice and wrongdoing requires great sacrifices of lives and property, the Quran reminds the first Muslim community of its own weakness, small numbers, the fear and persecution it endured. It also reminds those early Muslims of how God extended His shelter to them and granted them security and good provision. It must never, then, hesitate to respond to the type of life to which God's Messenger calls it, or to meet the responsibilities of this life that ensures its dignity, freedom and independence: **(8:26)**

You must remember this in order to be absolutely certain that God's Messenger calls you to that which will give you life. Remember it so that you do not ever feel reluctant to resist injustice of any type or form. Remember the days when you were weak and afraid. These were the days before God instructed you to fight the ungrateful, and before His Messenger called on you to face the mighty host in spite of your reluctance. Reflect on your situation after you have responded to this call and how you are now enjoying victory, God's reward, and the many good things He has provided for you. When you reflect on all this, you will then express your gratitude and gain further reward for that gratitude.

The Chapter paints a very powerful image of their inferior numbers and strength, as well as their worry and concern: **(8:26)** The Arabic expression emphasizes the connotations of worry, apprehension and fearful expectation that we can almost see their worried features, restless eyes and clear apprehension.

However, a transformation takes place and we have a scene of security, strength, victory and enjoyable provision, all granted by God who has extended His protection to them: **(8:26)** Coupled with this is a directive to them to demonstrate their gratitude in order to earn more reward: **(8:26)** Who can contemplate this great transformation and decline to respond to a call to a secure life that enjoys strength and affluence? This is the call of the noble Messenger who conveys God's message. Who can enjoy such a transformation without showing his gratitude to God for all His grace, when both scenes of weakness and strength, worry and security are held up in front of his eyes?

Yet those people actually lived both situations. They are reminded of their past and present. Therefore they appreciated fully what the Quran said. The Muslim community which strives today to re-establish this faith in human life may not have gone through both stages or experienced both states. The Quran, nevertheless, describes

this transformation to this and every Muslim community. If a Muslim community finds itself in the stage of weakness such as that described in the Quran: *Remember when you were few, taken advantage of because of your weakness on the earth?* Then it will do well to respond to the call to life conveyed by God's Messenger. It can await with certainty the fulfilment of God's promise. He fulfilled it to the first Muslim community and He has promised to fulfil it to every community that follows the same course of action and makes the required sacrifices. It can then look forward to a situation to which the same description applies: **(8:26)** In all this, a Muslim community is actually dealing with God and His promise that will always come true. They need be in no doubt of that.

A REASSURING CRITERION

Another address to the believers follows. God knows that property and children may discourage people from giving the proper response to such a call as they tend to enhance traits of fear and miserliness. Therefore, the Quran highlights the fact that property and children may be the subject of a trial and warns against weaknesses that may cause people to fail in such a trial. They may feel too reluctant to respond to the call of jihad, or to shoulder the responsibilities of the trust God placed in them and the pledges of loyalty they have given. To refrain from the fulfilment of such duties is a betrayal of God and His Messenger, and a betrayal of the trust God has assigned to the Muslim community on earth. This trust requires the Muslim community to strive to make God's word triumphant, establish His Godhead as absolute, and maintain truth and justice. Coupled with this warning is a reminder of the great reward that God has in store for them which outweighs by far the value of property and children: **(8:27-8:28)**

To abandon the duties God has assigned to the Muslim community is a betrayal of God and His Messenger. The basic issue in the Quranic message is that of attributing Godhead purely and solely to God alone, following only what has been conveyed to us by His Messenger, the Messenger Muhammad. Throughout human history, people did not deny God altogether, but they mostly associated partners with Him. On a few occasions, this took the form of beliefs and worship, but the form of attributing sovereignty and authority to others beside Him was much more common. Therefore, the basic issue is not to make people believe in God, but to make such a belief pure of all distortion. The declaration that "there is no god other than God" means that He is the sovereign over their life on earth, as they acknowledge His sovereignty in the universe. This is embodied in the Quranic statement: *And it is He Who is in the heaven, God, and on*

the earth, God. (43:84) This basic issue also entails that God's Messenger is the only source to convey what God wants of human beings, and this means that they must follow all his orders and directives. As this includes both conviction and action, the Muslim community, which has declared its belief in God, is warned against abandoning this whole issue. To do so is equal to betraying God and His Messenger.

It is, then, a fully integrated code that comprises concepts of beliefs, directives and education, as well as duties and responsibilities. It is a code that has been devised by God who knows what suits the human being, because it is He who has created the human being: *Would He Who has created not know?* (67:14)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

LESSON 88(4). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL) SIGNS 8:29-8:37

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
If you are God-conscious,
He will assign you a Criterion between right and wrong
and will absolve you of your evil deeds and will forgive you.
And God is Possessor of Sublime Grace. (8:29)

Makkah (8:30-8:36)

Madinah: *And mention when those who were ungrateful*
plan against you to bring you to a standstill
or to kill you or to drive you out.
God will differentiate the bad from what is good.
And He will lay the bad, some on some other,
and heap them up altogether and lay them into hell.
Those, they are the ones who are losers. (8:37)

COMMENTARY°

The last address to the believers here requires them to remain God-consciousness. People cannot fulfil such heavy responsibilities unless they are fully aware of their true position, equipped with light that clears all misunderstandings and a determination that steadies their footsteps along the road they have to traverse. They can only

have that when they have the sensitivity imparted by fearing God and benefit by the light He provides: **(8:29)**

This is, then, the equipment needed along the road. It is the sense of being conscious of God which makes people's hearts alive and keeps them fully alert. With God's light they can see clearly; their vision is not clouded by anything. Besides, being conscious of God is the proper equipment which ensures forgiveness for errors and sinful deeds. It provides reassurance and security, as well as great hope for a great bounty from God on the Day of Judgment when people discover that their actions have fallen short of expectation.

It is a fact of life that being conscious of God provides people with a standard to distinguish truth from falsehood. Like all facts of faith, however, this can only be appreciated by those who have experienced it. Description cannot begin to give a feeling of this fact to those who have no experience of it. Matters remain intermingled in people's minds and thoughts, and falsehood tries to always cling to the truth, particularly at points of divergence. Argument may silence objections, but cannot provide conviction, and polemics remain futile unless people are equipped with a sense of God-consciousness. When God-consciousness is present, minds are open to see the truth, and the way ahead is defined. Thus, people can enjoy security and reassurance, and walk along with steady steps.

The truth itself may not be lost to human nature because God has made this nature responsive to the truth. But people's desires may force a separation between the truth and human nature. It is such desires that becloud people's vision and cause them to lose their way. People's desires are not overcome by argument, but by a sense of consciousness of God. Therefore, the standard to discern truth from falsehood is all important to enlighten the way to those who wish to follow it. It is a priceless gift from God. God's grace, however, does not stop at that. God adds to it the forgiveness of sins as well as a great bounty. This can only be provided by the Lord whose grace is great, limitless, unceasing.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about it?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

LESSON 88(5). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STRATEGY EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies, critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL) SIGNS 8:38-8:44

Madinah : *Say to those who were ungrateful:*
If they refrain themselves, what is past will be forgiven.
And if they repeat then, surely,
a custom passed of the ancient ones as a warning. (8:38)
And fight them until there be no persecution and the way of life
—all of it—be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves,
then, truly, God is Seeing of what they do. (8:39)
And if they turned away, then, know that God is your Defender.
How excellent a Defender and how excellent a Helper! (8:40)
And know that whatever thing you gain as booty,
then, truly one-fifth of it belongs to God and to the Messenger
and to the possessors of kinship and the orphans
and the needy and the traveler of the way,
if you had been believing in God
and in what We caused to descend
to Our servant on the Day of the Criterion
between right and wrong,
the day when the two multitudes met one another.
And God is Powerful over everything. (8:41)
Mention when you were on the nearer bank of the valley
and they were on the farther bank of the valley
and the cavalcade was below you.
Even if you made a promise together,
you would be, certainly, at variance as to the solemn declaration
because God decrees a command that had been
one that is accomplished so that he who perishes
would have perished by a clear portent
and he who lives would live on by a clear portent.
And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing. (8:42)
*Mention when God causes **you** to see them*
*as few in **your** slumbering.*

If He caused you to see them as many, you would have lost heart
and contended with one another about the command
except God saved you.
Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (8:43)
And mention when He causes you to see them
when you met one another as few in your eyes
and He makes you few in their eyes
so that God decrees a command
that had been one that is accomplished.
And commands are returned to God. (8:44)

COMMENTARY°

When the Quraysh suffered their major setback at the Battle of Badr, and their defeated army arrived back in Makkah, Abu Sufyan and his trade caravan had already returned there. Abd Allah ibn Rabiah, Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl, Safwan ibn Umayyah and a number of other people from the Quraysh who suffered the loss of their fathers, brothers or sons at Badr went to Abu Sufyan and his fellow merchants who had major shares in that trade caravan. They said to them: Elders of the Quraysh, Muhammad has levelled a heavy blow on you and killed a number of the best people among you. Help us to fight him by donating this money to the war effort. This may enable us to secure revenge against him. All of them agreed. It is in comment on their action that God revealed this Quranic sign: **(8:38)**

What happened before and after Badr was only an example of this continuous effort by the enemies of this faith. They spend their money, concentrate their efforts and use all their ability to turn people away from the path of God. They set up obstacles to impede the progress of this religion and to suppress the Muslim community everywhere and at all times.

God warns those ungrateful who spend their money to turn people away from His path that they will come to regret their actions. They allocate their resources for a futile purpose. They will eventually be defeated and the truth will be triumphant. They will suffer the fate of hell, where they will taste the greatest regret. All this has the purpose outlined in the following statement: **(8:38)** But how will this come about?

The money and other resources that are so allocated enable evil to sustain its aggression. The truth counters such aggression with a determined struggle, i.e. jihad, and moves to smash the ability of evil and falsehood to sustain their aggression. In this hard fought battle, natures crystallize and the truth is separated from the evil, as are the advocates and supporters of each side. Indeed, such separation takes

place even within the ranks that initially join the side of the truth, and this before it begins to endure trials and hardship. Those who are firm believers, determined fighters and unwavering in their support of the truth are distinguished. These deserve to be granted victory by God, because they are well able to undertake the trust of its message. They will not abandon it under any circumstances, no matter what pressures and trials they are made to endure.

At this stage, God groups all the evil ones together and casts them into hell, where they suffer the greatest loss. The Quranic expression shows evil as a sizeable mass, as if it is nothing more than a huge heap of dirt which is cast in hell with little regard: (8:38) This image gives the expression a stronger impact on our minds, as is always the case with Quranic imagery.

With this clear outline of the destiny of heaped evil and allied falsehood, the Chapter directs the Messenger to issue a final warning to the ungrateful. The Muslim front is also commanded to fight until there is no more oppression on earth and human beings are all free to submit to God alone. The Muslim fighters are reassured that they receive support from God, their protector. Therefore, they will not be overcome by any force or devious ploy.

Say to the ungrateful that if they desist, all that is past shall be forgiven them; but if they persist [in their erring ways], let them remember what happened to the like of them in former times. Fight them until there is no more oppression, and all submission is made to God alone. If they desist, God is certainly aware of all they do. But if they turn away, know that God is your Lord Supreme. How splendid is this Lord Supreme, and how splendid is this giver of support.

The Messenger is ordered **(8:38-8:40)** to make it clear to the ungrateful that they have an open chance to mend their ways, to stop forming alliances against the Quranic message and its advocates, and allocating resources to turn people away from God's path. The way is open to them to turn to God in repentance. If they do, God promises to forgive them all their past actions. The adoption of the Quranic message waives all that a person has done in his past. He is just as innocent as a new-born child. But if they revert to their erring ways and continue with their aggression and rejection of the faith, then the laws God has set in operation in the universe will have their effect. These laws brought God's punishment on the ungrateful of the past after they were warned and given clear proof of the truth. It is also God's law to grant victory to the believers and to establish them in a position of power. This law will never fail. The ungrateful may make

their choice now that they are at the crossroads. Thus the address to the ungrateful is concluded.

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO REALITY

The Chapter now addresses the believers: **(8:39-8:40)** This is the purpose and the limit of jihad, or struggle for God's cause, not only at a particular period in time, but at all times. The Quranic message is a positive movement which deals with human situations employing means that are suitable for different situations. Moreover, it is a well structured movement that uses fitting means and methods for every stage. Nevertheless, we have here a statement that lays down a permanent principle that defines the objectives of the confrontation between the Quranic message and un-Quranic social setups. This is embodied in the sign which says: **(8:39)**

The Quranic message is a general declaration of the liberation of the human being on earth from subjugation to other creatures, including his own desires, through the acknowledgement of God's Lordship over the universe and all creation. We also pointed out that this declaration signifies a total revolution against assigning sovereignty to human beings, whatever forms, systems and situations such sovereignty may take.

There are two essential prerequisites for the achievement of this great goal. The first is to put an end to all oppression and persecution which targets the followers of this religion who declare their own liberation from human sovereignty and submit themselves to God alone. This cannot take place unless a community of believers establish their own movement and their own leadership that tries to put this general declaration into practice. This movement will be ready to continue its struggle against every tyrant who persecutes the followers of this religion or uses force, pressure and oppression to turn people away from it.

The second prerequisite is the destruction of every force that is established on the basis of submission to human beings, in any shape or form. This will guarantee the achievement of the first goal and put into effect the declaration that all Godhead and Lordship on earth belong to God alone. Thus, there will be no submission to anyone other than God and no authority except His. We are talking here about submission to God's authority, not merely believing in Him.

We need to add here a point of clarification, because some people may feel uneasy about what we say, particularly in the light of the Quranic sign: *There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely right judgment has become clear from error.* (2:256)

The statement, 'all submission is made to God alone,' means the

removal of physical impediments to people's submission to God. These impediments take the form of tyrannical authorities that impose their will on individuals. When these physical impediments are removed, all authority on earth will belong to God and human beings will not be subjugated by any tyrannical authority. Human beings will then be able to make their individual choices of what faith to adopt, in total freedom, without any pressure. Any faith other than the Quranic message that people may choose to follow must not establish a grouping that acquires physical force to exercise pressure on others and prevent them from following divine guidance. It must never resort to oppression against those who dissociate themselves from any power other than that of God. As individuals, human beings are free to choose the faith they want. But they are not free to establish a tyrannical authority to subjugate other human beings. Every human being must be free to submit himself, or herself, to the Lord of humanity, the Lord of the universe.

Human beings will not achieve the position of honor God has guaranteed them, nor will humanity all over the earth be liberated unless submission is made to God alone, to the exclusion of anyone and anything else. It is for this noble objective that the Muslim community fights: **(8:39)** Whoever accepts this principle and abides by it will be at peace with the Muslims who will accept such a position, making no attempt to search into motives and intentions. They will leave all that to God. **(8:39)** But whoever persists in opposing God's authority will be fought by the Muslims who rely on God's help: **(8:40)**

Such is the positive, practical and serious Quranic attitude as it moves to establish itself in practical life and ensure that Lordship is acknowledged to God alone by all humanity. This religion is not a theory that people learn from a book to enjoy its intellectual subtleties and to boast about their knowledge. Nor is it a negative faith that is confined to a relationship between human beings and their Lord. On the other hand, it is not merely a set of worship practices which people offer to their Lord. This religion is a general declaration for the liberation of humanity. It takes a realistic and practical approach that employs suitable means to confront any human situation. When it is impeded by obstacles of understanding, it speaks out, making its message absolutely clear. But when it faces the impediments of social systems and tyrannical authorities, it confronts them with a physical struggle, launching a campaign of jihad to destroy all tyranny and establish God's authority in its place.

This Quranic message moves within a human practical situation. Its struggle against ignorance is not one between theories. As

jahiliyyah is represented in a social order and an authority, then this religion must have its own social order and authority in order to confront *jahiliyyah* with equal and suitable means. Moreover, it must begin its struggle to ensure that religion belongs entirely to God, which means that no submission may be offered to anyone else.

Such is the positive and practical approach of this religion of Islam. It is nothing like the defeatists say, even though they may be sincere and well intentioned. They may even wish to be Muslims but the true image of the Quranic message may be obscure in their minds.

For our part, we praise God for having guided us to this understanding. We would not have been able to have such clarity of understanding without God's guidance.

The transition from the end of the previous passage to the beginning of the present one is very smooth. The beginning here continues to outline rulings concerning fighting, which were begun with: **(8:38-8:40)** The opening sign in this passage continues these rulings, outlining those that apply to spoils that are gained as a result of victory in battle.

WHEN THE FIGHTING IS OVER

Much controversy is found in reports and among scholars on several points relating to the meaning of this sign: **(8:41)** The main points of debate are as follows: Are the "spoils of war" mentioned in the opening sign of the Chapter the same as the "booty" mentioned here or are they two different things? The Quranic text uses two different terms to refer to them.

Since four-fifths are given to the fighters and divided among them, how is the remaining portion of one-fifth to be divided? Is the one-fifth portion that belongs to God to be divided in turn into five equal shares? If so, one of these belongs to God, but is this share the same as that which belongs to God's Messenger? Or is the Messenger's share a separate one?

Does the Messenger's share (i.e. one-fifth of one-fifth of the whole booty) belong to him personally? Or is it transferred to every Muslim ruler after him?

Is the share assigned to "the near of kin" exclusive to the Messenger's relatives of the clans of Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib, as was the case during the Messenger's time? Or does a Muslim ruler have any discretion over its distribution?

Are these fixed and equal shares into which the original portion of one-fifth of the booty must be divided? Or do the Messenger and the Muslim rulers who succeed him have discretionary authority over its usage and spending?

There are further points of debate over other matters of detail. Following our usual approach in this commentary, we prefer not to discuss such controversial points, leaving them to be pursued in specialized studies. Moreover, the whole question of spoils of war is far removed from the practical realities of the Muslim world today. This is not something that is facing us at the present time. We do not have a Muslim state led by a leadership that follows the Quranic message, fighting a campaign of jihad which may give it spoils of war that need to be divided according to Quranic regulations.

Recognizing this serious approach of the Quranic message, we do not wish to engage in any discussion of the juristic details concerning the question of booty and spoils of war until the time is right for such discussion. That is when God wills to bring into being a society which launches a campaign of jihad that leads to the acquisition of spoils of war. When that occurs, regulations will be needed to divide such spoils. In this commentary it is sufficient for our purposes to concentrate on the basic issue of faith in the historical progress of the Muslim community and the method of education to which it is exposed. This is a constant factor we find in God's book which is not subject to change at any time. Everything else is of secondary value.

The general rule outlined in the Quranic sign states: **(8:41)** This rule assigns four-fifths of anything gained in battle to the fighters themselves. The remaining one-fifth is left to God's Messenger and Muslim leaders implementing God's law and striving to further God's cause. They are required to dispense with it only those mentioned so as to satisfy real needs when such booty has been gained.

IF YOU TRULY BELIEVE

Following this, we have a permanent directive in the following statement: **(8:41)** True faith has certain essential indicators to prove it. God makes His recognition of true faith for the fighters in Badr conditional on their acceptance of His ruling on the question of the spoils of war. If they accept then they are truly believers in God and what He revealed to His Messenger. In fact such acceptance is a practical demonstration of faith.

The real meaning of faith is thus stated clearly in the Quran, without equivocation. It does not admit anything of the wide variety of interpretations and controversial details introduced by the different schools and sects. Such schools opened the way for argument, academic controversy and logical debate, which led, in turn, to accusations and counter accusations. It then became possible to brand someone as an unbeliever and for the refutation of such an allegation

to no longer rely on the clear and basic essentials of faith. Instead, they relied on prejudice and the need to score a point against opponents. Thus people began to accuse others of unbelief because of disagreement on points of detail, while others sought to refute such accusations by following very strict lines of thought and action. Both attitudes were products of historical circumstances. The divine faith is clear, well defined, free from ambiguity and extremism. The Messenger says: To be a true believer does not come about through wishful thinking. True faith is that which is firmly rooted in one's heart and to which credence is given by practice. To be a true believer presupposes acceptance of God's law and its implementation in real life. Conversely, the rejection of God's law and the implementation of a law other than the one He has laid down, in matters large or small, constitutes unbelief.

God's law provides rulings that are clear and decisive. One example of these is provided in this sign: **(8:41)** The same applies to all categorical statements that delineate the nature of true faith and its framework which we read in the divine book.

God has taken away the ownership of the spoils of war from those who actually collected them on the battlefield, and assigned that ownership to God and His Messenger, as stated clearly at the opening of the Chapter. His purpose was that those who fight for God's cause may have only pure motives. Thus, they would be able to remove from their minds all thoughts and temptations that relate to the life of this world. They would be able then to submit themselves totally to God, fighting the battle for God's cause, under His banner, in obedience to Him and to earn His pleasure. They accept His rule over their lives as they accept it over all their affairs, making no dissent or objection. This is the practical meaning of true faith, as clearly explained in the first sign of the Chapter which vested all authority over the spoils of war in God and the Messenger: **(8:1)**

When they accepted God's ruling, demonstrating that faith is deeply rooted in their hearts, God gave them back four-fifths of the spoils of war, and retained one-fifth in its original ownership, i.e. belonging to God and His Messenger. The Messenger was then to dispense with it for the welfare of those in the Muslim community who needed help, be they near of kin, orphans, needy or wayfarers. When the share of four-fifths was given back to them, the Muslims were well aware that they did not own it by right of fighting or victory. They went to war for God's sake, and achieved victory for His faith. They only deserved this share of four-fifths because God granted it to them, just as He determined the outcome of the battle and indeed all their affairs, and just as He granted them victory. They are re-

minded here anew that obeying this new order is a manifestation of faith. It is indeed both the condition and the outcome of being true believers: **(8:41)** We see clearly how Quranic statements support one another in confirming an essential and decisive principle of the Quranic message that relates to the true meaning of having faith.

Let us now reflect for a moment on God's description of His Messenger as *Our servant*, at this particular point where the ownership of the spoils of war is stated as clearly belonging to God and the Messenger: **(8:41)** It is indeed an inspiring description. Being a truly obedient servant of God is the essence of faith, and, at the same time, the highest position any human being can achieve when being honored by God. Therefore it is expressly mentioned at the point when God's Messenger is required to convey God's orders and assign the task of dispensing what God placed at his disposal.

This is indeed the case in real life: being a servant of God is not merely a position of honor; it is the highest position to which a human being can aspire. True submission to God alone protects people from being enslaved by their own desires or by other human beings. No human being can attain this highest position unless he refuses to submit to his own desires or to anyone other than God.

Those who are too proud to submit themselves to God alone are automatically enslaved by their own desires and caprice, which is the worst type of slavery. They lose their sense of free will with which God has favored human beings. They sink to the level of animals and soon descend to the worst rank of animals. They take themselves down to a level that God describes as *the lowest of the low*, (95:5) after they have been created *in the fairest form*. (95:4) They are willing to accept enslavement by others like them when they allow such people to conduct their lives according to narrow-minded theories and philosophies that are ignorant, deficient and arrogant.

Such people are also ready to submit to certainties which they are told to be inevitable and to admit no discussion, such as the certainties of history, economic development and evolution! There is indeed a long list of such materialist certainties and inevitabilities which enslave man and keep his head in the sand.

A Criterion of Distinction

We need now to discuss the description of the Battle of Badr as the *day He will assign you a Criterion between right and wrong* **(8:29)** as it occurs in the first sign of the present passage.

The Battle of Badr, which started and finished according to God's own planning, direction and help, was indeed a criterion of distinction between truth and falsehood, as most commentators say.

However, we are speaking here of a distinction that is much wider and far more profound. The truth, as meant here, is that original truth on the basis of which the whole structure of the heavens and the earth is established, as also the nature of all living things. It is the truth represented in the concept of God's Oneness, and His being the only deity who has the overall sovereignty, and authority over the universe. It is He who plans all that takes place. Everything in the universe: the heavens, the earth, animate and inanimate objects submit to His authority that admits no partnership with anyone. His will is enforceable without question. Falsehood, on the other hand, is incidental, although at the time of Badr it spread over the whole earth, beclouding people's vision so that they could not distinguish the original truth. It also created tyrannical deities that ruled over people's lives and conducted their affairs. That was the nature of the distinction that took place at Badr, when the original truth was distinguished from the tyrannical falsehood so that they could no longer be confused.

The far-reaching and profound significance of the distinction between the truth and falsehood that took place at Badr was multidimensional. It separated the truth from falsehood within people's hearts and consciences. This provided, in effect, a complete distinction between absolute monotheism that assigns authority over human feelings, behavior, morals, worship and submission to God alone, and polytheism in all its shapes and forms. This certainly includes mental submission to anyone other than God, be that a human being, a desire, a social value or a tradition.

Badr also separated truth from falsehood in daily life situations. It provided a clear separation between people's practical enslavement by other people, desires, values, laws and traditions on the one hand, and accepting, in all these matters, God's judgment, recognizing that He has no associate or partner, and that He is the only Lord and legislator. Thus human beings were able to raise their heads high, rejecting all tyranny and bending to no authority other than that of God, the only law-giver.

The Battle of Badr also separated two different stages in the history of the Quranic movement: the stage of grouping, perseverance and steadfastness, and the stage of strength, pre-emption and taking the initiative. The Quranic message represents a new concept of life, a code of living, a social order and a system of state and government. All these are results of the liberation of humanity all over the world which the Quranic message achieves through the establishment of God's sovereignty in human life and by rejecting all tyranny. As such, the Quranic message must always acquire strength and take the ini-

tiative. It is not in the nature of the Quranic message to remain in waiting for events and developments. It cannot remain a collection of beliefs that are represented in worship rituals and moral behavior. It must take action to establish its new concept, practice its code of living and lay the foundation of its new social order and state. This requires the removal of all physical and material impediments that hinder the practical implementation of its constitution in the life of the Muslim community at first, and later in human life as a whole. Needless to say, God has given us all these for practical implementation.

Badr also separated two epochs in human history. Prior to the establishment of the Quranic message, humanity as a whole was a totally different entity. The new Quranic concept of life and the new Muslim community meant a rebirth of humanity, while the new set of values provided the foundation of a new social order and a new code of law. After Badr, these were no longer the sole property of the Muslims alone. They gradually became the property of all humanity, which came to be profoundly influenced by them, within the land of the Quranic message and outside it. This applied to those who adopted a friendly attitude to Islam, and also to those who were hostile. The Crusaders who marched from the West to exterminate Islam in its own territory were strongly influenced by the traditions of the Muslim society they came to destroy. When they went home, they put an end to the feudal system that prevailed in Europe, after they had seen the lingering traditions of the Quranic system.

Badr also provided a clear distinction between two outlooks defining the causes of defeat and victory. The battle took place at a time when all apparent factors clearly indicated a victory for the ungrateful and predicted a defeat for the Muslims. The hypocrites and those sick at heart declared: *Their way of life deluded these people.* **(8:49)** Since it was the first major battle between the unbelieving majority and the Muslim minority, God willed that it should take place in this particular fashion in order to provide a clear distinction between causes of victory and defeat. Strong faith was thus able to overcome numerical strength and superior equipment so that people should know that victory belongs to the faith that has the elements of strength and is designed to bring out the best in human beings. Those who believe in the true faith must strive hard and join the battle against falsehood, without waiting until they have the same material strength as their enemy. They should be aware that they have another type of strength that can tip the balance in their favor. These are not idle words. This is an evident reality.

The Battle of Badr was also a distinction between the truth and

falsehood in a different sense, which we derive from God's statement in the early part of the Chapter: **(8:7-8:8)**

Those Muslims who marched with the Messenger from Madinah wanted only to capture the trade caravan led by Abu Sufyan. God, however, wanted something else for them. He wanted them to miss out on capturing the trade caravan and to meet in battle the army led by Abu Jahl. He wanted them to go through a hard battle when fighters are killed and prisoners are taken. He did not want them to have an easy mission which ended in the capture of handsome booty. Furthermore, He told them that He willed this in order to: **(8:8)**

This is a clear reference to a fundamental issue. In human society, the truth cannot be established and falsehood cannot be clearly seen as false on the basis of any theoretical exposition of each, or even by an academic belief that the one is true and the other is false. The establishment of truth and the eradication of falsehood in the real world can only come about when the might of falsehood is smashed and the authority of truth is triumphant. This takes place when victory is achieved by the army of truth over the forces of falsehood. This religion is not a mere theory for debate. It is a practical code of living.

God's purpose was certainly achieved with the truth firmly established as true and falsehood clearly seen as false. He has indeed stated His purpose behind bringing His Messenger out of his hometown with the truth, allowing the caravan (the host of little might) to escape its chasers and bringing about the encounter with the mighty host, so that the battle could take place.

All this is a criterion of distinction characteristic of the method of operation of the Quranic message. We are thus able to clearly see the nature of this method of operation and how it is perceived by Muslims. Today we feel the need and the importance of this criterion as we witness ambiguity creeping into people's perception of basic Quranic concepts. Indeed some of those who call others to embrace this religion are not free from such ambiguity.

The Battle of Badr was indeed a way to separate the true from the false in the sense of this whole range of concepts.

The Battle of Badr was an indisputable example of the working of God's power. It was an event that cannot be explained in any way other than its being brought about by God's power which can easily accomplish whatever He wants.

IN CLEAR EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH

At this point the Chapter refers once more to the Battle of Badr, portraying its scenes and events in a splendid style, to bring it all

alive before our eyes. It also points out the fact that it was God who conducted the battle, so that we almost see God's hand shaping events as they take place. Moreover, the Chapter tells us the purpose behind God's determination of the course of events. **(8:42-8:44)**

The battle is about to start, with each of the two combatants taking position, and with a clear pointer to the subtle and elaborate planning behind it all. We can visualize how God's hand brings each party to its position, while the caravan manages to slip away. The very words unveil God's planning as the Messenger sees his dream, and as each party sees the other as small in number, which tempts each party with the prospect of victory. Only the Quranic style can portray scenes so vividly, and bring them alive in such a concise method of expression.

Reference has already been made to the scenes portrayed in this part of the Chapter. When the Muslims left Madinah, they finally encamped at the end of the valley that was closer to Madinah, while the army of ungrateful took its position at the other end. There was a small hill separating the two sides. As for the caravan, Abu Sufyan managed to slip away with it to the coastal area, below the positions of both hosts.

Neither of the two armies was aware of the position of the other. It was God who brought them both to their positions by the hill, in order to accomplish a certain purpose of His own. Indeed, had they made prior arrangements to meet, they would not have taken their positions so close to each other and they would not have arrived there at the same time, as they actually did. God reminds the Muslim community of all this so that they always remember how God can accomplish any purpose He may have at any point in time. *Mention when you were on the nearer bank of the valley and they were on the farther bank of the valley and the cavalcade was below you. Even if you had made a promise together, you would have certainly been at variance as to the solemn declaration because God has decreed a command that had been accomplished so that he who perishes might perish by a clear portent and he who lives would live on by a clear portent. And truly God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(8:42)** Behind such an unplanned meeting there was certainly a purpose which God made the Muslim community the means to achieve. Moreover, He arranged all the circumstances that helped its accomplishment.

What is this matter for the accomplishment of which God arranged all the necessary circumstances? It is the one which He describes in these terms: **(8:42)** The verb perish may be used to express its direct meaning, or may be used to denote ingratitude and rejection of the faith. The same applies to 'live' which could express life and

may refer to faith itself. The latter meaning is nearer and clearer in this particular instance.

In the same sense God says in the Quran: *Is he who has been lifeless and We gave him life and We made a light for him by which he walks among humanity like he who is in the shadows and is not one who goes forth from them? Thus it was made to appear pleasing to ones who are ungrateful what they had been doing.* (6:122) Here denial of the true faith is described as death, while embracing the divine faith is portrayed as having life. This is indeed how the Quranic message views the nature of faith and denying it. The basis for giving more weight to this meaning in this particular instance is the fact that the Battle of Badr was, as God describes it, a day which separated truth from falsehood. Therefore, anyone who denies the faith after Badr does so in clear evidence of the truth. Likewise, anyone who believes does so on the basis of the clear evidence pointing to the truth provided by the battle itself.

With all the circumstances surrounding the Battle of Badr, the battle itself provided an irrefutable evidence of elaborate planning that dwarfs, by comparison, any plans human beings may devise, and points to a power that is totally different from that of human beings. It proved that this faith is supported by the Lord who takes care of its advocates when they demonstrate their sincerity and remain steadfast in their struggle for its cause. Had material strength been the decisive factor the ungrateful would not have been vanquished on the day of Badr, and the believers would not have scored such a great and decisive victory.

The ungrateful themselves said to their own ally who offered to support them with a battalion of his tribesmen: If we are fighting men like us, we are more than a match to them. But if we are fighting God, as Muhammad claims, then no human force can stand in opposition to God. Had mere knowledge been sufficient, they were certainly aware that they were taking a stand in opposition to God Himself, as they were told by Muhammad, the man who personified honesty and spoke nothing but the truth. They were certain that no one was a match for God Almighty. If after all this they perished on account of their denial of the faith, they perished after having had very clear evidence of the truth.

A PURPOSE TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

Such are the thoughts that come immediately to mind when we try to understand God's statement: **(8:42)** However, the statement also imparts a different sense.

That the truth achieved victory in the battle between its advo-

cates and the supporters of falsehood, after it had also triumphed in people's hearts, helps to put matters clearly in front of our eyes. No ambiguity or confusion is left after the victory at Badr has clarified all issues. Anyone who chooses to perish, i.e. rejects the true faith, no longer has any doubt concerning the truth after it had made its presence so clearly felt. Similarly, anyone who chooses life, i.e. embraces the faith, has no doubt that he is making his choice in favor of the truth which will always enjoy God's support against the tyrants who try to suppress it.

This takes us back to what we mentioned in our introduction when we spoke of the need to launch a jihad campaign to destroy the forces of evil and tyranny, and to enable the truth to triumph. Such jihad helps to make the truth clear to all: **(8:42)** Again, this understanding of the statement makes it easier for us to understand the significance of a later statement in this Chapter, in which the following directive is given: **(8:60)** Putting forces on the alert to frighten the enemy may help to make the truth clear in certain hearts and minds which only understand the language of force.

The comment that follows on this aspect of God's planning and execution of the battle and the purpose behind it all takes the following form: **(8:42)** Nothing that is said by the parties supporting truth or falsehood, and nothing that they may harbor in their hearts behind their words or actions escapes God as He puts His plan into action in full knowledge of all that is hidden or apparent. He does indeed hear all and know all.

This statement and the comment that follows occur in the middle of the account given in the Chapter of the events of the battle and its course. The next sign continues with this account: **(8:43)** Part of God's planning for the battle was that His Messenger should see the ungrateful in his dream as small in number, having no real strength. He told his companions of this and it gave them encouragement. Here God's Messenger is told the reason for this vision. Had God shown him a large force, it would have demoralized his Companions, who were no more than a small group of believers who joined him on an expedition, neither expecting a battle nor prepared for one. This would have weakened them and caused them to be in dispute over whether to fight or to avoid a confrontation. Such a dispute is the worst thing to happen to an army on the verge of meeting an enemy force: **(8:43)**

It was an aspect of God's grace that He, knowing the weakness of the Muslim group in that particular situation, showed the ungrateful to His Messenger as small in number, whereas they were truly a much larger force. That dream had true significance. Their numerical

strength was of little consequence, as their minds were devoid of broad vision, and their hearts deprived of faith. It was this true picture that God showed to His Messenger to reassure the small Muslim force. God was fully aware of their feelings and their inmost thoughts, as they were aware of their numerical weakness and lack of equipment. He was also aware of what would be the effect on them of their knowledge of their enemy's numerical superiority. Needless to say, they would have been reluctant to confront the enemy. It was, then, part of God's planning that they should think their enemy to have a smaller fighting force than it actually had.

When the two hosts actually met face to face, that which the Messenger saw in his true dream was repeated, but it was this time by actual eyesight and by both sides. This was again part of God's elaborate planning of which the believers are reminded in this review of the battle and its events: **(8:44)** This particular aspect of God's scheme encouraged both parties to go to war. The believers saw their enemies as a small force because they were looking at them from the viewpoint of real strength, while the ungrateful considered the believers to be of little consequence, because they judged them only by appearances. With the two facts shaping the way each party looked at the other, the purpose of God's planning was accomplished and His will was done. **(8:44)** This is the appropriate comment on the accomplishment of what God willed. This is a matter that rests with God alone. He brings it into being by His will and shapes it with His power. It is never removed from His will or His divine wisdom. Indeed nothing takes place in the whole universe except what He has willed.

Since all things are conducted by God and victory is granted by Him, while neither numerical strength nor superior firepower can resolve a confrontation or determine the outcome of a battle, the believers should remain steadfast and persevere when they meet ungrateful in battle. What they should do, however, is to have the proper equipment for the battle and take the measures that keep on the right footing their relationship with God who has the final say over all matters. It is He who grants effective support and commands all power and authority. They must also avoid the causes of defeat which led the ungrateful to be vanquished despite their great numbers and superior equipment. They must rid themselves of conceit, arrogance and falsehood. They should guard against falling prey to Satan's deception, for it was he who led the ungrateful to their destruction. They must place their trust in God alone.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

LESSON 88(6). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

Quranic Chapter 8: The Spoils (al-Anfal) Signs 8:45-8:48

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
When you met a faction,
then, stand firm and remember God frequently
so that perhaps you will prosper. (8:45)
And obey God and His Messenger
and contend not with one another.
Then, you lose heart and your competence go.
And have patience.
Truly, God is with the ones who remain steadfast. (8:46)
And be not like those who went forth from their abodes recklessly
to show off to personages and bar them from the way of God.
And God is One Who Encloses what they do. (8:47)
And mention when Satan made to appear pleasing
their actions to them and said:
No one will be ones who are victors against you this day
from among all personages. And, truly, I will be your neighbor.
But when the two factions sighted one another,
he receded on his two heels and said:
Truly, I am free of you.
Truly, I see what you see not.
Truly, I fear God. And God is Severe in repayment. (8:48)

Commentary°

Eliminating Causes of Failure

In these signs **(8:45-8:48)** we have a host of inspiring touches, rules, directives, scenes and attitudes; all relating to the battle. Ideas, feelings and inner thoughts are portrayed which normally need much greater space to describe, but they are all most vividly delineated here in the unique style of the Quran. They start with an address to the believers, which is one of many in the Chapter, instructing them to stand firm when they meet their enemy. They should also try to acquire all that is needed to ensure victory. This includes a steadfast attitude, frequent remembrance of God to maintain their relationship with Him, obedience to God and His Messenger, avoidance of internal conflict and dispute, patience in adversity, perseverance in battle, and steering away from conceit, showing off and persecution of others.

Steadfastness is the first step to victory, and the party that is more steadfast is the one which has the upper hand. Although the believers cannot tell, their enemy may be suffering even more than what they themselves are suffering. Their enemy may even be enduring

more pain, although that enemy could not hope to receive support from God as they hope to do. It may be that if the believers only remain steadfast for a moment longer, their enemy will collapse and be vanquished. Why should the believers ever feel shaken when they are certain that they will have either one of the best two alternatives: victory or martyrdom? Their enemy, on the other hand, aims at nothing further than the life of this world. This explains why ungrateful are so keen to achieve material superiority in this life which is the ultimate they hope for, since they have no hope in the life to come.

Frequent remembrance of God at the time when an encounter with the enemy is imminent is a constant directive to believers. It is a consistent teaching that becomes well engraved in the hearts of believers. Indeed the Quran shows it as a feature of the community of believers in their long history.

The Quran tells us about the sorcerers Pharaoh gathered for a contest with Moses. When they submitted to the faith after they had realized that it represented the truth, Pharaoh issued them with a highly frightening warning outlining the punishment which he would inflict on them, unless they abandoned their new faith. Their response was: *You take revenge on us only because we have believed in the sings of our Lord when they drew near to us. Our Lord! Pour out patience on us and call us to Yourself as ones who submit.* (7:126) The Quran also mentions the case of a small band of believers among the Children of Jacob who were facing the might of Goliath and his army: *When they departed against Goliath and his army they said: Our Lord! Pour out patience on us and make our feet firm and help us against the folk—ones who are ungrateful.* (2:250)

In the Quranic accounts of the attitudes of believing communities as they were fighting their battles we read the following statement: *And many a Messenger has there been whom, along with him, many thousands have fought, but none lost confidence with what lighted on them in the Way of God nor were they weakened nor were they to give in. And God loves the ones who remain steadfast. And their saying has been only that they said: Our Lord! Forgive us our impieties and our excessiveness in our affair and make our feet firm and help us against the folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* (3:146-3:147)

This type of education was well taken by the early Muslim community. They adopted the same attitude whenever they had to meet an enemy in battle. Later, the Quran speaks about those who suffered a reversal in the Battle of Uhud. When they were required to go on a new campaign the following day, they showed that they could rise to the highest level of steadfastness: *Those to whom humanity said:*

Truly humanity has gathered against you so dread them. But in increased them in believe and they said: God is enough for us and how excellent is He, the Trustee. (3:173)

Remembering God at the time of encountering an enemy is useful in a variety of ways. To start with, it provides a direct link with the Power that can never be overcome. It is a demonstration of placing all trust in God who is certain to support His servants. At the same time it brings to the forefront the nature of the battle, its causes and goals. It is a battle for God, to establish His authority on earth and to overthrow all tyrants who try to usurp this authority. In short it is a fight to make God's word supreme. It has no motive of imposing the authority of any person, group or nation, or making any personal or national gain. It also emphasizes the importance of the duty of remembering God even at the most difficult time.

Obedience to God and His Messenger ensures that the believers go into the battle submitting themselves totally to God. There will be no room for any cause of conflict or dispute: **(8:46)** People fall into dispute when they have different authorities which they look to for leadership and guidance, or when desire is the ultimate factor that shapes people's views and ideas. When people obey only God and His Messenger, the main cause of dispute between them disappears, no matter how much their views differ over the question under discussion. Having different views is never a cause of dispute and conflict. What causes conflict is desire, making everyone insist that his view is the one to follow, even when it appears to be wrong. Desire causes 'self' to be placed in opposition to 'right' and attaching more importance to self in the first place. For this reason, Muslims are given this directive to obey God and His Messenger at the time of battle. It is a question of discipline that is essential in battle. It is an obedience to the High Command which reflects itself in a genuine obedience to the leader in command of the Muslim forces. Thus it is different from the rigid and superficial discipline in the ranks of armies that do not fight for God's cause, and in which loyalty to commanders is not based on loyalty and submission to God. The gulf between the two is great indeed. Steadfastness and patience in adversity are also essential in any fight, whether internal within oneself, or on the battlefield: **(8:46)** Being with God will certainly ensure success and victory for those who are steadfast.

The last directive is given as follows: **(8:47)** The purpose of this directive is to protect the community of believers against going out to fight, with an attitude of conceit, keen to show off, boasting of their own strength and using the blessing of power God has granted them for a purpose other than that of which He approves. Believers

go out to fight for God's cause, to establish His authority and Lordship over human life, and to ensure people's submission to Him alone. They seek to destroy the tyrants who usurp God's authority and claim sovereignty for themselves, having no basis for their claim in the form of a permission granted by God or His law. They fight to declare the liberation of humanity throughout the world from any bondage to any authority, since such bondage represents a humiliation of the human being. Believers fight in order to protect people's rights, freedom and integrity, not to humiliate other races and peoples through the abuse of the power God has granted them. They go out to fight seeking no personal gain whatsoever. Victory brings them nothing other than having obeyed God's command to go on jihad, to establish the code of living He has revealed, to make God's word supreme and to seek His grace and pleasure. Even the spoils of war that believers may gain are viewed as an aspect of grace bestowed by none other than God.

FALSE PRETENSES, FALSE PROMISES

The believers had just seen the Quraysh leave their homes full of self-conceit, eager to be praised by others. They also witnessed the consequences of such an arrogant demonstration. The Quraysh mustered all their pride, power and prestige to defy God and His Messenger. By the end of the day the Quraysh returned home with their pride tarnished, their prestige shattered and their might totally destroyed. Here God reminds the community of believers of a recent situation that gave them much to think about: **(8:47)**

The Chapter goes on to describe how Satan persuaded the ungrateful to go out for a fight that led to their defeat and humiliation: **(8:48)**

Following our chosen approach in this commentary, we prefer not to discuss matters which relate to the world that lies beyond our human perception in any degree of detail, when we do not have a Quranic statement. Such matters require a statement of this type to formulate a conceptual belief. However, we do not adopt a negative attitude either. In this particular case, we have a Quranic statement that tells us that Satan did make their deeds seem fair to the ungrateful and encouraged them to raise an army and march to fight the Muslims, promising them support and protection. Later when the two hosts were within sight of each other: **(8:48)** Thus he let them down, keeping no promise he had given them, and leaving them to suffer the outcome of their actions on their own. We have no idea how he made their actions seem fair to them, nor how he said to them that they could not be overcome by any human power on that particular

day. Neither do we have any idea how Satan promised them support and assured them of his protection, nor how he turned on his heels and said what is reported in the Quran of his statements.

We cannot say anything about 'how' all these matters took place and in what form they were done. Everything that concerns Satan belongs to the realm that lies beyond the reach of our human perception. We have no way of knowing exactly 'how' such matters occur, except in as much as the Quranic statement relates. The statement we have here confirms the event but does not mention how it happened. We prefer not to go any further than that.

Deception Compounded by Short-Sightedness

While Satan was working hard, trying to delude the ungrateful and encouraging them to go out in force to fight the believers then abandoning them at their time of need, the hypocrites and those who were sick at heart thought the worst of what fate the Muslims would be facing. They looked at the small band of believers facing up to a much superior force. Thinking only in material terms, they felt that the believers brought upon themselves a woeful doom, deluded by their faith, thinking that faith would bring them victory or at least give them protection: **(8:49)** Some scholars say about this group that they were Makkans who looked favorably upon the Quranic message but who stopped short of accepting it. They went out with the Quraysh army, uncertain of their own attitude. When they realized how superior the forces of the ungrateful were they said this about the Muslims.

The hypocrites and those who are sick at heart are unable to understand the true causes of defeat or victory. They only look at appearances and have no means of understanding the true nature of anything that is not physically apparent. They cannot appreciate the power of faith and what effect trusting God and relying on Him bring about. They cannot see how believers cannot be overawed by forces that do not rely on a firm belief in God. Therefore it is understandable that they should think the believers to be deluded by their faith, bringing themselves to ruin as they faced a far superior force.

Any situation may have the same physical appearance in the eyes of believers and those whose hearts are devoid of faith. What is different, however, is how they look at any situation and how they evaluate it. The ungrateful do not see anything beyond the physical appearance, while those who have faith see the reality that lies beyond it. They are able to see all the forces that have an influence on it and balance between them accurately. The fact that believers understand and from which they derive reassurance is that to which the

conclusion of this sign alludes: **(8:49)** But this fact is withheld from those hearts that have no faith. Yet it is the one that tilts the balance and determines the outcome of the conflict between the two groups every time and everywhere.

On the day of Badr the hypocrites and those who were sick at heart said about the Muslim group, *their way of life has deluded these people.* This is the same thing that such people say whenever they see the advocates of the Quranic message confronting the mightier forces of tyranny, when their main equipment is basically this religion, their unshakeable faith in its truth, their burning desire to defend what God has made sacred and their reliance on God and trust in Him.

The hypocrites and those who are sick at heart stand idle, watching the advocates of the Quranic message as they firmly stand up to the forces of falsehood, deriding their attitude that makes little of the dangers to which they expose themselves when they take on such mightier forces. At the same time, they are full of admiration for such people who are willing to take such great risks for their cause. They cannot understand why anyone should be willing to be exposed to such great dangers. They view everything in life, including faith and religion, as little more than a business deal. If they feel they can profit by it then they will take it up without question, but if it involves risk taking, then they do not want to have anything to do with it. They are unable to see matters from the point of view of a believer, and they cannot evaluate matters using the perspective of faith. From a believer's point of view, the deal is a highly profitable one in all circumstances. It leads to one of the two best eventualities: victory which brings about the implementation of faith in practical life or martyrdom which ensures admittance into heaven. Besides, the balance of power is viewed differently by the believer. God Himself is involved, but the hypocrites and those who are sick at heart do not take God's power into account.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself?

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

LESSON 88(7). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)

SIGNS 8:49-8:58

Madinah: *Mention when the ones who are hypocrites say*
and those who, in their hearts, is a sickness:
Their way of life deluded these,

but whoever puts his trust in God.
Then, truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (8:49)
*And if **you** would see when those who were ungrateful*
are called to themselves by the angels,
they are striking their faces and their backs saying:
Experience the punishment of the burning. (8:50)
That is because of what your hands put forward of evil and,
truly, God is not unjust to His servants. (8:51)
In like manner of the people of Pharaoh
—and of those before them—
they were ungrateful for the signs of God
so God took them for their impieties.
Truly, God is Strong, Severe in repayment. (8:52)
Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Alter
a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk
unless they first alter what is within themselves.
And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing. (8:53)
In like manner of the people of Pharaoh,
and those before them, they denied the signs of their Lord,
so We caused them to perish for their impieties.
And We drowned the people of Pharaoh.
And they all had been ones who are unjust. (8:54)
Truly, the worst of moving creatures with God
are those who were ungrateful, so they will not believe. (8:55)
*Those with whom **you** have made a contract,*
again, they break their compact every time
and they are not God-conscious. (8:56)
*So if **you** have come upon them in war, then, break them up,*
whoever is behind them,
so that perhaps they will recollect. (8:57)
*And if **you** have feared treachery from a folk,*
then, dissolve the relationship with them equally.
Truly, God loves not the ones who are traitors. (8:58)

COMMENTARY°

DIVINE JUSTICE FOR ALL

At this juncture the Chapter portrays a scene of God's direct intervention in the battle. We see the angels acting on God's instructions and by His permission, reproaching the ungrateful and meting out punishment to them. They gather their souls in a very harsh manner and dole out to them the sort of treatment that befits their arrogance and conceit. Even in the most difficult of times they remind them of their evil deeds and tell them of their inevitable destiny.

There is no injustice in what they are about to suffer. It is only what they deserve. When this scene is painted, the Chapter follows it by a statement making clear that punishing the ungrateful for their misdeeds is a constant law that God has set into operation: **(8:52-8:54)**

It is according to this law that He took Pharaoh and his people to task, and according to it He takes to task any person or community guilty of the same type of action: **(8:50-8:54)**

The first two of these signs may be intended to refer to what the ungrateful were made to suffer at the Battle of Badr when the angels took part in the fighting carrying out God's orders. He had issued to them an express order: **(8:12-8:13)** When we commented on this statement, we mentioned that we do not know how the angels strike the necks of human beings or how they strike off their fingertips. However, our ignorance of how this is done should not tempt us to try to give this statement any meaning other than its apparent one, which makes it clear that there was an order from God to the angels to strike. We know that the angels: *who rebel not whatever God commands them and they accomplish what they are commanded.* (66:6) In this case these two signs serve as a reminder of what the angels did on the day of Badr and an explanation of what they actually did to the ungrateful.

These two signs, however, may also be taken as a reference to a continuing situation that applies whenever the angels gather the souls of ungrateful. In this case the opening phrase, *if you could but see*, may be understood as an address to anyone with eyes to see. This type of address is used frequently to direct attention to certain matters that need to be contemplated.

Whichever possibility we take, the Quranic statement portrays a fearful picture of the ungrateful as the angels gather their souls, adding humiliation to their misery and combining physical suffering with death: **(8:50)** The mode of expression then changes from that of reporting to an address: This serves to bring the scene alive as though it is happening now in front of our eyes. We almost see the fire of hell and how it burns fiercely. The ungrateful are severely reproached as they are pushed into it: **(8:51)**

This statement and the scene of the punishment of burning it portrays raise the question: is it a warning the angels give to the ungrateful pointing out to them what they are going to suffer and showing it as if it is taking place now? Or do they actually suffer the punishment of burning as soon as their souls are gathered by the angels? Both situations are possible. There is no reason to preclude either. We do not wish to add anything further because this is again something that belongs to the world that lies beyond human percep-

tion. It is known only to God. As for us, we only need to believe that it will definitely take place. Indeed there is nothing to stop it happening. But when will that be? The answer is known only to God whose knowledge is absolute, encompassing the universe and all that it contains.

The Chapter then states a fundamental fact that is relevant to this scene. The infliction of suffering and humiliation on the ungrateful is a permanent law that does not change. It was set into operation a long time ago and it continues to operate without fail: **(8:52)** God does not determine the fate of human beings haphazardly or on the basis of sudden whims. Their fate follows a law that is meant to apply at all times. What happened to those ungrateful at Badr is likely to happen to them at all times. The same type of thing happened to Pharaoh's people and to other communities before them, because **(8:52)** They could not protect themselves against His punishment: **(8:52)**

WHAT CHANGES GOD'S BLESSINGS?

God had bestowed His grace on them, giving them plenty of provisions, granting them power, and allowing their generations to follow one another. All this God grants to human beings to test them so that they may choose whether to be grateful to Him for His blessings or not. But they chose to be ungrateful, denying God and using His blessings to tyrannize. They felt that the power they were given was theirs by right and they denied God's revelations. Therefore they deserved their severe punishment in accordance with the law God had set in operation. Therefore, God altered the blessings with which He had favored them, and destroyed them altogether: **(8:53-8:54)**

God destroyed them only after they had denied His revelations. He did not punish them with destruction prior to that, although they were ungrateful, because He is Compassionate, Merciful: *We would not be ones who punish until We have raised up a Messenger.* (17:15) Pharaoh's people and those who had gone before them adopting the same attitude of denying God's revelations and suffering the punishment of destruction are described here as wrongdoers. This is a very frequent usage in the Quran, depicting the rejection of the Quranic message or the association of partners with God as wrongdoing.

We need to reflect a little on the statement that this sign makes: **(8:53)** It confirms the essential aspect of fairness in God's treatment of human beings. He does not deprive them of any favor He has granted them unless they change their intentions, attitudes, behaviors and general situation. By doing so, they deserve that God should alter what He has given them by way of testing them and withdrawing the

favors and blessings He has bestowed on them. They have shown no gratitude for such blessings and favors. On the other hand, God bestows a great honor on the human being when He makes His will applicable to the human being on the basis of the human being's own actions. A change in the fate of human beings depends on a practical change in their own intentions, behavior, practices and general situation. All this they choose for themselves. Moreover, human beings are given a great responsibility, commensurate to the great honor God has granted them. They can ensure that the grace and favors God grants them remain permanently with them and that they are given an increase of this by knowing, appreciating and showing gratitude. On the other hand, they can ensure that all these are removed from them if they behave with arrogance, deny God's favors, entertain evil intentions and adopt deviant practices.

This great fact is central to the Quranic concept of the human being, how God's will applies to him as well as his relationship with the universe and what takes place in it. Here we see the position of honor granted by God to the human being and we appreciate the latitude the human being has been given in determining his own destiny and shaping the events that take place around him. He is indeed an actor who makes his contribution by God's permission. Indeed the working of God's will takes place through his deeds and actions. Thus the human being is freed from the humiliating state of passivity imposed on him by materialistic philosophies which regard him as a passive creature who has no influence on the major trends that continue their inevitable movement with total disregard to him and his actions. These include economy, history and evolution. According to these philosophies, man has no option other than to submit to these trends with all humility.

The same fact makes it absolutely clear that there is an inevitable relationship in human life between action and reward. It also gives us a clear idea of God's absolute, unfailing justice that transforms this relationship into a law set into operation by God's will. It ensures that not a single one of God's servants will suffer the slightest injustice: **(8:51-8:54)** All praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.

STRIKING TERROR INTO THE ENEMY

Those who believe in the Quranic message should have a clear understanding of the nature of its method of operation. It is essential that the Quranic message should have real power as well as a reputation of power. Thus, as it starts its mission to liberate humanity all over the world from tyranny, it strikes fear into the hearts of all tyrants who do their utmost to check its tide. Those who think that

this religion will confine itself to preaching and to the explanation of its message when the forces of evil try to put every type of impediment in its way have little understanding of its true nature.

This is the first ruling which deals with the case of actual violation of treaties that have been concluded with the Muslim community. The violators are to be dealt a heavy blow so that they, as well as those who sympathize with them, are intimidated and are actually overawed by the Muslims.

The second ruling deals with a different situation: that of fearing and expecting treachery. There should be clear signs that a particular group or community are actually contemplating such violation of a treaty. In this case the Messenger is directed to take the following approach: **(8:58)**

The Quranic message here sets out a code of practice. When a treaty is concluded, the Muslim community will undoubtedly honor it. If they fear that the other party is about to violate it, then the Muslims declare the termination of the treaty, without any attempt to cheat or deceive the other party. What is meant here is an open and clear termination of a treaty so that each party realizes that peaceful relations are over. The Quranic message attaches a very high value to honesty and integrity in order to ensure peace and security. Launching a treacherous attack on people who rely on covenants that remain in force is alien to the nature of the Quranic message. The Quranic message does not terrorize those who have not taken precautions even when it fears treachery from them. However, when a treaty has been publicly terminated, then trying to outwit the enemy is perfectly acceptable because each side should be on its guard. If an enemy falls for a trick, they pay the price of naivety. No method of outwitting the enemy can then be described as treachery.

The Quranic message wants humanity to rise above worldly temptations and to be sublime. Therefore, it does not allow treachery for the sake of achieving a cheap victory at a time when it strives for the noblest of causes and aims. People who have honorable aims cannot utilize dishonorable means. The Quranic message finds treachery repugnant and looks at traitors who violate their treaties with contempt. Therefore, it does not accept that Muslims violate their covenants for the achievement of any objective, noble as it may be. The human soul is a complete whole. When it allows itself to resort to disgraceful means it cannot maintain its noble aims. He is not a Muslim who claims that the ends justify the means. Such a principle is alien to Quranic thinking and cannot fit with Quranic sensitivities. Within the human self there can be no gulf to separate the ends from the means. Reaching a clean shore does not tempt a Muslim to walk

through a muddy pool, because the shore will not remain clean after dirty feet have walked there. Therefore: **(8:58)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask: What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?

How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question you are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things you are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which you have some control from questions over which you have no control. Set aside the questions over which you have no control, concentrating your efforts on those questions you can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information you need and actively seek that information.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information you collect, drawing what reasonable inferences you can.

5. Figure out your options for action. What can you do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under your control from questions beyond your control. Recognize explicitly your limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate your options, taking into account your advantages and disadvantages in the situation you are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When you act, monitor the implications of your action as you begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise your strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift your strategy or your analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 88(8). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)
SIGNS 8:59-8:64

Madinah: *Assume you not that*
those who were ungrateful will outdo Me.
Truly, they will never weaken Him. (8:59)
And prepare for them whatever you were able of strength,
including a string of horses, to put fear in the enemy of God
and your enemy and others
besides whom you know them not.
God knows them.
And whatever thing you spend in the way of God,
the account will be paid in full to you
and you will not be wronged. (8:60)
And if they tended towards peace,
then, tend you towards it and put your trust in God.
Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (8:61)
And if they want to deceive you, then, truly, God is Enough.
It is He Who confirmed you with His help
and with the ones who believe. (8:62)
And He brought their hearts together.
If you had spent all that is in and on the earth,
you would not have brought together their hearts,
except God brought them together.
Truly, He is Almighty, Wise. (8:63)

*O Messenger! God is Enough for **you** and for whoever followed **you** among the ones who believe.* (8:64)

COMMENTARY°

In return for such clear honesty God promises victory to the Muslims and He tells them that the ungrateful have no real power: **(8:59)** Their treachery will not enable them to take the lead and outstrip the Muslims, because God will not abandon the Muslims or allow the traitors to triumph. The ungrateful are too weak to escape from God when He moves against them. Nor can they escape from the Muslims when God is supporting them. Therefore, those who resort only to clean and lawful means, seeking God's pleasure, need not worry when they see others who employ foul means surging ahead. They achieve victory through God's help, because they strive to implement His law and make His word supreme. Their efforts aim to liberate humanity from the worship of creatures, so that it may worship only the Creator.

The Quranic message, however, sets out to make real preparations that are within the capability of the Muslims so that victory becomes achievable. It does not raise the sights of the Muslim community towards that sublime horizon without making sure that it has firm ground on which it can stand. The Quranic message also takes every practical step which has been proven through experience to be of immense value in the achievement of victory. The Quranic message also makes sure that the Muslim community is well prepared for its practical tasks that serve its sublime objectives: **(8:60)**

GETTING ALL FORCES READY

The Quranic message certainly needs physical might which is kept ready to use for the fulfilment of its mission of liberating humanity throughout the world. The first purpose that this power serves is to establish peace and security for those who choose to accept the Quranic message so that they do not suffer any persecution as a result of their choice. Secondly, it deters the enemies of the Quranic message from contemplating aggression against it the land of the Quranic message. Thirdly, such enemies should be so intimidated that they do not ever entertain any thought of trying to check the tide of the Quranic message as it goes about the fulfilment of its mission of liberation. Lastly, this power is to be used to break any force that claims the attributes of God and enforces its laws and legislation on human beings and refuses to accept that all sovereignty belongs to God alone.

The Quranic message is not merely a system of divinity that is established once it has been consciously accepted as a faith and practised as a set of worship rituals. The Quranic message is a practical code of living which stands face to face against other codes and systems that are supported by physical force. Therefore, the Quranic message has no option but to break those forces and remove the authorities that implement those codes which stand in opposition to its code of living devised and revealed by God Himself.

No Muslim should ever mince words when he declares this basic truth. There is nothing to be ashamed of in the nature of the Quranic approach. The Quranic message does not have a man-made system, and does not seek to establish the authority of a leader, a state, a class, or a race.

This is the fundamental truth which needs to be driven home to those defeatists who put the Quranic message on the defensive, trying to seek excuses for jihad in history.

It is pertinent to know the limits of the Muslim community's duty to prepare its forces. The Quranic sign states: *And prepare for them whatever you are able of strength* ... **(8:60)** This goes as far as the maximum ability of the Muslims, so that they do not overlook any element of power which they are able to get ready. The sign also makes clear the prime purpose for which such forces are mobilized: *including a string of horses, to put fear in the enemy of God and your enemy and others besides whom you know them not. God knows them.* **(8:60)**

The objective, then, is to strike terror into the hearts of God's enemies who are also the enemies of the advocates of the Quranic message throughout the world, be they open with their hostility and known to the Muslim community, or others who may be discreet with their real feelings, not openly stating their hostile attitude towards the Quranic message. God is certainly aware of their true feelings and sympathies. Such people are intimidated by the might of the Quranic message even though they may not suffer its consequences directly. The Muslims are required to gather all the strength they can have so that they remain feared by other people. This is essential so that God's word remains supreme and all submission is to God alone.

Acquiring such forces and having them ready can only be done if the resources are there. Since the Quranic system lays much stress on collective responsibility and mutual support, the duty of jihad goes hand in hand with the duty of spending money for God's cause: **(8:60)** Both jihad and spending money for God's cause are thus purged of all worldly and personal aims and purposes as well as all national and community feelings and aspirations. They must always

be pure, undertaken 'for God's cause,' to establish His authority and to earn His pleasure.

Thus, right at the outset, the Quranic rules out any war undertaken for the glory of individuals and states. It rejects all campaigns that seek to exploit resources and open markets, or to subjugate and humiliate other communities. The Quranic message has nothing to do with any war that tries to establish the superiority of one class, race, nation, or state over another. The only type of campaign which the Quranic message approves of is one undertaken for God's cause. Needless to say, God does not wish to grant supremacy to any one race, nation, class, or individual. He only wants His own sovereignty and authority to be recognized by all people. God is in no need of anyone or any community. The recognition of His sovereignty and submission to Him alone bring honor, freedom, goodness and blessings to all humanity.

WHEN PEACE IS A REAL PROSPECT

The third ruling given in this passage deals with the case of those who wish to live in peace with the Muslim community and give clear indications by word and action that they are genuine in their desire to have a friendly and peaceful relationship with the Muslims. With respect to these, the Messenger is instructed: **(8:61)** The use of the term 'incline' here is very apt as it gives connotations of a gentle attitude that prefers peace and friendly relations. The instruction to be inclined to peace is coupled with that of placing our trust in God who hears and knows everything and is certainly aware of all that is harbored behind words and appearances. Placing our trust in God is sufficient for ensuring protection and security.

What we conclude is that there is no final rulings of universal application in this sign: **(8:61)** At the time when this Chapter was revealed, God instructed His Messenger to remain at peace with those groups who refrained from fighting him and the Muslims, whether they entered into a formal treaty with the Muslims or not.

WHERE TO PLACE ALL TRUST

In the early days after his settlement in Madinah, the Messenger concluded a peace and defense treaty with the Jews and the ungrateful in and around Madinah. The treaty made it clear that the supreme authority in Madinah belonged to the Messenger, and committed the other groups to defend the city against the Quraysh. The signatories agreed that they would not extend any support to any aggressor who attacked Madinah. None would make any pact with the ungrateful who were hostile to the Muslims without the prior agreement of the

Messenger. At the same time, God instructed the Messenger to extend peaceful and friendly treatment to any group who were inclined towards peace, even though they did not sign a treaty with him. He was to maintain that peaceful situation as long as they were committed to peace. All this changed later, as already explained.

When the events known as the Expedition of the Moat took place, with the Arab ungrateful mobilizing large forces and surrounding Madinah, the Qurayzah Jews violated their treaty with the Muslim state. The Messenger was worried that the Muslims might be in very serious trouble as a result of a planned pincer attack. To ease the situation the Messenger offered to make a deal with the chiefs of the second largest force, namely the Ghatafan tribe, which would have them withdrawing all their forces in return for having one-third of Madinah's harvest. That agreement would have left the pagans alone in the position of attack and the Muslims would most probably have been able to gain a quick victory against them. This was only an offer and no agreement was signed.

The practical nature of the Quranic message makes it necessary to face up to any situation with adequate means. The Quranic message takes a practical and flexible approach which is at the same time clear and firmly based. If we seek in Quranic teachings a basis for positive action to deal with any practical situation, we will not need to twist Quranic or ahadith statements, or give them arbitrary interpretations. What is needed is to fear God and to refrain from any attempt to make His faith subservient to evil and ignorant realities. We must also guard against adopting a defeatist attitude which puts the Quranic message on the defensive when it is a faith that is meant to govern and regulate people's lives. It satisfies, from a position of strength, all the needs of practical life. Praise be to God for having guided us to His faith.

UNITING BELIEVERS' HEARTS

When God instructed His Messenger, the Messenger Muhammad to accept the state of non-belligerency from any community which offered him it and to incline to peace whenever they so inclined, He also directed him to rely on Him and place his trust in Him. He further reassured him that He knows precisely what all people hide as guarded secrets: **(8:61)**

Furthermore, God assured him that they would not be able to deceive him, should they try to do so. If their peace offer was merely a cover-up for their real intentions of treachery, he could always rely on God who is sure to protect him. It was He who granted him victory in the Battle of Badr, when He strengthened him with His own

help and with the believers. It was He who established their brotherhood based on faith and united their hearts which could not have been united by any other means: **(8:62-8:63)**

The Messenger is here reassured that he would not need anything other than God's help, for that is more than sufficient for protection from any treachery. It was He who gave strength and support to His Messenger in the first place, when he rallied the believers round him. They were true to their pledges. They came to be a united force, after they had had divergent loyalties. They were often in open hostility against one another and fought their tribal wars with determined ferocity. The reference here may be to the two tribes of Madinah, the Aws and the Khazraj, who constituted the Helpers. In pre-Quranic days, their enmity and protracted disputes were so fierce that there could not be any sort of peace between them, let alone a bond of brotherhood which the Quranic message forged. However, this sign may also be intended as a reference to the Emigrants who migrated with the Messenger from Makkah to Madinah. They also had the same sort of internal disputes and enmity as the Helpers. Or it may be that the sign means them all together. Indeed the whole of Arabia was alike in its internal hostilities.

It was a great miracle which could never have been accomplished by anyone other than God, through the faith He revealed. Hearts that had always been hostile, and natures that had been rebellious, were solidly united. Their hostility was replaced by love and unity of a standard that serves as a symbol for life in heaven: *And We will tear any grudges from their breasts. They will be as brothers on couches, one facing the other.* (15:47)

The Quranic message makes its appeal to humanity on the basis of pure love that has its roots in faith in God and is nourished by dedication to His cause. When human beings make a favorable response to that appeal, the miracle that can only be worked out by God takes place in reality.

MATCHING SUPERIOR FORCES

The Chapter moves on to reassure the Messenger and the Muslim community yet again that God is on their side. This is more than enough for them to ensure their victory. The Messenger is also instructed to encourage the believers to fight for God's cause. They are equal to a force that outnumbers them by ten to one. Even at their weakest, the believers are more than a match for twice their number. **(8:64-8:66)**

We pause here a little to contemplate the difference between God's invincible, overwhelming power and the small force which

tries to suppress the advocates of the divine message. The difference is too huge to allow any meaningful comparison. Therefore, the outcome of the battle is a foregone conclusion. This is what is implied in the statement: **(8:64)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (*birr*). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what they are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on their meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what they mean from experiences they have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what they mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

When developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

Lesson 88(9). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empowering Constancy, Courage

How do I develop courage (determination, constancy)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

Quranic Chapter 8: The Spoils (al-Anfal)
Signs 8:65-8:69

Madinah: *O Messenger! Encourage fighting*
to the ones who believe.
If there be twenty of you, ones who remain steadfast,
they will vanquish two hundred.
And if there be a hundred of you, they will vanquish
a thousand of those who were ungrateful
because they are a folk who understand not. (8:65)
Now God lightened your burden from you

for He knew that there was a weakness in you.
So if there would be a hundred of you,
ones who remain steadfast, they will vanquish two hundred.
And if there would be a thousand of you
they will vanquish two thousand
with the permission of God.
And God is with the ones who remain steadfast. (8:66)
It had not been for a Messenger
that he would have prisoners of war
unless he gives a sound thrashing in the region.
You want the advantages of the present,
but God wants the world to come.
And God is Almighty, Wise. (8:67)
Were it not for a preceding prescription from God,
you would, certainly, be afflicted with a tremendous punishment
for what you took. (8:68)
Eat of what you gained as booty,
lawful, what is good. And be God-conscious.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (8:69)

COMMENTARY°

This is followed by an order to the Messenger to urge the believers to fight for God's cause, now that every soul is ready for the engagement, every heart is full with expectation and all are confident, reassured: **(8:65)** Rouse them to arms, for they are a match for their enemies, even though they may be much inferior in number: (8:65) The reason for such a great difference in real power comes as a surprise, but it is true, incisive: **(8:65)**

What is the link between understanding and victory? There may be very little on the surface, but the link is very real and strong. The believers are distinguished by the fact that they know their way which they have chosen after deep thought. They understand the course they follow in this life and they are well aware of the purpose of their existence and their goals. They have a perfect understanding of the nature of Godhead and the nature of servitude to God. They know that God must be the only master in the universe, and that none of His servants can associate any partners with Him. They realize that they, the Muslim community, are the group that follow divine guidance, whose task is to liberate humanity, by God's will, from servitude to creatures so that they worship God alone. They are the ones to be entrusted with power on earth, not to exercise superiority over others, but to ensure that the word of God reigns supreme. Their mission is to struggle for God's cause, build a proper human civi-

lization, and establish the rule of justice among all people.

All this understanding pours enlightenment, confidence, strength and reassurance into the believers' hearts. They are thus motivated to go into their campaigns of jihad with certainty of the outcome. This alone multiplies their strength. Their enemies, on the other hand, are "devoid of understanding". Their hearts are sealed, and their eyes are blinded. Their forces are without power, although they may appear to be superior. That is because their link to the source of real power has been severed.

This relative power of one to ten is the original balance of power between the believers who are full of understanding and the ungrateful who are devoid of it. Even when the Muslims who remain steadfast are at their weakest, this ratio is two to one: **(8:66)**

Some scholars and Quranic commentators have taken these signs to imply a commandment to the believers that, when they are strong, no one may run away from ten of the ungrateful, or from two in the case of weakness. There are considerable differences on points of detail, which we prefer not to go into. It is our considered opinion that these signs make a statement of fact in estimating the believers' strength when they confront their enemies. This is an estimate made according to God's own measure, which is the true measure. These signs are also meant to inform the believers of this fact so that they have more confidence and reassurance. God certainly knows best but in our considered view, these statements do not stipulate rules to be implemented.

RULINGS ON CAPTIVES OF WAR

The Chapter moves on to outline certain rulings that are relevant to taking prisoners of war and what to do with them. This comes in the context of the Messenger's action with regard to the captives taken in the Battle of Badr. The captives themselves are invited to accept the faith, which provides them with a prospect giving them more than fair compensation for the loss they suffered.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Learn to express your feelings

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

LESSON 88(10). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: do *good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)
SIGNS 8:70-8:75

Madinah: *O Messenger!*
Say to whom are in your hands of the prisoners of war:
If God knows any good in your hearts,
He will give you better than what was taken from you

and He will forgive you.
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (8:70)
But if they want treachery against ***you,***
they, surely, betrayed God before,
so He gave ***you*** *power over them.*
And God is Knowing, Wise. (8:71)
Truly, those who believed and emigrated
and struggled with their wealth and their lives in the way of God,
and those who gave refuge and helped,
those are protectors, some of some others.
And those who believed, but emigrate not,
you have no duty of friendship to them at all
until they emigrate.
And if they asked you for help in the way of life,
then, it would be upon you to help them, but against the folk
whom between you and between them there is a solemn promise.
And God is Seeing of what you do. (8:72)
And those who were ungrateful,
some are protectors of some others.
If you accomplish not allying with other believers
there will be persecution on the earth
and the hateful sin of corruption. (8:73)
And those who believed and emigrated
and struggled in the way of God
and those who gave refuge and helped,
those, they are the ones who truthfully believe.
For them is forgiveness and generous provision. (8:74)
And those who believed afterwards,
and emigrated and struggled beside you, then, those are of you.
And those imbued through wombs, blood relations,
some are more deserving than some
others in what is prescribed by God,
truly, God is Knowing of everything. (8:75)

Commentary°

Seeking to Deceive God

Now the Chapter addresses those captives, giving them hope and promising a future which is far better than the life they used to lead. They are also promised what is superior to the property they lost, in addition to forgiveness and mercy: **(8:70)** But all this depends on them opening their hearts to the light of faith. God will then find goodness in them. That goodness is the very fact of believing in God. It is goodness at its purest. Indeed all goodness stems from it.

From the point of view of the Quranic message, keeping prisoners of war in the hands of believers is only a means of opening up the essence of goodness that may be deep in their hearts. Thus their nature becomes recipient to the call to accept the divine faith and follow guidance. No vengeance is to be exacted on those prisoners of war. Such was the practice of the Byzantines and other conquerors. But Islam follows a totally different approach.

At the same time that the captives are given this prospect of hope, they are warned against any attempt to play false with God's Messenger. They have already experienced the outcome of playing false to God: **(8:71)** Their treachery to God took the form of associating partners with Him after He had formed their nature to always recognize Him as the only Lord, but they were never true to their pledges. If they seek to play false with God's Messenger when they are captives in his hands, they should remember the result of their first treachery which led them to be taken prisoner and gave mastery over them to God's Messenger and his followers. God is certainly aware of the thoughts they harbour and He is wise as He inflicts punishment on them: **(8:71)**

DEFINITION OF RELATIONS

The Chapter's final passage outlines the internal and external relations of the Muslim community. Rulings concerning these relations are also outlined. This gives us a clear idea of the nature of the Muslim community itself and the basis on which it is founded. The essential ties which bring that community together are not those of blood, land, race, history, language or economy. Ties of family, country, nation or financial interests are of no importance. The only ties which are given weight and importance are those of faith, organized movement and its leadership. Therefore, those who believe, migrate to the land of the revelation of the Quranic message, abandon all their earlier links with their own land, homes and nation, sacrifice their lives and possessions and strive for God's cause, as well as those who give them shelter and support and join them in their faith under the same leadership and in the same movement—all those are friends and protectors of one another. On the other hand, those who believe but have not yet migrated may not aspire to such status that provides for mutual protection. This is because they have not yet pledged their full loyalty to the Quranic leadership and have not yet abandoned all ties with the ungrateful, except the bond of faith. Within the Muslim community itself, blood relations have priority in inheritance and other matters. The ungrateful, on the other hand, are also patrons and allies of one another. These are the main lines delineating loyalties

and relationships as shown in these very clear signs: **(8:72-8:75)**

LOYALTY IN A MUSLIM COMMUNITY

In the early days of the Quranic message, until the major Battle of Badr, the social bond that tied Muslims together involved inheritance and obligatory mutual support, sharing in the payment of any blood money for accidental killing. These ties replaced those of blood and family. When the state was established and acquired additional strength after God enabled it to score its most remarkable victory at Badr, the obligation of giving loyalty and support was maintained. As for inheritance and help in the payment of blood money, these were now confined, by God's order, to blood relatives within the Muslim community itself.

The migration mentioned here as a condition of such mutual commitment, in its special and general aspects, refers to the physical departure, by those who can, from the land of the ungrateful to the land of the Quranic revelation. Those who were able to migrate but chose not to do so, because they did not want to abandon their ties, whether financial or family, with the ungrateful had no claim for protection by the Muslim community. This provision applied to some Bedouins and some individuals in Makkah who were not prevented from migrating. The Muslim community had an obligation to come to the support of those believers, particularly when they appealed for help on account of being harassed or persecuted on grounds of faith. The only exception was if they wanted such help against a people with whom the Muslim community had a treaty, as such treaties had a stronger claim to be honored by the Muslims.

These statements and the rulings and provisions they outline give us a clear idea of the nature of the Muslim community, its essential factors and basic values. Nevertheless, a word about the emergence of this community and its foundation, method of action and commitments will clarify that better.

The Quranic message conveyed by God's Messenger, the Messenger Muhammad, is the last link in the long history of the call advocating submission to God alone undertaken by the noble prophets. Throughout history, this message has remained the same: that human beings should recognize their true Lord and Sustainer, God the only deity, and that they should submit to Him alone. All claims to lordship by human beings are null and void. Except for a few individuals here and there in history, humanity as a whole has never denied the existence of God or His sovereignty over the universe. It has rather erred in its understanding of His real attributes, or associated partners with Him, either in belief and worship or in assigning sovereignty.

Both of these are forms of polytheism which take people out of the faith altogether. Each one of God's Messengers taught humanity the religion God wants people to follow. After a long while, people would start to deviate and steer away from it, back into *jahiliyyah*, ignorance and polytheism, i.e. associating partners with God, either in belief and worship or in attributing sovereignty to them or both.

Throughout history the call to believe in God has had the same nature. Its purpose is self-surrender to God, which means to bring human beings into submission to the Supreme Lord alone, to free them from servitude to human beings so that they may devote themselves to the one true God. Thus, they would be freed from the clutches of human lordship and man-made laws, value systems and traditions. They would be able to acknowledge the sovereignty and authority of the one true God and follow His law in all spheres of life. This is the central issue of the Quranic message as preached by the Messenger Muhammad and all the noble prophets and messengers sent before him. It wants people to acknowledge God's sovereignty, which is readily acknowledged by all the universe. Human life must be regulated by the same authority that regulates the entire universe. Thus, human beings will not have their own code of living and will not submit to an authority other than those governing the whole universe, including those aspects of human life over which human beings have no say.

As is well known, human beings are subject to the laws of natur God has set into operation in matters that affect their birth, growin up, health, illness, death and also those that determine the consequences of their own choices in the areas where they can exercise their free-will. They cannot change God's laws governing the universe or these aspects of their own life. It is only wise then for them to submit to God in those aspects of their life in which they have a free choice. When they do so they make God's law govern both aspects of their life, the one which follows God's natural laws and the one subject to their own will. They thus bring harmony into their life.

Jahiliyyah, which may be defined as a state of ignorance based on giving sovereignty to human beings, is bound to bring about a clash between the natural and the free-will aspects of human life. To counter *jahiliyyah* in human life all prophets, including Muhammad, God's final Messenger, advocated submission to God alone. It must be said that ignorance is not represented by an abstract theory. In certain periods of history, ignorance had no theoretical representation whatsoever. However, it always takes the form of a living movement in a society which has its own leadership, its own concepts and values, and its own traditions, habits and feelings. It is an organized so-

ciety and there is close co-operation and loyalty between its individuals. It is always ready to defend its existence consciously or unconsciously. It crushes all elements which seem to be dangerous to its personality.

Since *jahiliyyah* takes the form of an active movement in this fashion, rather than of a theory, then any attempt to abolish *jahiliyyah* and bring people back to God through representing Islam merely as a theory is both useless and ineffective. *Jahiliyyah* controls the practical world, and for its support there is a living and active organization. In this situation, mere theoretical efforts cannot be a match for it. When the purpose is to abolish the existing system and to replace it with a new one that is different in character, principles, as well as in all general and particular aspects, it stands to reason that this new system should come into the battlefield as an organized movement and a viable community. It must also have the advantage of a more powerful strategy, social organization and firmer ties between its individuals. Only then can it hope to replace the existing system.

THE PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION OF QURANIC THEORY

The theoretical foundation of the Quranic message, in every period of history, has been the declaration by which a human being bears witness that 'there is no deity other than God.' This means that God is the sustainer, the ruler and the real sovereign. This must take the form of a firm belief that is deeply rooted in one's heart and manifested in both addressing all worship to God alone and putting His laws into practice. This declaration cannot be deemed to have been truly made with such complete acceptance of its meaning. It is only when a person accepts its significance fully that he is deemed to be a true Muslim.

From the theoretical point of view, the establishment of this rule means that people must refer to God in conducting any aspect of their lives. They cannot decide on any affair without first referring to God's injunctions that may be relevant to it and implement them. There is only one source to know God's guidance; that is, His Messenger. Thus, in the second part of the declaration by which a person becomes a Muslim we declare that we 'bear witness that Muhammad is God's Messenger.'

This theoretical basis of the Quranic doctrine provides a complete code of living for the entirety of human life. A Muslim approaches every aspect of his individual or social life, whether within or outside the Quranic community, from the perspective of this code of living which also regulates the internal and external relations of the Muslim community.

As has already been explained, the Quranic message cannot confine itself to a mere theory which people accept as a belief practised merely as worship rituals while remaining within the structure of the existing *jahiliyyah* society. If true believers, numerous as they may be, do that, their presence within the *jahiliyyah* society cannot lead to a real and practical existence of the Quranic message. Those 'theoretical' Muslims who are part of the structure of the *jahiliyyah* society will inevitably have to respond to its requirements. Whether they like it or not, they will try, consciously or subconsciously, to fulfil its basic needs and defend its existence, and they will try to counter whatever forces or factors are threatening that existence. Any living entity will always complete these tasks using all its organs without even consulting them. In practical terms, those individuals, who are theoretically Muslims, will continue to practically support and strengthen the jahiliyyah society which they should, in theory, be trying to dismantle. They will remain living cells within its structure, supporting its continuing existence with all their talent, experience and capability. Their efforts should in fact be directed to using all their power, talent and experience for the establishment of the Quranic message.

Full and complete loyalty must be given to the new Quranic movement and the new Muslim leadership. This decisive step must be taken at the very moment when a person makes this verbal declaration bearing witness that: there is no god other than God and Muhammad is God's Messenger. A Muslim society cannot come into existence without this. It does not become a reality when it is no more than a belief held by individual Muslims, numerous as they may be. They must form themselves into an active, harmonious and cooperative group with a separate and distinct existence. Like the limbs of a human body, all individuals in this group work together to strengthen its foundation, and to enable it to expand and defend itself against any external attack which threatens its existence. In all this, they must work under a leadership that is independent of that of *jahiliyyah* society.

The role of this leadership is to regulate, harmonize and direct their efforts to the strengthening of their Quranic character and to resist and abolish the hostile, *jahiliyyah* set-up. It was in this way that the Quranic message was established the first time. It was founded on a creed which, though concise, encompassed all life. This creed immediately brought into action a viable and dynamic group of people who became independent and separate from the jahiliyyah society that rose to challenge it. It never came as an abstract theory devoid of practical existence. Similarly, it can be brought about in the future

only in the same manner.

When we understand these basic elements in the nature of the Quranic message and its method of action we can fully understand the import of the provisions that we read in the final passage of this Chapter. These organize relations within the Muslim community between those who migrated from Makkah and those who provided them with shelter and support in Madinah, and the relations of these together with those who did not migrate. All these relations are based on the understanding of the active and organized emergence of Islamic society. Equipped with this understanding, we can now look at the relevant passage and the provisions it outlines.

DEMARCATION OF LOYALTIES IN A QURANIC SOCIETY

Everyone in Makkah who declared his or her belief that 'there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger' also disclaimed all loyalty to their family, clan, tribe or to the leadership of the *jahiliyyah* society represented by the idol worshippers. At the same time, they pledged every loyalty to Muhammad, God's Messenger, and to the nucleus of the new society emerging under his leadership. On the other hand, the *jahiliyyah* society tried to defend itself against the danger represented by the new group which broke away from it even before they clashed in the battlefield. It certainly tried to crush the new group in its early days. **(8:72-8:73)**

At the same time, the Messenger established a bond of brotherhood between the members of the new group. In other words, he transformed those individuals who broke away from the *jahiliyyah* society into a new community where a new bond of mutual loyalty was established. In the new community, the bond of faith replaced that of blood and family in other societies. Everyone in that community pledged their total loyalty to the new leadership and the new entity, thus replacing all past bonds and loyalties.

When a number of people in Madinah accepted the Quranic message and pledged their total loyalty to the Quranic leadership, they made it clear that they would obey that leadership in all situations. They also pledged to strive to protect God's Messenger against his enemies, in the same way as they protected their own women, children and property. When all this was set in place, God allowed the Muslims of Makkah to migrate to Madinah.

Thus, the new Muslim state was established in Madinah under the leadership of God's Messenger. The Messenger again established a bond of brotherhood between the Emigrants and the Helpers. Again this brotherhood replaced the bonds of blood and family with all that they entailed, including inheritance, payment of blood-money and

other compensations for which the family and the clan were liable. **(8:72)** They are mutual protectors in as much as they provide one another with support, and they are friends in as much as they inherit one another and provide help in the payment of blood-money for accidental death, and other compensations, as well as fulfilling the commitments and honoring the pledges that result from blood relations.

Other individuals then accepted the Quranic message as a faith without practically joining the Muslim community, because they did not migrate to the land of the revelation of the Quranic message where God's law was implemented and the Muslim leadership was in full control. Those individuals were not part of the Muslim community which was able to fulfil its whole existence in its own land.

These individuals were in Makkah or were Bedouins living in the areas surrounding Madinah. This means that they adopted the faith but did not join the Islamic society, nor did they pledge their full loyalty to its leadership. These were not regarded as part of the Muslim community. With these, God did not require that the Muslim community have full loyalty, in all its aspects, because they were not, in practical terms, part of Islamic society. Therefore, the rule regarding these individuals stated: **(8:72)**

This rule is perfectly understandable because it fits with the nature of the Quranic message and its practical method of action. Those individuals were not part of the Muslim society and, therefore, they could not have a relationship of allegiance with it. Nevertheless, there is the bond of faith which, alone, does not provide for duties towards such individuals which the Quranic society is bound to fulfill. However, in the case where these individuals suffer aggression or an attempt to turn them away from their faith a provision in their favor is clearly stated. Should they in such a situation appeal to Muslims for support, the Quranic society must support them. The only proviso is that giving such support should not violate any provision of a treaty the Muslim society might have with another party, even though that party might be the aggressor.

What we have to understand here is that the first priority is given to what serves the interests of the Muslim community and its method of action with whatever contracts or transactions that this might produce. These have to be honored even in the case where aggression is made against believers who have not joined the Quran-based society which represents the practical existence of the Quranic message.

This shows the great importance the Quranic message attaches to its own active organization. The comment on this rule added at the end of the sign says: **(8:72)** Whatever human beings may do, God

is aware of all their actions. He knows the preliminaries, incentives, motivations, the deeds as well as their effects and consequences.

Thus, a society based on the Quranic message is an active and organic grouping where individuals are united by their loyalty, allegiance and mutual support of one another. The same characteristics apply to ignorant or *jahiliyyah* societies: **(8:73)** By nature, a *jahiliyyah* society does not act as mere individuals. It behaves like a living entity whose organs move by nature to defend its existence and independence. Therefore, the people in that society are, to all intents and purposes, friends and protectors of one another. Therefore, the Quranic message must confront them as a society which demonstrates the same characteristics to a stronger and firmer degree.

Should the Muslims refrain from confronting them as a community whose individuals are united by mutual ties of loyalty and friendship, these Muslims would be subject to persecution by the *jahiliyyah* society. They would not be able to resist that society since it moves against them as an integrated whole. Thus, *jahiliyyah* would gain the upper hand against the Quranic message, sovereignty would be given to human beings and people would be forced to submit themselves to other people. All this leads to much persecution and the worst type of corruption. **(8:73)**

This is a very serious warning. Muslims who do not establish their existence on the solid foundation of an active organization bound by a single loyalty and working under a single leadership shall have to answer to God for all the oppression and the corruption that results from their actions, in addition to what they suffer in their own lives as a result.

TRUE BELIEVERS

Once more, the Chapter states the true nature of faith: **(8:74)** This is the true picture reflecting true faith. This sign tells us exactly how the Quranic message gains its real existence. The Quranic message does not become a reality with a declaration of its theoretical basis, or its adoption as a conceptual belief, or even with offering its worship rituals. The code of living based on the Quranic message needs an active organization to implement it and put it into practice. When it remains in the form of beliefs only, its existence remains abstract. It does not become a true and practical existence without such an active organization dedicated to its implementation.

Those who belong to such an active organization are the true believers who are promised forgiveness and generous provisions. The provisions are mentioned here in relation to their striving, sacrificing their wealth, supporting their brethren and giving them shelter, with

all the costs they bear in meeting these responsibilities. But in addition to such generous provisions, they are given forgiveness of sins, which counts as t best type of God's bounty.

Grouped with the first Muslim community of the Emigrants and the Helpers are all those who later migrate and strive for God's cause, but the first community had its degree of excellence, as stated in other Quranic signs. The addition is stated here to make it clear that these also belong to the Muslim community, and give it their allegiance. **(8:75)**

The requirement of migration continued to apply until Makkah had fallen to the Quranic message. At that time, the whole of Arabia acknowledged leadership based on the Quranic message and its entire population formed the Quranic community. The Messenger made it clear then that the requirement of migration was no longer operative, but people were required to work for the Quranic message and strive hard in serving its cause. That was in the first round of Quranic triumph which ushered in a period of rule through the Quranic message that continued for nearly twelve centuries. Throughout that period, Quranic law was implemented and the Muslim leadership acknowledged God's sovereignty and fulfilled its obligations under Quranic law.

The first period of building the Quranic message had its own provisional laws and special duties. Loyalty on the basis of faith replaced blood and family relations in all shapes and forms, as well a rights and duties, including inheritance and mutual support in th payment of penalties and compensation for accidental killing. Whe the structure of Quranic society became well established after the resounding victory at Badr, the provisional laws applicable to that special period of construction were amended. The amendments re-established inheritance and mutual support in financial liabilities on the basis of family relationships, but only within the Muslim community in the land of Islam: **(8:75)**

To give priority in such matters to family and relatives, within the general framework of the Muslim community, after the practical existence of the Quranic message has been firmly established meets a certain need of human nature. There is no harm in satisfying people's natural feelings as long as there is no conflict between such satisfaction and the fulfilment of Quranic duties. The Quranic message does not negate or obliterate natural feelings, but it controls them so that they work in line with the more important requirements of its own existence as a faith. Thus, the satisfaction of people's natural needs and feelings is provided within the general framework of Islam and its requirements. This means that some special periods may have

special provisions which are not included among the final provisions of Islamic law which are applicable in a well-established and secure Islamic community. This is how we must understand the requirements of the initial building stage as well as the general nature of Islam and its laws. This is the appropriate comment on all these laws and regulations and how they interact and are coordinated. They have their basis in God's knowledge which is flawless, perfect and absolute. **(8:75)**

A COMMUNITY OF HUMANITY

This Quranic approach making faith the basic social tie in a Quranic society has produced remarkable results. Instead of stressing those traits which are common to both the human being and animal, the Quranic approach promotes and nurtures the human being's human qualities so that they become the dominant factors. The concrete remarkable result of this attitude was that the Quranic society became an open and all-inclusive community in which people of various races, nations, languages and colors were members. No obstacle prevented them from forming a coherent and open society. The rivers of higher talents and various abilities of all races of humanity flowed together into this vast ocean and worked in perfect harmony. Such a coherent mix gave rise to a high level of civilization in a very short period of time. It harnessed the capabilities, ideas and wisdom of all those peoples to produce a great civilization, in spite of the fact that in those times, travel was difficult and the means of communication were slow.

In this unique Quranic society Arabs, Persians, Syrians, Egyptians, Moroccans, Turks, Chinese, Indians, Romans, Greeks, Indonesians, Africans and people of other nations and races were gathered together. Their various characteristics were united, and with mutual cooperation, harmony and unity they took part in the construction of the Islamic community and the Quranic culture. This marvellous civilization was not an Arab civilization but a Quranic one. At no time did it acquire a nationalistic guise, but was instead always based on faith.

All these peoples came together on an equal footing in a relationship of love, with their minds set on a single goal. They used their best abilities, developed the qualities of their races to the fullest, and brought the essence of their personal, national and historical experiences for the development of this united community, to which they all belonged as equal members and in which their common bond was through their relationship with their Lord. In this community their 'humanity' developed without any hindrance. Such character-

istics were never witnessed in any other community in the entire history of humanity.

The Quranic message, then, is the only divine way of life which brings out the noblest human characteristics, developing and using them for the construction of human society. In this respect, the Quranic message has always remained unique. Those who opt for any other system, whether based on nationalism, color and race, or on class struggle, or similar corrupt theories, are truly enemies of humanity. They are the ones who do not want man to develop those noble characteristics which have been given to him by his Creator. Nor do they wish to see a human society benefit from the harmonious blending of all those capabilities, experiences and characteristics which have been developed among the various races of humanity. Such people swim against the current and try to reverse the tide of human development. They wish human society to be based on the same factors which group animals together: a stable and a grazing land. They are not happy with that sublime level to which God has raised man and which provides a fitting basis for uniting human society.

But God will most certainly accomplish His purpose. This type of reversal into *jahiliyyah*, or ignorance, and its animal values will not survive for ever in human life. God's will is certain to prevail. Humanity will try one day to establish its society on the basis by which God has honored the human being and which provided the foundation of the first society based on the Quranic message that attained a highly distinctive position in human history. The image of that society will continue to loom large on the horizon and humanity will aspire to attain the same high level which it had experienced at a particular stage in history.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?

Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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LABIB BAKKAR

CRITICAL THINKING AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL QURAN IN THE LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

THE YEAR 16 OF THE REVELATION (3 AH/624-625 CE)

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 16

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 16

of the Revelation (3 AH/624-625 CE)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 16, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 3 AH/ca. June 24, 624 CE-June 12, 625 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun you in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts**, ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions**, solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

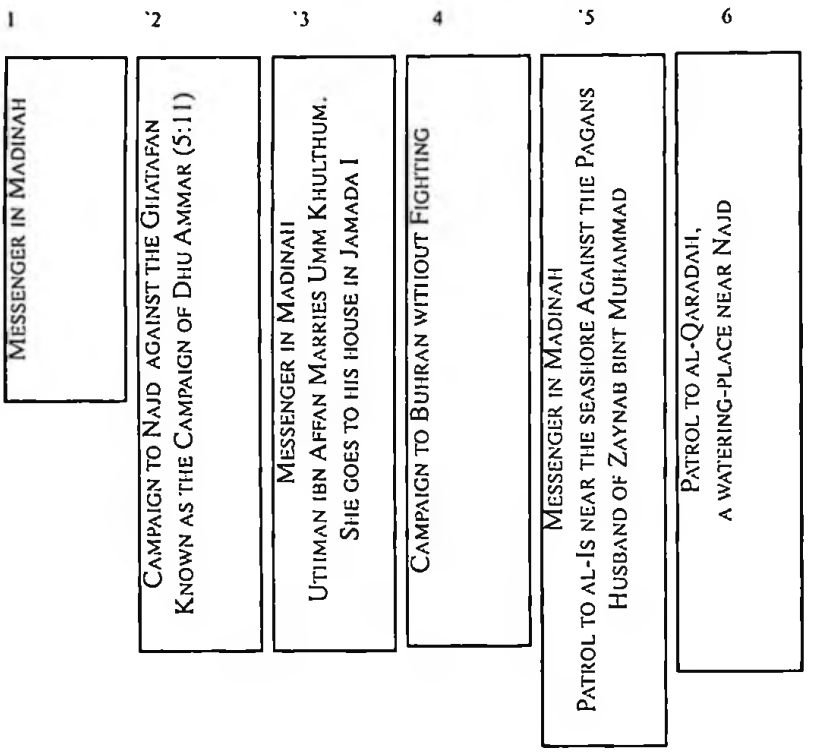
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

Preview *Book Year 16*

Timeline

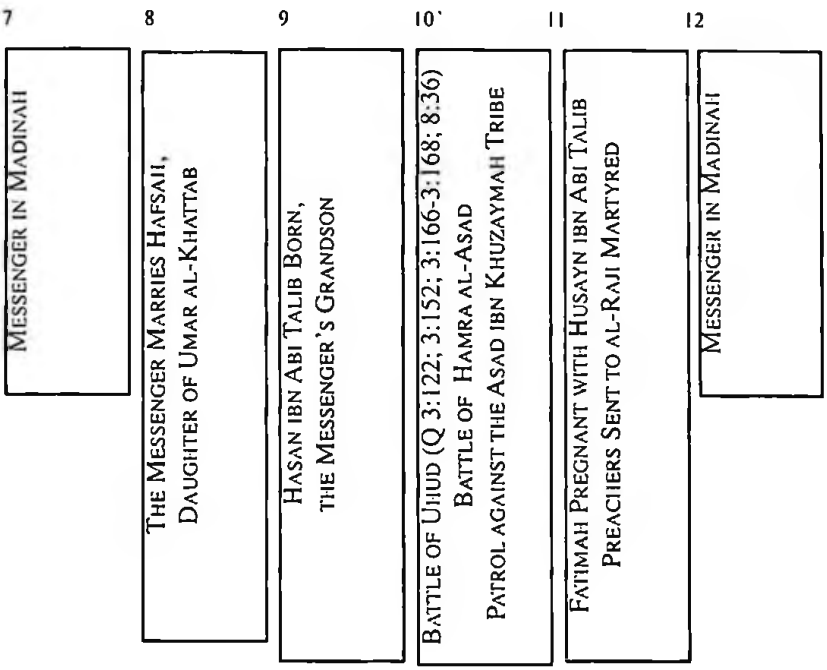


Key
1 = Muharram
2 = Safar
3 = Rabi I
4 = Rabi II
5 = Jamada I
6 = Jamada II

Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands
a Companion to Lead

Preview *Book Year 16*

Timeline



Key
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 16 presented here begins with Lesson 89 and Quranic Chapter 3, the 89th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 33, 60 and, finally, Lesson 92, Quranic Chapter 4.

PRELUDE

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I IMRAN)

The Quran is the Book of Islam. It is the soul and *raison d'être* of the Islamic mission. It is the backbone and edifice of its existence. It is its guardian and protector; its expression and manifestation; its constitution and way of life. Once all is said and done, the Quran is the fountain, and the reference point, from which Muslims draw the ways and means of their actions, their systems and approach, and the provisions for their journey in this life.

The Quran is a reality with a perpetual existence akin to that of the cosmos itself; the cosmos being God's visual Book while the Quran is God's recited Book. Each is a testimony and a witness to the Creator, and a force in the world. The universe continues to move and fulfil the functions ordained for it by its Creator: the sun moves in its orbit and performs its role, as do the moon, the earth and all the stars and planets, unhindered by the passing of time or the changes affecting their role in the universe. Similarly, the Quran has fulfilled its role towards humanity, and continues to exist in its original form. Likewise, as far as his true character and original nature are concerned, the human being has not changed.

The Quran is God's message to the human being. It is immutable because, despite the changes that may have taken place around him and despite the mutual effect between him and those changes, the Quran addresses the basic being and his original nature which have remained the same. It is capable of guiding human life today and in the future because it is destined so to do. That is because it is God's last and final message and because human nature, like that of the physical universe, is constant and dynamic but never changing.

Would it not be laughable if the sun, for instance, were described as old or reactionary and therefore it should be replaced by a new and more progressive star? Similarly, is it not also laughable for the human being to be considered antiquated and reactionary and his replacement by some other more enlightened being to rule the world be argued for? It would also be ludicrous to say the same with regard to the Quran, God's last and final message to humanity.

The Chapter under examination here covers a lively period in the history of the Muslims in Madinah, extending from the end of the famous Battle of Badr, in the second year of Hijrah (623 CE), to the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud, a year later. It describes the circumstances and the atmosphere surrounding the events of that period, the impact of the Quran on the life of that community, and how it interacted with the prevailing conditions, across all walks of life.

The force and vitality of the Quranic text brings into sharp focus the images of that period, the life of the community, and the interactions and circumstances in which that life was engulfed. It penetrates deep into the Muslims' consciences, exploring their innermost thoughts, feelings and sen-

sibilities; so much so that the reader feels those events in the same way that members of that community experienced them. If one closes one's eyes, one may begin to see—as I have seen—those Muslims going about their daily lives, here and there, with their smiling faces and serenity, but with enemies lurking all around.

Those enemies were conspiring, spreading lies and suspicion, harboring grudges, and rallying their forces for combat with the Muslims, for them to be defeated initially at Uhud, but later to re-group and inflict heavy losses upon the Muslims. One can picture every movement and every action that took place on the battlefield, and every inner or outward emotion and reaction that accompanied it. One can see the Quran being revealed to counteract the conspiracy and the intrigue, to refute the lies and the allegations, to strengthen Muslim morale and bolster the Muslim position, to direct Muslim spirit and thoughts, to comment on events and actions and draw appropriate lessons, to establish and clarify concepts, to alert the Muslims to the treachery and deceit of their scheming enemies, and to provide them with an enlightened and judicious lead through the thorns, nettles and traps laid in their path.

Beyond that, the directives and exhortations contained in this Chapter remain eternal and universal, not restricted by time, place, or circumstance. The Chapter addresses the human soul and the Muslim community—today and in the future—and the whole of humanity, as though it is being revealed at this very moment. It deals with contemporary issues and current situations, because it deals with emotional and spiritual issues, events and feelings as though these were already taken into account within the context of the Chapter. Indeed, they would have been taken into account in the overall scheme of God, the omniscient, who has full knowledge of everything.

Thus, it becomes clear that the Quran is the guiding light everywhere and at all times. It is the life code for every generation of Muslims whoever they may be, and their beacon along the way, century after century. For, it is God's last and final message to humanity in all ages.

The Early Years in Madinah

At the time of the revelation of this Chapter, the Muslim community began to settle in their new homeland, Madinah, the city of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Battle of Badr had already taken place, and the Muslims had been blessed with victory over the Quraysh. The circumstances concomitant with achieving that victory suggested a miracle. This forced notable figures such as Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, a grand personality of the Khazraj tribe of Madinah, to suppress his pride, put aside his hatred for the Quranic message, and contain his spite and envy towards the Prophet Muhammad in order to assimilate into the Muslim community, albeit hypocritically. His only comment was: This is here to stay. He had come to accept that the Quranic message was firmly es-

tablished and its progress unstoppable.

This was how the seeds of the phenomenon known as hypocrisy were planted in Madinah, and which began to grow and spread. Before Badr, some people whose relatives had believed in the Quranic message were obliged to pretend not to mind; some of the more prominent of these even pretended to have accepted the Quranic message and joined the Muslim community while, at the same time, they continued to harbor a grudge and animosity. They were ready to scheme against the Muslims and to seek the weaker points in the structure of the new community in order to undermine Muslim ranks and strength, satisfy their own prejudices and await the appropriate moment to strike their final blow, if possible.

The hypocrites found natural allies among the Jews of Madinah who had a similar or even stronger grudge and prejudices of their own towards the Quranic message and the Prophet. The Quranic message had posed a real and formidable threat to the status of the Jews among the Arabs of Madinah. It deprived them of the one reason they had to cause rancor and division between the two main Arab tribes of Madinah: the Aws and the Khazraj. Under the Quranic message people of the two tribes became brothers and sisters, belonging to the same united side.

The Jews of Madinah were stifled and choked at the Muslim victory at Badr. From then on, they would use all their powers of intrigue, deceit and scheming to break Muslim ranks and throw doubt and confusion into Muslim hearts and minds; spreading rumors and allegations against the Quranic message and against the Muslims personally.

Then came that episode with the Jewish tribe of Qaynuq bringing all that animosity into the open. This they did, despite the agreements and covenants the Prophet Muhammad had made with the Jews of Madinah following his arrival there in 622 CE.

On the other hand, in the wake of their defeat at Badr, the non-Muslim Arabs were growing increasingly bitter. They could no longer afford to ignore Muhammad's achievements or those of the Madinah camp; nor could they underestimate the threat posed to their trade, their status and their very existence in Arabia. They were, therefore, keen to eliminate that imminent threat before it was beyond their capacity to do so.

As the hatred and power of the enemies of the Quranic message were reaching their peak, the Muslim camp in Madinah was still in its infancy. It was hardly a homogeneous community; there were the elites of the earlier Muslims of Makkah (the Emigrants) and Madinah (the Helpers) as well as individuals who were yet to mature. The community as a whole lacked any practical experience to be able to smooth away the rough edges in its composition and to present a clear image of the Quranic message and the phase it was going through, or to express the sum and substance of its approach and obligations.

The hypocrites, headed by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, commanded a strong

position in society. They maintained strong family and tribal ties. The Muslims, on the other hand, were yet to develop the understanding that the Quranic message alone represented their family and tribal relationships and the only bond that united them. A certain amount of dislocation could still be found within Muslim ranks due to the existence of hypocrite and dishonest elements and their influence on the destiny and future of the whole community, as we will see clearly when we come to review the signs in this Chapter relating to the Battle of Uhud.

The total and decisive victory of the Muslims at Badr, however, was achieved with minimum effort and cost. The small band of Muslims who joined that expedition were scantily equipped for armed conflict. Although they confronted a much larger and well- prepared Quraysh battalion, the latter were overcome swiftly and convincingly.

That victory, coming in the very first confrontation between the army of God and that of the ingrateful, was part of God's scheme of things, and we may be able to discern some of its underlying purpose today. Perhaps it was designed to reinforce and strengthen the fledgling religion, or to demonstrate its efficacy in the battlefield so that it could proceed and progress thereafter.

The Muslims, themselves, might have taken their victory for granted and considered that they would prevail at every stage of their ascent. After all, were they not believing Muslims and their enemies ungrateful? Was it not the case, then, that whenever the two camps met in battle, the Muslims would be certain of triumph.

The divine principles governing victory and defeat are not so simplistic or naive. There are prerequisites pertaining to mental preparation, organizational readiness, equipment and provisions, discipline and control, as well as mental and physical alertness. This is what God meant to teach them through the setback they suffered at Uhud, as this Chapter portrays in vivid, breathtaking and meaningful terms. It identifies the behavior of some Muslims as the reason for their defeat and delivers constructive lessons for both individuals and the community as a whole.

Lesson 89(1). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empathetic Altruism

What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:1-3:9

Madinah: *Alif Lam Mim.* ((3:1)
God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal. (3:2)
He sent down to you the Book with The Truth,
that which establishes as true what was before it.
And He caused to descend the Torah and the Gospel (3:3)
before this as a guidance for humanity.
And He caused to descend the Criterion between right and wrong.
Truly, those who were ungrateful for the signs of God,
for them is a severe punishment.
And God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital. (3:4)
Truly, God, nothing is hidden from Him

in or on the earth nor in heaven. (3:5)
It is He Who forms you in the wombs how He wills.
There is no god but He, Almighty, Wise. (3:6)
It is He who caused the Book to descend to you.
In it are signs, ones that are definitive.
They are the essence of the Book and others,
ones that are unspecific.
Then, those whose hearts are swerving,
they follow what was unspecific in it, looking for dissent
and looking for an interpretation,
but none knows its interpretation but God.
And the ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge say:
We believed in it as all is from our Lord.
And none recollects, but those imbued with intuition. (3:7)
Our Lord! Cause our hearts not to swerve after You had guided us.
And bestow on us mercy from that which proceeds
from Your Presence. Truly, You, You alone are The Giver. (3:8)
Our Lord! Truly, You are One Who Gathers humanity on a Day
in which there is no doubt in it.
Truly, God breaks not His solemn declaration. (3:9)

COMMENTARY°

The opening signs of Chapter 3, emphasizes the parting of the ways between the principle of God's absolute Oneness and that of falsehood and distortion. It delivers a warning to those who reject the Quran and God's revelations it contains. All such people are branded as ungrateful, even though they may profess to be Christian or Jewish. It describes the Muslims' attitude towards their Lord and their reactions to His revelations in a manner that makes the situation crystal clear. This it does by defining in no uncertain terms the true meanings of belief and ingratitude.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?

Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 89(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING, EGO-CENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:11-3:20

Madinah: *Truly, those who were ungrateful,*
it will not avail them—neither their wealth nor their children—
against God at all.
And those, they will be fuel for the fire, (3:10)
in like manner of the people of Pharaoh
and those who were before them.
They denied Our signs so God took them because of their impiety.
And God is Severe in repayment. (3:11)
Say to those who were ungrateful:
You will be vanquished and you will be assembled into hell.
It will be a miserable Final Place. (3:12)
Surely, there had been a sign for you in the two factions who met one another—one faction fights in the way of God and the other as ones who are ungrateful, whom they see twice the like of visibly in their eyes. And God confirms with His help whom He wills.
Truly, in this is a lesson for those imbued with insight. (3:13)
Made to appear pleasing to humanity was the cherishing of lust:
From women and children and that which is heaped up heaps of gold and silver and horses, ones that are distinguished,
and flocks and cultivation, that is the enjoyment of this present life,
while God, with Him is the goodness of the Destination. (3:14)
Say: Shall I tell you of better than that?
For those who were God-conscious, with their Lord are Gardens beneath which rivers run. They are ones who will dwell in them forever with purified spouses and contentment from God.
And God is Seeing His servants, (3:15)
those who say: Our Lord! Truly, we believed, so forgive us our impieties and protect us from the punishment of the fire: (3:16)
They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness)
at the breaking of day. (3:17)
God bore witness that there is no god but He, as do the angels and those imbued with the knowledge, the ones who uphold equity.
There is no god but He, The Almighty, The Wise. (3:18)
Truly the way of life with God is submission to the One God.
And at variance were those who were given the Book after what drew near them of the knowledge out of insolence among themselves. And whoever is ungrateful for the signs of God,
then, truly, God is Swift in reckoning. (3:19)
So if they argued with **you**, *then say: I submitted my face to God as*

have those who followed me. And say to those who were given the Book and to the unlettered: Have you submitted to God? If they submitted to God, then, surely, they were truly guided. And if they turned away, then, on you is only delivering the message.) And God is Seeing of His servants. (3:20)

COMMENTARY°

In this passage, the chapter uncovers the reality of those who swerve from the truth. These people turn their back on the facts stated with absolute clarity in the Quran, pursuing other Quranic statements which admit more than one explanation in order to use the same as a basis for their fabrications. It also shows the distinctive characteristics of those who truly believe in God and submit to Him, accepting everything they receive from Him without any doubt or argument.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.

I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.

I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 89(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

HOW IS POINT OF VIEW DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:21-3:30

Madinah: *Truly, those who are ungrateful for the signs of God and kill the Prophets without right and kill those who command to equity from among humanity, then, give you to them the good tidings of a painful punishment.* (3:21)

Those, those are they whose actions were fruitless in the present and the world to come.

And for them there is no one who helps. (3:22)
Have you not considered those who were given a share of the Book? They are called to the Book of God to give judgment between them. Again, a group of people among them turn away and they, they are ones who turn aside. (3:23)
That is because they said: The fire will not touch us but for numbered days. And they were deluded in their way of life by what they had been devising. (3:24)
How then will it be when We gathered them on a Day, there is no doubt in it? The account of every soul will be paid in full for what it earned and they, they will not be wronged? (3:25)
*Say: O God! The One Who is Sovereign of Dominion, **You** have given dominion to whom **You** have willed, and **You** have torn away dominion from whom **You** have willed. **You** have rendered powerful whom **You** have willed, and **You** have abased whom **You** have willed. In **Your** hand is the good.*
*Truly, **You** are Powerful over everything.* (3:26)
***You** have caused the nighttime to be interposed into the daytime. And **You** have caused the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime. And **You** have brought out the living from the dead. And **You** have brought out the dead from the living.*
***You** have provided to whomever **You** have willed without stinting.* (3:27)
Let not the ones who believe take to themselves the ones who are ungrateful for protectors instead of the ones who believe. And whoever accomplishes that is not with God in anything, unless it is because you are God-conscious that you are being cautious towards them.
And God cautions you of Himself.
And to God is the Homecoming. (3:28)
Say: Whether you conceal what is in your breasts or show it, God knows it and He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.
And God is Powerful over everything. (3:29)
A Day when every soul will find that which is brought forward of good and what it did of evil. It will wish that there be between this and between that a long space of time.
God cautions you of Himself.
And God is Gentle to the servants. (3:30)

COMMENTARY°

Those who deny God's revelations, and slay the Prophets against

all right and slay people who enjoin equity among all people: promise them a painful suffering. It is they whose works shall come to nothing in this world and in the life to come; and they shall have none to help them.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says that God sends down the Remembrance and guards it. What is the Remembrance? God has sent down the signs of the Book and of a clear Recitation (Quran). The Remembrance is the Quranic message. God sent Remembrances before with various Messengers who were also ridiculed. Do not be disheartened, Muhammad. Know that God guards the Remembrance. The Remembrance is guarded by God. The ungrateful will be punished because of their denial of the Remembrance and their claim that the Prophet is possessed. That on that Day the ungrateful will wish that they had been among the ones who submit (*muslim*).

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

Lesson 89(4). Critical Thinking Strategy

Thinking Independently

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran)

Signs 3:31-3:41

Madinah: *Say: If you had been loving God, then, follow me. And God will love you and forgive you your impieties. God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (3:31)

Say: Obey God and the Messenger. Then, if they turned away, then, truly, God loves not the ones who are ungrateful. (3:32)

Truly, God favored Adam and Noah and the people of Abraham and the people of Imran above all the worlds, (3:33)
some of one another's offspring.
And God is The Hearing, The Knowing. (3:34)

Madinah: Book 28: The Wife of Imran, Mother of Mary (3:35)

Madinah: Book 28: The Wife of Imran, Mother of Mary (3:36)

Madinah: Book 28: The Wife of Imran; Zechariah (3:37)

Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:38)
Madinah: Book 28: Zechariah (3:39)
Madinah: Book 28: Zechariah (3:40)
Madinah: Book 28: Zechariah (3:41)

Commentary°

The whole passage ends on a high note stating in absolute clarity the final verdict on the whole issue which is central to the chapter. In just a few words, the essence of faith and submission are stated in such a way which admits of no confusion whatsoever between faith and unfaith:. (3:31-3:32) True love of God is not a mere verbal claim or a spiritual passion. The claim and the passion must be confirmed with a conscious following of God's Messenger and implementation of the divine way of life. To be a true believer is not to repeat certain words or to experience certain feelings or to observe certain rituals. True faith is total obedience to God and His Messenger and a conscious implementation of the constitution conveyed to us through God's Messenger.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us that the treasures that God sends down are in a known measure. What are some of the treasures that God sends down? The fertilizing winds and rain water. There are underlying important numbers to be studied in understanding how the universe and the earth work. Everything has a known number. God is the Creator and Originator of the universe.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).
I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)
I was able to ask questions.
I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.
By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:42-3:54

Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:42)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:43)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:44)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:45)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:46)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:47)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:48)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:49)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:50)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:51)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:52)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:53)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:54)

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:55-3:63

Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:55)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:56)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:57)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:58)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:59)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:60)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:61)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:62)
Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:63)

LESSON 89(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

The Quran cautions:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says: If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:64-3:71

Madinah: *Say: O People of the Book! Approach now*
to a word common between us and between you
that we worship none but God and ascribe nothing as partners
with Him, that none of us take others to ourselves as lords besides
God. And if they turned away, then, say:
Bear witness that we are ones who submit to God. (3:64)
O People of the Book! Why argue with one another about Abraham
while neither was the Torah caused to descend nor the Gospel
until after him. Will you not, then, be reasonable? (3:65)
Lo, behold! You are these who argued with one another about what
you have some knowledge. Why, then, argue with one another
about what is with you when you have no knowledge?
And God knows and you know not. (3:66)
Abraham had been neither a Jew nor a Christian,
but he had been a monotheist, one who submits to God.
He had not been of the ones who were idol worshippers. (3:67)
Truly, of humanity closest to Abraham are those who followed him

and this Prophet and those who believed.
And God is Protector of the ones who believe. (3:68)
A section of the People of the Book wished
that they cause you to go astray.
And they cause none to go astray, but themselves,
and they are not aware. (3:69)
O People of the Book! Why be ungrateful for the signs of God
while you bear witness? (3:70)
O People of the Book! Why confuse you The Truth with falsehood,
and keep back The Truth while you know? (3:71)

COMMENTARY°

This part of the chapter takes up the same general theme of the controversy surrounding religious beliefs between the people of earlier revelations, i.e. the Jews and Christians, and the Muslims. It explores the relentless and devious efforts lined up against the Quranic message; the scheming, smears, slandering, vilification, lies and devilish intrigues of its opponents. It presents the Quran's argument on behalf of the Muslims and reassures them of the truth of their cause and exposes the deviation and hopelessness of their detractors. It openly and closely probes the habits, ethics, intentions and activities of those enemies in order to make the Muslims fully aware of the threat they pose and to take away the mantle of knowledge and wisdom those enemies had assumed. It moves to dissipate any trust some gullible Muslims may have placed in them. It discourages following their example, and eliminates the dangers of their intrigue by exposing it so that no one may be deceived or misled by it.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Prophet is told to tell the servants of God that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. How will the servants of God be treated in the next life? They will be amidst gardens and springs. They will enter in peace as ones who are safe. God will reward His servants. Those who are the servants of God will receive a great compensation. The consequences for those who are servants of God will be eternal peace. The servants of God will be rewarded.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

Lesson 89(6). Critical Thinking Strategy
Developing Intellectual Curiosity

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment just as Umar al-Khattab had been regarding the conversion of the people around him. What were they listening to? What was Muhammad telling them: Why would my sister and her husband have converted? What is special about this message?.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran)
Signs 3:72-3:80

Madinah: *And a section of the People of the Book said:*
Believe in what was caused to descend to those who believed
at the beginning of the daytime. Disbelieve at the last of the day
so that perhaps they will return to disbelief. (3:72)
And believe none, but one who heeded your way of life.
Say: Truly guidance is The Guidance from God and believe not
that anyone be given the like of what you were given,
so that he argue with you before your Lord.
Say: Truly, the grace is in the hand of God.
He gives it to whomever He wills.
And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. (3:73)
He singles out for His mercy whom He wills.
And God is Possessor of Sublime Grace. (3:74)
And among the People of the Book is he who, if you have entrusted
him with a hundredweight, he would give it back to you.
And among them is he who, if you have entrusted him with a dinar,
he would not give it back to you unless you had continued as one
who stands over him. That is because they said: There is no way of
moral duty on us as to the unlettered.
And they are lying against God while they, they know. (3:75)
Yea! Whoever lived up to his compact and was God-conscious
then, truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious. (3:76)
Truly, those who exchange the compact of God and their sworn
oaths for a little price, those, there is no apportionment for them in
the world to come. And God will neither speak to them, nor look on
them on the Day of Resurrection nor will He make them pure.

And for them is a painful punishment. (3:77)
And, truly, among them is a group of people who distort their tongues with the Book so that you assume it is from the Book, although it is not from the Book.
And they say: It is from God, although it is not from God.
And they say a lie against God while they know. (3:78)
It had not been for a mortal that God should give him the Book and critical judgment and the prophethood and, again, he say to humanity: Be you servants of me instead of God! Rather, he would say: Be you masters, because you had been teaching the Book and because you had been studying it. (3:79)
Nor would He command you to take to yourselves the angels and the Prophets as lords. Would He command you to ingratitude after you are ones who submit to God? (3:80)

Commentary°

The chapter then reveals aspects and manifestations of that evil intrigue. The culprits declare adherence to the Quranic message in the morning but reject it before the day is out in order to feed uncertainty and suspicion in the hearts of weaker Muslims who are found among all communities. Surely, there must be a valid reason why Jewish and Christian individuals, whose people had a much longer association with, and experience of, prophets and Divine revelations, rejected the Quranic message.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?

8. What is its **Point of View?**

The Quran reiterates that the Hour is that which will come. How does the Quranic message tell the Prophet to behave towards the ungrateful? Be graciously forgiving of them as their fate rests with God. The fate of everyone is in the hands of God. We are not responsible for the actions of others. We are each responsible for our own actions. The Hour will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes Ie worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 89(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:81-3:91

Madinah: *And mention when God took a solemn promise*
from the Prophets: Whatever I gave you of the Book and wisdom,
again, if a Messenger drew near you with that which establishes
as true what is with you, you will believe in him
and you will help him. He said: Are you in accord?
And will you take on My severe test? They said: We are in accord.
He said: Then, bear witness
and I am with you among the ones who bear witness. (3:81)
Then, whoever turned away after this, then, those,
they are the ones who disobey. (3:82)
Desire they other than the way of life of God
while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth
willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him? (3:83)
Say: We believed in God and what was caused to descend to us and
what was caused to descend to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac
and Jacob and the Tribes and what was given to Moses and Jesus
and the Prophets from their Lord. We separate and divide not
between anyone of them
and we are ones who submit to Him. (3:84)
And whoever be looking for a way of life
other than submission to God, it will never be accepted from him.
And he, in the world to come,
will be among the ones who are losers. (3:85)
How will God guide a folk who disbelieved after their belief?
And they bore witness to The Truth of the Messenger
after the clear portents drew near them.
And God guides not the unjust folk. (3:86)
Those, their recompense is that the curse of God is on them

and of the angels and of humanity, one and all, (3:87)
ones who will dwell with it forever. Neither will the punishment be
lightened from them, nor will they be given respite. (3:88)
But those who repented after that and made things right,
then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (3:89)
Truly, those who disbelieved after their belief, again,
added to their disbelief. Their remorse will never be accepted.
Those, they are the ones who go astray. (3:90)
Truly, those who were ungrateful and died
when they were ones who are ungrateful, it will not be accepted
from anyone of them the earth full of gold,
even if he offered it as ransom.
Those, for them, is a painful punishment,
and for them there is no one who helps. (3:91)

COMMENTARY°

It says: Do they seek a religion other than God's, when every soul in the heavens and the earth has submitted to Him, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they shall all return? With that on-going covenant in the background, the chapter asserts that anyone seeking a religion other than that reveled in the Quranic message, or complete surrender to God, would be breaking away from the whole grand and universal order God has ordained for all creation. Those who choose not to surrender totally to God or humbly and freely comply with His order of life, appear abnormal and out of place in this majestic world design. At this point, the chapter turns to direct the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims to declare their unshakeable faith in the One God, as set out in what was revealed to all prophets, as the only religious belief sanctioned by God Almighty. It says: He who seeks a religion other than self-surrender to God, it will not be accepted from him, and in the life to come he will be among the lost. Those who reject God's religion, however, have no prospect of either being guided by God or being spared His punishment unless they heed and repent. As for those who leave this world without believing in God, nothing they may have done will save them, even if they were to give the earth's weight in gold. The chapter goes on to urge the Muslims to give those possessions closest to their hearts to good causes, as an investment with God to be collected in the hereafter. It says: You will never attain to true piety unless you spend on others out of what you dearly cherish. God has full knowledge of what you spend. Thus, in one relatively short passage, this chapter packs an impressive and important host of issues, facts and directives.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells the Prophet to say to the people that he was commanded to be the first who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God. He was not among the polytheists, the ungrateful who worshipped more gods than there are. There is only One God and a Muslim is one who submits to the One God. To submit means that one does not rebel against God's will. To submit to the One God is to be saved. That Muhammad was commanded to be the first one [among you] who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God.

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

LESSON 89(8). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN)
SIGNS 3:92-3:101

Madinah: *You will never attain virtuous conduct*
until you spend of what you love.
And whatever thing you spend, truly,
God is Knowing of it. (3:92)
All food had been allowed to the Children of Jacob,
but what Jacob (Israel) forbade to himself
before the Torah is sent down.
Say: Then, approach with the Torah and recount it
if you had been ones who are sincere. (3:93)
Then, whoever devised lies against God after that
then, those, they are the ones who are unjust. (3:94)
Say: God was Sincere, so follow the creed of Abraham
—a monotheist—and not had he been
among the ones who are polytheists. (3:95)
Truly, the first House set in place for humanity was that which is at
Bekka, that which is blessed, and a guidance for the worlds. (3:96)
In it are clear portents, signs, the Station of Abraham.
And whoever entered it had been one who is safe.
And to God is a duty on humanity of pilgrimage to the House in
Makkah for whoever was able to travel the way to it.
And whoever was ungrateful,
then truly God is Independent of the worlds. (3:97)
Say: O People of the Book!
Why be ungrateful for the signs of God?
And God is Witness over what you do. (3:98)
Say: O People of the Book!
Why bar he who believed from the way of God,
desiring crookedness when you are witnesses?
God is not One Who is Heedless of what you do. (3:99)
O those who believed! If you obey a group of people of those who

were given the Book, they will repel you after your belief
turning you into ones who are ungrateful. (3:100)
And how would you be ungrateful when the signs of God
are recounted to you, and His Messenger is among you?
And whoever cleaves firmly to God was,
then, surely guided to a straight path. (3:101)

COMMENTARY°

In this passage we witness the culmination of the debate with the people of earlier revelations. Although the concepts outlined here do not form part of the debate with the Najran Christian delegation, they share a common theme and, thereby, complement and resonate with that debate. The passage addresses the Jews in particular, countering their intrigues and scheming against the Muslims of Madinah, and leads to a complete and total break between the two camps. Further on, it directs its attention fully to the Muslim community, pointing out their true identity, their way of life and their obligations. This section opens by the affirmation that the Children of Jacob were permitted to eat all types of food with the exception of what Jacob had chosen to forbid himself and his people from eating before the Torah was revealed to Moses. This statement appears to come in reply to objections raised by the Children of Jacob against the Quran for making permissible certain foods that have been forbidden to them. The reality is, of course, that these were forbidden only to the Children of Jacob as punishment for their transgressions.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?

7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful what the result of their denying the signs of God will be. What is the result of the ungrateful's denial of the signs of God? On the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful will wish that they could be returned to this life in order to accept the signs of God. When before their Lord, they would admit that the Quran is stating the Truth. It would be too late to avoid the punishment. Those who deny the Last Day will not be returned to this life to change their ways and even if they were to be returned to this life, they still would not believe. The Day of Judgment is the Day when each person will be judged for what they did. Those who deny the Day of Judgment in this life will be punished in the next life. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

LESSON 89(9). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:102-3:109

Madinah: *O those who believed! Be God-conscious as it is His right that He be feared. And die not but that you be ones who submit to the One God.* (3:102)

And cleave firmly to the rope of God altogether and be not split up. And remember the divine blessing of God on you when you had been enemies. Then, He brought your hearts together. You became brothers/sisters by His divine blessing. You had been on the brink of an abyss of the fire and He saved you from it. Thus, God makes manifest to you His signs so that perhaps you will be truly guided. (3:103)

And let there be a community from among you who calls to good and commands to that which is honorable and prohibits that which is unlawful. And those, they are the ones who prosper. (3:104)

And be not like those who split up and were at variance after the
clear portents drew near them.
And those, for them is a tremendous punishment (3:105)
on a Day when faces will brighten and faces will cloud over.
As for those whose faces cloud over:
Disbelieve you after your belief?
Then experience the punishment
for what you had been ungrateful. (3:106)
And as for those whose faces brightened,
they are in the mercy of God.
They, ones who will dwell in it forever. (3:107)
These are the signs of God. We recount them to you in Truth.
And God wants not injustice in the worlds. (3:108)
And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
To God all commands are returned. (3:109)

COMMENTARY°

It goes on to condemn the people of earlier revelations for their denial of God's revelations, for turning people away from God's path, their refusal to comply with His commands, and for their propensity to deviation as a dominant feature of life when they are well aware of the truth. It turns to address the people of earlier revelations as a whole, as it warns the Muslims not to comply with their false beliefs. That was all the more urgent as the Quran was being revealed to them and God's Messenger, Muhammad, was teaching them and calling upon them to fear God and hold fast to Islam until they die and meet their Lord. It reminds them of God's grace which had kept their hearts close together and united them under the singular banner of Islam when they were besieged with schisms and strife. Islam took them back from the brink and prepared them to be the nation that would uphold all that is good and prevent all that is indecent and harmful, as part of their obligation to establish God's order on earth. They are warned not to succumb to the machinations of the people of earlier revelations or to allow themselves to be divided as those people were. That would only bring them frustration and destruction both in this life and in the life to come.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer questions, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

QURANIC SIGN 2:260

When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how You shall give life to the dead. He said: Shall you (Abraham) not believe? He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest. He (God) said: Then take four birds and twist them to yourself. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach you coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise. (2:260)

QUESTIONS 2:260:

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?

What example does it give?

Is this an example of everyone having to agree?

What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

You can use a number of techniques to learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just finding a definition of a word, try to paraphrase the word or concept to something that you already understand. You can also add examples from your classmates to the list.

Rewrite passages, making them clear to yourself. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

LESSON 89(10). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.

Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. The Quranic message, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[1]

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:110-3:120

Madinah: *You had been the best community that was brought out*
for humanity. You command to that which is honorable
and prohibit that which is unlawful and believe in God.
And if the People of the Book believed,
it would have been better for them.
Some of them are the ones who believe,
but most of them are the ones who disobey. (3:110)
They will never injure you but are an annoyance.
And if they fight you, they will turn their backs on you.
Again, they will not be helped. (3:111)
Abasement was stamped on them wherever they were come upon—
but those with a rope to God and a rope to humanity—
and they drew the burden of anger from God
and wretchedness was stamped on them.
That is because they had been ungrateful for the signs of God
and kill the Prophets without right.

That is because they rebelled
and had been exceeding the limits. (3:112)
They are not all the same.
Among the People of the Book is a community
of ones who are upstanding.
They recount the signs of God in the night watch of the night
and they, they prostrate themselves. (3:113)
They believe in God and the Last Day and they command that
which is honorable and prohibit that which is unlawful
and they compete with one another in good deeds.
Those are among the ones in accord with morality. (3:114)
And whatever of good they accomplish will never
go unappreciated. And God is Knowing
of the ones who are God-conscious. (3:115)
Truly, those who were ungrateful never will avail them their wealth
nor their children against God at all.
And those will be the Companions of the Fire.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (3:116)
The parable of what they spend in this present life
is like the parable of a freezing wind in it that lit on the cultivation
of the folk who did wrong themselves and caused it to perish.
And God did not wrong them,
but they do wrong themselves. (3:117)
O those who believed! Take not to yourselves
as close friends other than yourselves.
They stop at nothing to ruin you.
They wished that misfortune would fall on you.
Surely, their hatred showed itself from their mouths
and what their breasts conceal is greater.
Surely, We made manifest to you
the signs if you had been reasonable. (3:118)
Lo, behold! You are those imbued with love for them,
but they love you not. And you believed in the Book, all of it.
And when they met you, they said: We believe.
But when they went privately,
they bit the tips of their fingers at you in rage.
Say: Die in your rage.
Truly God is Knowing of what is within the breasts. (3:119)
If benevolence touches you, it raises anger in them,
but if an evil deed lights on you, they are glad about it.
But if you endure patiently and are God-conscious
their cunning will not injure you at all.
Truly, God is One Who Encloses what they do. (3:120)

COMMENTARY°

These signs describe the Muslim nation so that it becomes aware of its position, value and true nature. The first part of the sign imposes a very heavy duty on the Muslim community, while at the same time honoring and elevating it to a position which cannot be given to any other community: You are the best community that has ever been raised for humanity; you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong, and you believe in God.

We note first that the reference to the Muslim community as one which has been raised is made in the passive voice. This suggests that a highly skilful hand has neatly molded this community and brought it forth from behind the eternal curtain which covers things known only to God. The expression adopted here indicates a subtle and gentle movement which brings forth onto the stage of existence a whole nation which has a unique role to play and a special position to occupy. You are the best community that has ever been raised for humanity. The Muslim nation should understand this in order to know its position and its true nature. It should know that it has been raised specially for the purpose of assuming the leadership of humanity, since it is the best nation.

God wants the leadership in this planet of ours to be assumed by the forces of goodness, not the forces of evil. It follows that it should never be in the recipient position, taking what other nations have to offer. It must be the one to offer to others whatever it has of sound ideology, philosophy, morality and knowledge, and of course its perfect system. This is the duty of the Muslim nation, imposed on it by its unique position and the purpose of its very existence. It is a duty on the Muslim nation to assume the leadership of humanity at all times. By assuming it, it also takes upon itself certain responsibilities.

Leadership cannot be given to any nation which claims it, unless it proves that it is the worthy leader. By its ideology and social system, the Muslim community is worthy of this position. It is clear then that the system which brings this nation into existence demands much from it and gives it the incentive to excel in every field, if only it would follow this system and appreciate its requirements and duties.

The first requirement is that the Muslim nation should work hard at protecting human life from evil. It must have the power to enable it to enjoin the doing of all that is right and forbid the doing of all that is wrong. It is, after all, the best nation ever raised for humanity. This position is not given to the Muslim community as the result of any favoritism, coincidence or random selection. Far be it from God to do that. Positions and duties are not given by God to different na-

tions on the basis of any favoritism.

The criterion which makes a certain community worthy of the position of leadership is its active work for the preservation of human life from evil and the promotion of what is right, in addition to its implementation of the faith which defines what is right and what is wrong: You enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong.

The position of leadership is thus earned through the active fulfilment of its tasks, heavy as they are, and through following the way defined for it, thorny as it may be. In practical terms, it means standing up against evil, promoting every good and protecting society against all elements of corruption. All these are extremely hard tasks, but they are nevertheless necessary if a good human society is to be established and protected. There is no other way to bring about the type of society which God loves.

Belief in God is also necessary so that the community has a correct standard of values and a correct definition of what is right and what is wrong. What is socially agreed by a community is not enough. For it may happen that corruption becomes so widespread that standards are no longer correct or appropriate. Therefore, reference must be made to a permanent concept of good and evil, virtue and vice, right and wrong. This concept should have as its basis something other than the social norms of any particular generation.

Belief in God provides all this, since it ensures a correct concept of the universe and the relationship between the Creator and His creation. It provides the correct concept of the human being, the purpose of his existence and his true position in the universe. It is from this general concept that moral values and principles should be derived. The desire to earn God's pleasure and to avoid His displeasure motivates people to work for the implementation of these principles. They, in turn, are safeguarded by fear of God and by the authority of His law.

Belief in God is necessary for those who invite to all that is good, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, to proceed along their appointed course and bear all its difficulties and hardships. They have to face the tyranny of evil at its fiercest, the pressures of worldly desires at their strongest, as also complacency, weakness and narrow ambition. To do this, they have to be equipped with faith. It is their only weapon. Their support comes from God. Any other aid is exhaustible, any other weapon can be overpowered and any other support is liable to collapse.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

INTERLUDE
THE BATTLE OF UHUD°

From the battlefield of words and ideas and concepts the chapter turns now to that of armed combat: the Battle of Uhud. Uhud was not, however, solely an armed confrontation; it was rather a struggle within the Muslim conscience. Its scope encompassed the whole gamut of human behavior, feelings, emotions, aspirations, instincts and limitations. The Quran was there to coach the human soul in the most caring and gentle way, and in a manner that is more comprehensive and effective than any forceful confrontation.

First came the victory, and then the setback. The sweeter and greater triumph, however, was still to come. It was the triumph of enlightenment and of a clarity of understanding the facts as the Quran lays them down. A triumph of having those facts established as convictions. Muslim hearts were put to the test and purified, their ranks were set apart and the whole community proceeded with clearer concepts, more definite values, and stronger feelings than before. Furthermore, the hypocrites were largely set apart. In what ensued, the characteristics of hypocrisy and sincerity, as manifested in feelings, words, behavior and actions, became much clearer, as did the obligations of faith and the responsibilities attendant on it. The battle clearly defined the preparations required of the Muslims in knowledge, devotion, organization, compliance and total dependence on God Almighty, every step of the way. Everything was and is up to Him alone, in times of victory as in times of defeat, in life as in death.

The unexpected defeat suffered by the Muslim community in battle, however, was immeasurably less crucial than the Quranic guidelines and recommendations that followed it. The Muslims, at that time, were in desperate need of such guidance; they needed it a thousand times more than they needed a military victory or the spoils of war. The benefits of that result were even more important and enduring for later Muslim generations. In short, there was a supreme divine purpose behind the defeat suffered by the Muslims. As far as we can ascertain from its outward natural causes, what happened conforms to the normal pattern of things. The Muslims had, in essence, the great privilege of learning from their experience, of gaining more enlightenment and maturity, and of cleansing their ranks and reorganizing and coordinating their plans. The whole experience has proved immensely valuable for later Muslim generations as well.

As soon as the battle on the ground was over, the Quran moved to a wider arena, the human soul and the whole life of the Muslim community. It goes on to mold the community according to God's

will, knowledge and purpose. What God designed for the Muslim community was achieved and it was all for their good, despite the hardships, the travails and the trials and tribulations they experienced.

When discussing the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud, the Quran combines in a remarkable way its review of the events, portrayal of the scenes of conflict, with its pointed commentary and specific directives. These emanate from the events themselves, and they advance specific exhortations and prescriptions for purifying souls, clarifying concepts and freeing hearts and minds from the negative and dark effects of desire, greed, hatred, guilt, negligence, and coveted aspirations.

What is even more interesting is how, while reviewing a military confrontation, the chapter goes on to discuss the evils of usury and the merits of consultation and collective decision-making, or *shura*, despite the fact that at Uhud it led to a disappointing outcome. Furthermore, the chapter deals in a vigorous and thorough style with a wide range of human behavior.

This richness, vitality and comprehensiveness come as no surprise to those who are aware of the divine method. In the dynamics of the Quranic message, an armed confrontation is not merely a clash of artillery, cavalrymen and fighters, nor does it involve pure military planning alone. Rather, such a confrontation cannot be isolated from the greater struggle that takes place inside human consciousness and in the social organization of the Muslim community. The physical battle is closely linked to the purity and dedication of the human conscience and its freedom from the shackles that darken its vision or prevent it from turning to God Almighty. Likewise, it is firmly linked to the foundations and structure on which the life of the Muslim community is organized, in accordance with God's straight and sound order. The divine way of life is built on mutual consultation in all aspects of life, not only in matters of state and governance. It is based on a system of cooperation rather than usury, and the two can never be part of the same structure.

The Quran was addressing a Muslim community in the wake of a battle which, as we have already pointed out, went far beyond a simple armed expedition. It was a battle of wider extent and implication, for individuals as well as for life as a whole. This is the reason for raising in this context subjects such as the condemnation of usury, giving charitably at times of prosperity and need, obedience to God as a condition for His mercy and generosity, the restraint of anger, kindness and the purification from sin through appealing to God for forgiveness, and repentance as a condition for gaining God's pleasure and goodwill. The chapter also talks of God's mercy as reflected in

the benevolence of the Prophet Muhammad and his kindness towards others. Towards the end of the review, the chapter establishes the principle of mutual consultation, or *shura*, as necessary even at the most difficult of times; it stresses honesty and sacrifice and warns against parsimony.

These aspects were all ingredients for raising and preparing the Muslim community for the bigger and wider battle which included armed combat but which was not restricted to it. It remains the battle for the greater prize: overcoming the powers of self-interest, desire, greed and hatred, and establishing values and healthy foundations for the total life of the community.

The object here is to highlight the integrity and the unity of the Quranic faith in dealing with the human individual and all aspects of his behavior and activity. These should revolve around one fundamental principle: worship of, and submission to, God with sensibility and full consciousness. The chapter draws one's attention to the consistency of God's method in dealing with the totality of the human being in every situation, and to the coherent and final outcome of human activity, and to the influence of every move and every action on that outcome.

The all-ranging advice given here is not altogether removed from the context of the battle. People do not triumph in war until they prevail in emotional, moral and organizational struggles. Those who retreated at Uhud were misled by Satan as a result of some misdemeanor. We are reminded that those earlier communities whose prophets led them to victory in battles of faith only triumphed because they started their march with seeking God's forgiveness and support and by cleansing their hearts of all wrongdoing. To abandon usury and adopt an equitable financial system is an essential preparation for victory. An equitable society is more likely to prevail than an exploitative one. Suppression of one's anger and forgiving others are essential for victory, because self-control, solidarity and kindness are highly potent forces in a tolerant society.

Another fundamental tenet in this context is recognition of God's will and the attribution of all eventualities to His wish and command, a concept which this chapter defines clearly and decisively. In the meantime, it confirms God's way of basing the effect of people"s behavior on the nature of their activities, whether right or wrong, compliant or rebellious. People are no more than an image of God's will and an instrument of His command which He puts to whatever purpose He chooses.

Last, but not least, the chapter impresses upon the Muslims the fact that victory is not a matter for them to decide. It is up to God's

will which is translated through their struggle, for which they will be rewarded. The material fruits of victory are not theirs to reap, nor is victory granted to them for their own special gratification. It is brought about for the sake of higher objectives decided by God Almighty. The same applies to defeat, which is brought about in fulfilment of God's will, pursuant to the performance of the Muslim community and whether they discharged their obligations or not. Defeat comes about to achieve certain purposes, predetermined by God and known only to Him, to test people and purify their ranks, establish facts, values and standards, and in order to reveal God's laws for all to see.

Military, political or economic predominance has no value or weight, according to the Quranic message, unless it is based on the divine way which requires the exercise of proper control of personal desires and greed and the upholding of the way of life chosen by God for humanity. Victory must be totally for God and His way, and every human effort must be made for the sake of God and His cause. Otherwise, it is a triumph of one godless group over another godless group, with no benefit for humanity or for human life. Real advantage is gained only when the truth, the indivisible truth, of God's way prevails. There is no other truth in this world. But for this truth to prevail it must conquer the human soul and the daily system of human life. This can only be achieved when human beings conquer their own self-interest, desires, greed and prejudice, when they break free from the chains of materialism and seek God's pleasure and put their trust fully in His hand. It happens when people do their utmost to comply with God's command in every aspect of their lives. Only then can a military, economic or political victory be considered a real one, in God's sight; otherwise it is a godless victory that carries no weight or value whatsoever.

Thus, we are able to appreciate the approach of the chapter in its appraisal of the Battle of Uhud and why it takes the wider view of the human struggle, of which the battlefield represents only one aspect.

A Brief Account of the Battle of Uhud

Before we go into the Quranic review of the Battle of Uhud, it is fitting to give a brief account of the events of that battle, as recorded in the biographies of the Prophet, in order to gain a better understanding of the Quranic appraisal of the battle and of God's approach in educating and nurturing the Muslim community through the Quran.

The Muslims scored a total victory against the non-Muslim

Arabs at Badr in the second year after the migration. That victory had the makings of a miracle about it. The Quraysh lost its most eminent personalities and its leadership fell to Abu Sufyan, who spared no effort in launching a revenge campaign. The trade caravan carrying a substantial portion of the Quraysh's wealth, which had precipitated the Badr confrontation in the first instance, escaped the fighting and it was that wealth which the Arabs of the Quraysh used to finance the planned retaliation.

Abu Sufyan was able to recruit around three thousand fighters from among the Quraysh and their allies, the Abyssinians, who were accompanied by some of their women so as to deter them from running away. The army left for Madinah in the ninth month, Shawwal, of the third year of the Muslim calendar, and camped near Mount Uhud on the outskirts of Madinah.

The Prophet Muhammad consulted with his people over whether they should meet them outside the city or stay put inside. According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in his biography of the Prophet, Muhammad"s own view was to remain in the city and fortify their defenses around it; if the Arabs decided to enter, the Muslims could engage them in the streets and the women could give support from the rooftops. He was supported by Abdullah ibn Ubayy (the chief of the hypocrites), but a large number, mainly young men who did not attend Badr, insisted that they should go and meet the enemy outside Madinah. As this view seemed to prevail, the Prophet stood up and went to Ayisha's room, donned his fighting attire, and emerged again ready to move. By that time the people had changed their mind and decided that they should not force the Prophet to leave the city. Some of them said: Messenger of God, if you prefer you can stay in Madinah. His reply was: It does not befit a prophet to take off his fighting attire once he has put it on until God decides the duel between him and his enemies. That was the first lesson the Muslims were to learn: once a collective decision has been arrived at by public consultation, there is no way to go but forward. There is no room for dithering, reconsultation and indecision. Things must be allowed to take their natural course and God will decide the outcome.

Shortly prior to this, the Prophet saw in a dream that his sword was cracked, and saw cows being slaughtered, and that he had put his hand inside a strong shield. He interpreted the crack as someone from his household being hit, the cows as some of his Companions being killed and the shield as the city of Madinah. He was, therefore, aware of the outcome of the confrontation, but decided, nevertheless, to comply with the consensus arrived at with his Companions. He was also educating his followers through practical experience. Above

all, he was submitting to God's will which in his heart he felt happy and contented to do.

The Prophet left the city with a thousand Muslims, leaving Ibn Umm Maktum in charge of leading the formal prayer during his absence. When they were half-way between Madinah and Uhud, Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, and around one-third of the Muslim contingent withdrew from the expedition, protesting that the Prophet had not respected his views, and that he listened to the boys, so to speak. Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn Haram, the father of Jabir ibn Abd Allah, went after the retreating company, cursing, scolding, and urging them to rejoin the Muslim fighters. He called to them: Come and fight for the cause of God or lend support. They replied: If we knew that you would fight we would not have retreated. Eventually he gave up on them, cursed them and rejoined the Muslim army.

Some of the Helpers, i.e. Muslims from Madinah, asked if they could seek the support of their Jewish allies, but the Prophet refused: the Jews had no part in the confrontation between the Muslims and the idolaters. When one puts one's trust in God and dedicates one's heart and soul to Him, victory will be granted. The Prophet asked his Companions whether anyone of them could lead them closer to the Quraysh and this some of the Helpers did until the party came down the slope of the Valley of Uhud with the mountain to their backs. The Prophet asked his Companions not to start the fighting until he had given the order.

The following morning, the Prophet marshalled around 700 men for battle, including 50 cavalrymen and 50 archers under the command of Abd Allah ibn Jubayr. The Prophet ordered Ibn Jubayr and his men to hold their positions behind the main army and not to leave them no matter what happened, even if you see birds picking up troops one by one. He ordered them to repel the Quraysh attackers with their arrows so that they could not attack the Muslims from the rear.

The Prophet put on two layers of body armour and handed the standard over to Musab ibn Umayr. He placed Al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam on one flank and al-Mundhir ibn Amr on the other. He surveyed the younger recruits and ordered those he thought were under age to go back. These included Abd Allah ibn Amr, Usamah ibn Zayd, Usayd ibn Zahir, al-Bar ibn Azib, Zaid ibn Arqam, Zaid ibn Thabit, Urbah ibn Aws, and Amr ibn Hizam. Those he allowed to remain with the troop included Samurah ibn Jundub and Rafi ibn Khudayj who were both 15 years of age.

The Quraysh similarly mustered their troops, numbering around 3,000, and including 200 horsemen, with Khalid ibn al-Walid in

charge of the right flank and Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl commanding the left one.

The Prophet gave his sword to Abu Dujnah Sammak ibn Kharshah, a brave fighter who showed real enthusiasm for battle.

OLD LOYALTIES TOTALLY DISREGARDED

The first man to come forward from the pagans was Abu Amir, known as the Monk, but whom the Prophet nick-named the Transgressor. He had been a leader of the Aws tribe but he refused to accept the Quranic message and declared open hostility towards the Prophet. He had left Madinah to join the Quraysh in Makkah with the aim of rallying them against the Muslims. He enticed the Makkans to go to war against the Muslims, promising them the support of his tribe, the Aws, whom he said would follow him as soon as they saw him. He was the first man to step into the fighting arena, introduced himself and called over to his people among the Prophet's army to come over to his side. He was rejected and cursed. Declaring that some evil had befallen his people, he went on to fight the Muslims with fanatical zeal.

Abu Dujanah, Jalah ibn Ubayd Allah, Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Ali ibn Abi Talib, al-Nadir ibn Anas, Saad ibn al-Rabi, to mention but a few, showed tremendous courage when the combat started.

In the early part of the day, the Muslims prevailed and 70 of the most valiant of the pagans fell. The bulk of the Arab troops were scattered and ran back to where the women were camped. The women lifted their dresses and themselves took flight.

As the Muslim archers saw the non-believers withdrawing, they abandoned their assigned positions which the Prophet had ordered them never to leave. They were shouting: The booty. The booty. Their commander ordered them back, recalling the Prophet's instructions, but they took no notice. They went after the loot leaving the Uhud positions undefended.

At that precise point, Khalid ibn al-Walid led the Makkan cavalry in a pincer movement to occupy the Mount abandoned by the archers, so as to attack the Muslims from the rear. When the fleeing Quraysh men saw Khalid and his troops occupying the high ground, they rallied to join them.

The tables were turned. The Muslims went on the defensive and chaos broke out all over the battlefield. The surprise attack from the pagans had thrown the Muslims into disarray; they lost control and panicked. Many Muslims were killed in what ensued and the Makkans were even able to get very close to the Prophet himself who was being defended by a handful of followers. Although they fought

back bravely, all were killed. As for the Prophet, he sustained a wound to his face, and a broken lower incisor. His helmet was shattered. A volley of stones was hurled at him by the Makkans, causing him to fall on his side into a camouflaged ditch which Abu Amir, the Transgressor, had dug to entrap the Muslims. Two metal rings from his visor pierced his cheek.

Amid this confusion, someone shouted: Muhammad has been killed. Whatever morale the Muslims had left was shattered and they were put to flight. Overcome with despair and exhaustion, they were routed and soundly defeated.

As people moved back, some stayed behind, among them Anas ibn al-Nadr. He saw Umar ibn al-Khattab, among other Muslims from both Makkah and Madinah, looking dejected and despondent. He enquired why they were sitting there. When they replied that it was because Muhammad had been killed, he said: What is your life worth after him, then? Get up and die for what he died for. He turned towards the enemy camp and as he passed by Saad ibn Muadh, he said: Saad, how wonderful is the scent of Paradise. I can smell it behind Mount Uhud. He fought until he was killed, with some seventy wounds to his body. Only his sister was able to identify him, only by a mark on his finger.

The Prophet, however, was able to make his way back to the Muslims and the first person to recognize him from behind his visor was Kab ibn Malik who shouted at the top of his voice: Muslims. Hear the good news. Here is the Messenger of God. The Prophet gestured to him with his hand not to say any more, and the Muslims, Abu Bakr, Umar and Al-Harith ibn al-Simmah among them, flocked to him. He led them towards and up the mountain pass. Then they were seen by Ubayy ibn Khalaf on a horse called al-Awd which he used to feed in Makkah, saying: I shall ride this horse to kill Muhammad. When the Prophet heard this he said: It is I who will kill him, by God's will. As Ubayy charged towards the Prophet aiming to fulfil his intention, the Prophet took a lance from al-Harith and threw it at Ubayy hitting him in the collar bone, whereupon he fell down like a bull. The Prophet was sure the man would never recover, as he had said, and he did indeed die on the way back to Makkah.

Soon thereafter, Abu Sufyan, the Makkan chief, called from the top of the mountain: Is Muhammad among you? Muhammad told his Companions not to answer him, and he called again: Is Ibn Abu Bakr among you? No one answered. He called a third time: Is Umar ibn al-Khattab among you? Having received no answer, he turned to his own people and said: You need no longer worry about these men. However, Umar could not restrain himself and called back: You

enemy of God, all the men you mentioned are still alive, and may God give you more bad news. Abu Sufyan said: There has been mutilation among your dead. I neither ordered it nor did it cause me any anger. This was a reference to what his wife, Hind, had done to the body of Hamza, the Prophet"s uncle, after her slave, Waashi, had killed him. She cut open his abdomen, pulled out his liver, chewed it and then threw it from her mouth.

Abu Sufyan then called upon the Makkan deity, saying: Rise and prevail, Hubal. The Prophet urged his people to answer him, but they did not know what to say, and he said: Say: God is higher and more exalted. Abu Sufyan retorted: We have al-Uzza and you do not. The Prophet said: Say to him: God is our Lord, and you have none. Abu Sufyan said: Today avenges the day of Badr, and victory in war goes by turns. Umar answered him, saying: We are not equal. Our dead go to Paradise, but your dead go to Hell.

When the fighting subsided and the Makkans had departed, the Muslims were nonetheless concerned that their enemies would head for Madinah, take their women and children and loot their possessions. The Prophet, therefore, ordered Ali ibn Abi Talib to follow them to see which direction they followed and what their intention was. He said if they dismounted the horses and rode the camels, they would be going to Makkah; otherwise they would be going to Madinah. By God in whose hand is my life, the Prophet said, if they go to Madinah I will go after them and fight them inside it. Ali, however, reported that he had seen them dismount their horses and rode their camels instead. They were moving in the direction of Makkah.

Somewhere along the way disagreement broke out among the Makkans. Some of them argued that they had achieved very little at Uhud. The Muslim high command remained intact and they could easily regroup. Such contenders urged their people to go back to Madinah to annihilate the Muslims. This news soon reached the Prophet and he called his people to prepare to confront the enemy again, adding: Only those who fought [on the preceding day] should join us. Abd Allah ibn Ubayy offered to join the expedition but the Prophet declined his offer. Many Muslims willingly and dutifully prepared themselves to go out to fight again, despite their wounds and their apprehensions. Jabir ibn Abd Allah requested the Prophet to make an exception in his case and allow him to join the army. He said: Messenger of God, I love to be with you in every battle, but my father asked me to look after his daughters on the day of Uhud, and I ask you to let me join you this time. The Prophet granted him permission and led the Muslims out in pursuit of the idolaters of the Quraysh. They went as far as Hamr al-Asad, about 15 kilometers from Madinah.

A man by the name Mabad ibn Abi Mabad al-Khuzi, came to see the Prophet who asked him to catch up with Abu Sufyan's army and dissuade them from launching any attack on the Muslims. Mabad caught up with Abu Sufyan at al-Rawa. Unaware that Mabad had converted, Abu Sufyan asked him: What news have you? Mabad replied: Muhammad has come out with his Companions to pursue you with an army the like of which has not been seen before. Many of them regretted staying behind the first time round. Abu Sufyan said: So what do you think? Mabad replied: If you were to order your troops to march now, I would imagine that by the time you have started to move, you will be seeing their horses.

Abu Sufyan said: By God, we are determined to attack them and wipe them out. Mabad answered: But I advise you against it. At that point Abu Sufyan led his people back towards Makkah.

Abu Sufyan also met with some non-Muslims heading for Madinah and he offered to load their camels with raisins when they returned to Makkah, if they would tell Muhammad from him that they are set to attack and wipe him and his Companions out. When the Muslims heard the message, they said: God is Sufficient for us. He is the best Protector. Their resolve still strong, they waited for three more days and once they were certain that the ungrateful were well on their way to Makkah, they returned to Madinah.

PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

This **(3:121-3:122)** is the scene, recalled in all its reality and vigor while still fresh and clear in the minds of those being so addressed. The chapter, however, brings into focus other factors that were not visible at the time. First, God's presence and knowledge of all that was going on. The Quran always impresses this fact upon the Muslims so as to reinforce in their hearts a clearer and deeper faith and understanding. It is the major and most fundamental facet of the Islamic system and no one can claim a full understanding of this religion without it being firmly established in both their conscience and their mind.

This **(3:121)** is a reference to the Prophet setting out from Ayisha's home, having donned his battle dress, consulted with his Companions and all of them having arrived at the consensus that the Muslims should go and meet the enemy outside Madinah. The Prophet went on to organize the Muslim troops, including the archers, assigning them duties and positions around the battlefield. But the chapter also introduces a new fact: God hears all and knows all. What a momentous event. God Almighty was witnessing the proceedings. How awesome! God was witnessing the consultation and

was aware of what was going on inside the hearts and minds of all those present.

The other dimension, however, is that some Muslim hearts vacillated. This was a result of the treachery perpetrated by the leader of the hypocrites, Abd Allah ibn Ubayy. Enraged by the Prophet's acceptance of the views of his Companions, in preference to his own view, Abd Allah ibn Ubayy broke away with one-third of the Muslim fighting force, refusing to join the expedition. Having said, as the chapter puts it: *If we know for sure that there will be fighting we would have come with you,* **(3:167)** Abd Allah ibn Ubayy had demonstrated that his heart did not fully accept the Quranic message and that his self-importance was in control of him. The Quranic message demands total dedication and does not tolerate sharing a person's heart with other beliefs.

According to authentic reports regarding **(3:122)**, the two groups were the tribes of Harithah and Salamah, who were influenced by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy's stance. They wavered, struggled with doubt, but, as the chapter affirms, God came to their rescue and gave them heart to stay and fight.

God reveals here some of people's inner thoughts and feelings, which only they and He know. It is He who steers them away from those negative feelings and gives them the courage to go ahead and fight. The Quran recalls the scene, revives the emotions, and reassures the Muslims that God heard and knew all that had taken place, that He was with them all the way. It demonstrates to them that God is looking after them and helping them in their moments of weakness, so that they learn from where to seek help and support the next time they face a similar situation. It directs them to the only certain way: *In God shall the believers trust. In God alone, and in no one else, should the believers put their trust, for, they shall have no other resort.*

Therefore, in the very first two signs of this section, two major tenets of the Quranic message are established: God hears all and knows all, and in God shall the believers trust. They are presented at the correct moment and in the right context, blending perfectly together in rhythm and in nuance, at the very moment when hearts are receptive and ready to learn and understand. Here, then, we also have a good example of the way the Quran deals with events while they are still live, fresh and relevant. Here, we can also see the difference between the Quranic method of relating and interpreting events and other methods that do not aim to touch the human heart or direct, educate and guide human beings.

A REMINDER OF PAST VICTORY

The chapter takes up the discussion of the battle in which, though they were close to victory, the Muslims did not prevail. It begins with a reference to the hypocrite Abd Allah ibn Ubayy and his followers, who put their own selfish interests ahead of the interests of the faith. It alludes to the two Muslim groups who almost lost heart and withdrew, and concludes with the archers' desertion of their positions, driven by greed in pursuit of booty. The exemplary conduct of some Muslims on the battlefield did not spare the Muslim camp the final and dismal outcome. This was the result of flaws in their ranks and confusion in their thinking.

Before the chapter goes on to analyze and review the events of Uhud, however, the Muslims are reminded of their victory at the Battle of Badr. This provides them with the opportunity to compare the two situations and to reflect on the root causes and results of both victory and defeat, as also on their own weaknesses and strengths. They have to realize that victory and defeat are the result of divine providence, brought about for a specific, predetermined purpose. They have to believe that, after all, everything is in God's hands in all circumstances. **(3:123-3:129)**

The chapter reminds the Muslims of all these facts and explains to them the real reason for their triumph at Badr. **(3:123)** It was God Who brought them victory, and for a purpose shortly to be revealed. They had no other helper or patron, and it is He Whom they should fear and consider. He has the power and authority to grant them victory or leave them to be vanquished. Perhaps if they were to fear God they might learn to thank Him properly and appreciate the favor He bestows on them.

After this opening stroke, the chapter goes on to recall some scenes from Badr itself. **(3:124-3:125)** These were the comforting words the Prophet conveyed to the Muslims when they embarked on their expedition to intercept the caravan, not knowing they would be confronting a formidable fighting force. He conveyed to them the good news of God's support to reassure their hearts and give them strength. He also told them the condition on which that support would be given: that they should persevere and rise to the challenge of the enemy, and fear God and be mindful of Him at all times. Indeed, He will, if you are patient in adversity and fear God, and if they [the non- believers] suddenly attack you, your Lord will supply you with five thousand angels swooping down. **(3:125)**

Then God imparts the fact that everything happens as a result of His will and wisdom. God is the power behind all events. The angels were dispatched to assist the Muslims and lend them moral as well

as material support. Victory is determined by God Almighty and results from His will without intervention from anyone or any other cause or means. God made this only as a happy news for you, so that your hearts might take comfort from it. Victory comes only from God, the Mighty, the Wise. **(3:126)**

Then the chapter explains the purpose behind that victory, pointing out that the way God deals with the ungrateful is of no concern to any human being: It is in order to destroy some of the non-believers, and so abase others that they lose and withdraw. You have no say in the matter. [It is for Him] to accept their repentance or punish them. They are wrongdoers. **(3:127-3:128)**

The Quran assigns the destiny of all people, believers or ungrateful, to God's will. The fate and future of the Quranic message, and those who accept or reject it are determined by God. The Prophet and his followers can only fulfil their obligations and leave the outcome to God. They will receive their just reward, for their loyalty and the efforts they make in support of God's cause.

But there was another reason for stating the principle: You have no say in the matter. The chapter tells us that some people were wondering: Have we any say in the matter? **(3:154)** The object is to make it clear to the Muslims that they had nothing to do with bringing about victory or defeat. All they are required to do is obey, comply and act accordingly. The result is entirely up to God and no body else, not even the Prophet Muhammad. It is of supreme importance that this concept is firmly and clearly established in Muslim hearts and minds.

This reminder of what happened at Badr, and the accompanying admonition, are complemented with a more universal and fundamental truth: the destiny of the whole cosmos is in the hands of God, He forgives and punishes people as He wills. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. God is Forgiving and Merciful. **(3:129)**

This passage **(3:137-3:148)** comments on the early events of the Battle of Uhud up to the point at which the victory which was well within the grasp of the Muslim army turned into defeat. As the Quran comments on these events, it seeks to establish certain rules and principles. The events themselves are only a means employed by the Quran to drive the truth home to the Muslims. These comments begin with a reference to an ever-recurring pattern which engulfs those who reject God's message and describe it as a lie. The Muslims are told here that the pagan victory in this particular battle is a one-off incident delivering a particular lesson. They are called upon to demonstrate their steadfastness and to feel their superiority through faith.

If they have suffered, the idolaters have also suffered in the same battle. What happened to the Muslims is useful in certain ways as it helps distinguish those who are firm in their faith and select from among them martyrs who are ready to sacrifice their lives for their faith. Moreover, the Muslims are brought face to face with death, after they had wished for it. Their promises and wishes are thus put to the test. All this helps the Muslim community acquire the necessary equipment to face its enemies and to bring about the desired result of wiping out ungrateful. In both defeat and victory, the overall goal is served.

UNFAILING LIFE PATTERNS

Many patterns have passed away before you. Go about the earth and see what was the fate of those who described the truth as lies. This is a plain exposition for humanity, as well as a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing. **(3:137-3:138)**

The patterns to which the chapter refers here, and to which it draws the attention of the believers, concern the fate of those who, throughout history, denied God's message and described it as a lie, and the fact that days of fortune and misfortune alternate between people and communities. The patterns identified also test people in order to know whether they are truly believers, and patient in adversity. Another pattern of importance is the fact that victory is always granted to those who are steadfast, while the ungrateful are blotted out. As these corresponding parts are outlined, much encouragement is given to the believers to persevere and remain steadfast. They are consoled for their misfortune, which has not befallen them alone. A similar one has befallen their enemies. They should remember that they have a superior faith and aim to those of their enemies and that they enjoy divine guidance and have a perfect constitution.

Moreover, ultimate victory will be theirs, while their opponents will be vanquished: Many patterns have passed away before you. Go about the earth and see what was the fate of those who described the truth as lies. **(3:137)** The Quran relates the present to the past in order to point to the future. The Arabs who were the first to be addressed by the Quran had nothing in their lives, neither experience nor knowledge, prior to the Quranic message, to enable them to have such a wide view of life and its events. The Quranic message, indeed, gave them a new life and made out of them a nation to lead humanity.

This is a plain exposition for humanity as well as a guidance and an admonition for the God-conscious. **(3:138)** The Quran makes an exposition of the truth to all mankind. It elevates people to a height

which they could never attain without its guidance. But the God-fearing are the only ones who appreciate its guidance and admonition. A word of truth is not appreciated except by a believing heart which is particularly receptive to guidance. A word of plain admonition can only benefit a heart which remembers God. The ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, or between following guidance and going astray is rarely lacking among people. By nature, the truth is self-evident. What people lack is the desire to follow the truth and the ability to prefer its implementation, because these are initiated only by faith and cannot be preserved except with the fear of God. This explains the need for the repeated emphasis in the Quran on the fact that the truth it tells and the guidance, light and admonition it provides are meant only for the believers and the God-conscious. It is these qualities which enable man to make use of this guidance and benefit by its light, regardless of the difficulties one may face. This is indeed the heart of the matter. There are many people who know the truth but who, nevertheless, remain immersed in falsehood either because they yield to temptation and desire or because they fear to share in the hardship which the followers of the truth may have to endure.

A CYCLE OF FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE

Believers must not lose heart, nor should they allow grief to overtake them because of what may happen. **(3:139- 3:140)** They will gain the upper hand, because they have a superior faith. Believers prostrate themselves only to God, while others prostrate before one, or more, of His creatures. This chapter makes it plain to the believers that they are indeed superior and far more exalted than other people. It tells them: You have a superior way of life, because you follow a method established by God while the methods followed by other groups have been devised by His creatures. Moreover, your role is superior, because you have been selected for a position of trust, to convey God's guidance to all humanity. Other people are unaware of this guidance, and have gone astray. Your place on earth is superior, because God has promised you to inherit the earth, while they will sink into oblivion. If you are truly believers, then you are superior. Therefore, you have to demonstrate the strength of your faith by not losing heart and you must not grieve. The rules determined by God make it possible that you may score a victory or suffer a defeat, but the ultimate end after enduring the test and striving hard for God's cause, will be in your favor.

A rule of nature which is seen in full operation is the dealing out of fortune and misfortune among people according to their actions

and intentions. In this way, true believers are distinguished from hypocrites. Mistakes are identified and the way ahead becomes very clear, misfortune befalls you, a similar misfortune has befallen other people as well. Such days [of fortune and misfortune] We deal out in turn among men. God wants to mark out those who truly believe. **(3:140)** When hardship is followed by prosperity and the latter is followed by another hardship, people"s true characters emerge. They reveal how clear their vision is, how much they panic and how patient in adversity they can be, as well as how great their trust in God is and how submissive to His will they are. Thus true believers are distinguished from those who are hypocrites. Their true hearts are apparent to all. The Muslim camp is strengthened by the fact that those who do not truly belong to it are identified and excluded.

In the process of molding the first Muslim community and preparing it for the role of leadership of humanity, God has tested it with hardship after prosperity, and with a bitter defeat after a spectacular victory. Both have happened according to the laws of nature which never fail. That is because God wants the Muslim community to learn what brings it victory and what causes it defeat. Thus, it becomes more obedient to God and reliant on Him. It becomes better aware of the true nature of its Quranic way of life and what its implementation requires of its community.

LESSON 89(11). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN)
SIGNS 3:121-3:129

Madinah: *And when you had set forth in the early morning*
from your family to place the ones who believe at their positions
for fighting, God is Hearing, Knowing. (3:121)
Mention when two sections are about to lose heart among you
although God was their Protector.
And let the ones who believe put their trust in God. (3:122)
And, certainly, God helped you at Badr
while you were humiliated in spirit. So be God-conscious
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (3:123)
Mention when you have said to the ones who believe:
Suffices you not that your Lord will reinforce you
with three thousand among the angels?
Ones who are caused to descend, (3:124)
yea! if you endure patiently and are God-conscious?
And if they approach you instantly here, your Lord will reinforce
you with five thousand angels—ones who are sweeping on. (3:125)
And God made it but as good tidings to you
so that with it your hearts will be at rest.
And there is no help, but from God,
The Almighty, The Wise, (3:126)
for He will sever a selection of those who were ungrateful
or suppress them so they turn about
as ones who are frustrated. (3:127)

It is none of thy affair at all if He turns to them in forgiveness or He punishes them, for, truly, they are ones who are unjust. (3:128)
And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (3:129)

COMMENTARY°

We should note here that the Quranic message meets all this hostility with tolerance. It simply commands the Muslims not to take such people as their intimate friends. It does not, however, encourage a policy of measure for measure with the ungrateful. It does not require them to return the ungrateful" hate, grudges and evil schemes with similar feelings and attitudes. It seeks only to provide protection for the Muslim community. It simply warns the Muslims of the danger presented by other people.

A Muslim treats all people with the tolerance characteristic of Islam. He is motivated by his love to do good to all humanity. He tries to foil the evil schemes of others against him, but he does not scheme against anyone. He does not harbor grudges although he takes care not to fall victim to other people's grudges. Only when a Muslim faces aggression which aims to turn him away from his faith and from following and implementing the method of life God has laid down, is he required to fight back and break down all barriers which prevent people from following divine guidance. His fight is a struggle for the cause of God. It is not a fight in pursuit of revenge. He fights because he loves what is good for humanity, not because he nurses a grudge against those who have caused him harm. He struggles in order to remove the barriers which prevent the goodness of the Quranic message from reaching mankind, not to win power and dominion over others. His aim is to implement the perfect system under which all humanity enjoy justice and peace. He is not after raising any national banner or building any empire. Many a statement in the Quran confirm this fact. Furthermore, the history of the first Muslim community proves this. This method of life is absolutely good. Only the enemies of humanity try to turn them away from it. It is those enemies who must be chased and kicked out of every position of leadership they occupy. This is the duty God imposes on the Muslim community. It once fulfilled it as it should be fulfilled. It is called upon to fulfill it all the time. Struggle under this banner and for the cause of God will continue until the Day of Judgment.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance ... (6:52) the Quranic message tells us. Who is one who drives them away? Those who drive them away are the unjust. It is unjust to drive away anyone who calls on his or her Lord in the morning or evening wanting His Countenance, His Presence. This behavior is the sign of a believer no matter what his social status may be. Their reckoning is not on us and our reckoning is not on them. Therefore, a believer knows the answer to the Quranic question: *Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR LISTENING CRITICALLY ARE:

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying. Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

LESSON 89(12). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[2]

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:130-3:143

Madinah: *O those who believed! Consume not usury—that which is doubled and redoubled—and be God-conscious so that perhaps you will prosper.* (3:130)
And be God-conscious of the fire that was prepared for the ones who are ungrateful. (3:131)
And obey God and the Messenger so that perhaps you will find mercy. (3:132)
And compete with one another for forgiveness from your Lord and for a Garden whose depth is as the heavens and the earth that was prepared for the ones who are God-conscious, (3:133)
those who spend in gladness and tribulation and the ones who choke their rage and the ones who pardon humanity. And God loves the ones who are doers of good. (3:134)
And those who, when they committed an indecency or did wrong to themselves, they remembered God. Then, they asked for forgiveness for their impieties. And who forgives impieties but God? And persist not in what impiety they committed while they know. (3:135)
Those, their recompense is forgiveness from their Lord and Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever. And how bountiful is the compensation for the ones who work! (3:136)
Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (3:137)

This is a clear explanation for humanity, a guidance
and an admonishment for the ones who are God-conscious. (3:138)
And be not feeble nor feel remorse. And you will be among the
lofty, if you had been ones who believe. (3:139)
If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk
similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity
so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses
to Himself from among you—and God loves not
the ones who are unjust— (3:140)
and so that God may prove those who believed
and eliminate the ones who are ungrateful. (3:141)
Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows
not those who struggled among you
and knows the ones who remain steadfast? (3:142)
And, certainly, you had been coveting death
before you were to meet it.
Then, surely, you saw and look on it. (3:143)

COMMENTARY°

A REWARD WORTH COMPETING FOR

These signs make a definitive prohibition of all usury, warn the believers against the Fire which is prepared for the ungrateful and call on them to always fear God in the hope of being granted His mercy and of achieving prosperity. This is immediately followed with an order to hasten to the achievement of God's forgiveness and admission into paradise, which is described as being as vast as the heavens and the earth. We are told that this paradise has been prepared for the God fearing. **(3:133-3:134)**

The first quality given here of this class of people is that they spend in His way in time of plenty and in time of hardship. They are, then, a class of people which is totally different from those who gorge themselves on usury and multiply their money by no effort of their own. Their other qualities are also defined: **(3:133-3:135)**

The style adopted here describes the fulfilment of these duties in a physical movement representing a race towards a certain goal and for a set prize. The prize is forgiveness by God and admission to heaven. It is there to be won, and the believers are invited to make their race and vie with one another in order to win. The prize is set for those who remember God. These have certain qualities which are outlined in the next two signs: they spend their money at all times for the sole reason of earning God's pleasure. They are, then, consistent in their attitude. They follow the way which pleases God, unchanged either by prosperity or adversity. When money comes to

them in plenty, they are not preoccupied with luxurious living. When they suffer hardship and adversity, their sorrow does not become their major preoccupation. They are conscious of their duty at all times and in all situations. They are free from miserliness and greed. They watch God and fear Him. The human being loves money and he is always reluctant to part with his money. Nothing makes him spend his money voluntarily in all situations except a motive far stronger than that of possession and self-interest. That motive is the fear of God. It is a pleasant, profound feeling which works on man"s soul so that it becomes free, unfettered by greed and personal desire.

They restrain their anger, and forgive their fellow men. Remembering God also works in this respect, providing similar motives and leaving similar effects. Anger is a human reaction which is normally combined with or followed by a fit of temper. It is both natural and essential to the human being. However, it can only be overcome through that higher perception made possible by the positive effects of remembering God and the spiritual strength which a person achieves through looking up to horizons which are far superior and more sublime than a person's own needs and interests.

Restraining anger is only the first stage; it is not sufficient on its own. A person may restrain his anger but harbor a grudge. His outward fury becomes a deeply-seated, inward rancor. Needless to say, anger and fury are preferable to harboring grudges and rancor. The Quranic sign emphasizes that the God-conscious do not allow their anger to become a grudge. They forgive others and do not harbor any ill feelings. When anger is deliberately restrained it becomes a burden, a fire which burns internally sending its smoke over a person's conscience in order to blur his vision. Forgiveness, however, ensures a release from that burden. It gives peace of heart and conscience, as well as an easy movement in a more sublime world.

God loves the benevolent. Those who spend their money at times of prosperity and hardship are benevolent. Similarly, those who do not hesitate to forgive others after having been angered by them are also benevolent. The Quranic sign tells us that God loves all who are benevolent. Use of the term love here is significant. Its pleasant, friendly, bright and compassionate shades are in perfect harmony with the pleasant and honorable atmosphere of help and forgiveness.

THE HUMAN BEING: SAINT OR SINNER

Another quality of the God-conscious is highlighted here. **(3:135-3:136)** They are those who seek forgiveness whenever they slip into sin and make sure of not knowingly disobeying God's orders. How compassionate this religion is. Before He calls on people

to be compassionate to one another, God, limitless is He in His glory, shows them one aspect of His own compassion of which they themselves are the recipients, so that they may learn.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here contains three "say" verses, messages the Prophet is specifically told to relate regarding faith. What are the three? To worship other than God is to go astray; to follow the desires of another is to go astray; God has sent the Prophet with a clear sign by which He distinguishes truth from falsehood that the ungrateful deny. If the command that the ungrateful wish to hasten to come were to arrive, the command of God would already have been decided. "Say" verses are an important concept in the Quran as a means of Quranic commands—imperatives—to be followed. Knowing the Quran as the first source for information about the Prophet is essential. This will give us a "new view" into his life.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

Lesson 89(13). Critical Thinking Strategy Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:144-3:148

Madinah: *And Muhammad is only a Messenger.*
Surely, Messengers passed away before him.
Then, if he died or be slain, will you turn about on your heels?
And he who turns about on his heels will not injure God at all.
And God will give recompense
to the ones who are thankful. (3:144)
It had not been for any soul to die, but with the permission of God.
Prescribed is that which is appointed. And whoever wants
a reward for good deeds in the present, We will give him that.
And whoever wants a reward for good deeds in the world to come
We will give him that. And We will give recompense
to the ones who are thankful. (3:145)
And how many a Prophet whom, along with him, many thousands
fought, but none lost confidence with what lit on them in the way of
God, nor were they weakened nor were they to give in
And God loves the ones who remain steadfast. (3:146)
And their saying had been only that they said: Our Lord!
Forgive us our impieties and our excessiveness in our affairs.

And make our feet firm and help us against the folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (3:147)
So God gave them a reward for good deeds in the present and the goodness of reward for good deeds in the world to come. And God loves the ones who are doers of good. (3:148)

COMMENTARY°

MUHAMMAD: MAN, PROPHET AND MESSENGER

This sign **(3:144)** refers to a particular incident which took place during the Battle of Uhud. The Prophet had stationed a detachment of soldiers on top of the mountain behind the Muslim army. They were the rearguard, equipped with bows and arrows to repel any attack launched against the Muslim army from behind. When the battle appeared to be all over, most of them left their positions, against the express orders of the Prophet. A battalion of the enemy forces were thus able to go round the mountain and attack the Muslims from the rear. The Prophet himself was injured: his front teeth were broken, and his face was bleeding.

The situation became chaotic and the Muslim army was in disarray. At this moment, someone cried out: Muhammad is killed! Such a great shock was this to the Muslims, that many of them turned round to return to Madinah. They went up into the mountain, shattered, defeated, in despair. However, the Prophet himself, with a small group of his Companions, stood firm. He called to his Companions as they began to retreat. When they heard him, they began to rally. God helped them regain their moral strength and allowed them to be overtaken by a momentary slumber so as to give them strength, security and reassurance, as will be explained later.

This sequence of events is used in the Quran to drive home to the Muslims certain fundamental principles about life and death and the history of divine faith: **(3:144)** This is an elementary fact. How is it then that the Muslims show themselves to be oblivious of this fact when it stared them in the face during the battle?

The message is also greater than its advocates and lasts longer. Many of its advocates have come and gone, while it continues to serve as guidance to succeeding generations. Its followers maintain their link with God Almighty, its originator, Who has sent Messengers to convey it to humanity. He is Everlasting and believers address their prayers to Him. None of them may turn about on their heels or turn their back on God's guidance. This explains the stern warning implicit in this sign: **(3:144)**

The vivid description of turning back is here to be noted: Will

you turn about on your heels? The physical movement depicted here brings alive the meaning of abandoning faith as if we see it with our own eyes. The sign does not refer to the physical turning away as a result of defeat in battle. It is more concerned with the psychological turning about when a voice cried out that Muhammad was killed. Some Muslims felt that there was no point in continuing the fight against the idolaters, since the death of Muhammad signalled the end of this faith and the end of combat against idolatry. This psychological effect is delineated in terms of turning about on one's heels, which was a movement that actually took place during the battle.

DEATH AND REWARD

No one can die except by God's leave, at a term appointed. He who desires the reward of this world, We shall give him thereof and to him who desires the reward of the life to come, We shall give thereof. We shall reward those who are grateful to Us. **(3:145)**

Every human soul, then, lives up to its appointed time. No one dies before his time. Neither fear, nor the desire to live longer can postpone anyone"s appointed time. Courage and adventure, on the other hand, will not shorten one"s life. As this idea sinks into the minds of the believers they simply do not think of death as they go about fulfilling their responsibilities and carrying out their religious duties. This is the reason why people, throughout the ages, have seen that those who believe in God are not encumbered by their desire to prolong their time on earth or by their fear of what lies ahead. They simply rely on God as they carry out their duties with patience and reassurance.

Since everybody dies at his or her appointed time then everyone should think of the life to come and should work hard in order to achieve the greater happiness of that life: He who desires the reward of this world, We shall give him thereof and to him who desires the reward of the life to come, We shall give thereof **(3:145)**

LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE PROPHETS

Many a Prophet has fought with many devout men alongside him. They never lost heart on account of what they had to suffer in God's cause, and neither did they weaken nor succumb. God loves those who are patient in adversity. All that they said was this: Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and our excesses in our affairs. Make firm our steps, and give us victory over the ungrateful. God has granted them the reward of this life and the best reward of the life to come. God loves those who do their duty well. **(3:146-3:148)**

The example which the chapter gives here is a general one, which neither mentions any prophet by name nor specifies a particular nation or people. The outcome of this is that the Muslims feel themselves to belong to the advocates of true faith throughout history. They learn that the cause of faith is one which has been present throughout history and that they are only one battalion in a great army of the faithful: Many a Prophet has fought with many devout men alongside him. They never lost heart on account of what they had to suffer in God's cause, and neither did they weaken nor succumb. **(3:146)** There were many prophets who mobilized large groups of fighters who withstood all manner of hardship and suffering. They never yielded or gave up their fight. Such determination is characteristic of believers who know that they have to fight for their faith. God loves those who are patient in adversity. They persevere and show no weakness. Their determination remains strong. When these are described as being loved by God, the expression has its particular effect on the present generation of believers. It helps heal their wounds and it is accepted as ample and generous compensation It for every hardship.

The description so far shows only what is apparent of the attitude of those believers in situations of difficulty and trial. Now the chapter goes on to describe their inner feelings. It shows them as observing all standards of propriety when they address God. The testing times, the difficulties and the dangers do not make the believers oblivious of their need to turn to God. As they do, their first request is not victory, as would have been expected, but forgiveness for their errors and excesses. Prayer for increased strength and victory over the enemy comes second: All that they said was this: **(3:147)** They do not pray for any great bounty or reward. They have not implored God to give them the reward of either this life or the life to come. Their humility when they turn to God and address Him is too great to allow them to do this, and despite the fact that they are fighting for His cause. They pray only that He will grant them forgiveness of their sins, make firm their steps, and grant them victory over the ungrateful.

To these very people who have asked nothing for themselves, God has given everything, out of His grace. He has given them all that is desired and coveted by those who seek the riches of this world. He has also given them everything that those who prefer the reward of the life to come yearn for: God has granted them the reward of this life and the best reward of the life to come. (Verse 148) He further acknowledges that they have done well. Their good manners are combined with a very effective way of fulfilling their duty of jihad,

exerting every effort for the cause of God. He, therefore, declares that He loves them. His love is greater than all reward and superior to all bounty: God loves those who do their duty well. **(3:148)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What does the Quranic message say we should do with those who take their way of life (din, religion) as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded? *Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up to destruction for what it earned. Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor. And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (6:70)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.

Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.

Question the relevance of what we are studying.

Probe the evidence for and against what others say.

Question myself and others.

Lesson 89(14). Critical Thinking Strategy Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:149-3:155

Madinah: *O those who believed! If you obey*
those who were ungrateful, they will repel you back on your heels
and you will turn about
—ones who are losers. (3:149)
Nay! God is your Defender
and He is Best of the ones who help. (3:150)
We will cast into the hearts of those who were ungrateful, alarm,
because they ascribed partners with God.
And He sends not down for it authority.
And their place of shelter will be the fire.
And miserable will be the place of lodging
of the ones who are unjust. (3:151)
And, certainly, God was sincere to you in His promise when you blasted the enemy with His permission until you lost heart and you contended with one another about the command and you rebelled after He caused you to see what you longed for in the spoils of war. Among you are some who want the present and among you are some who want the world to come. Again, He turned you away from them that He test you and, certainly, He pardoned you.

And God is Possessor of Grace for the ones who believe. (3:152)
When you mount up, not attentive to anyone and the Messenger calls you from your rear, then, He repaid you, lament for lament, so that you neither feel remorse for what slipped away from you, nor for what lit on you. And God is Aware of what you do. (3:153)
Again, He caused to descend safety for you after lament. Sleepiness overcomes a section of you while a section caused themselves grief thinking of God without right, a thought out of the Age of Ignorance. They say: Have we any part in the command? Say: Truly, the command is entirely from God. They conceal within themselves what they show not to you.
They say: If there had been for us any part in the command, we would not be killed here.
Say: Even if you had been in your houses those would have departed—whom it was prescribed they be slain—for the Final Place of sleeping, so that God tests what is in your breasts and He proves what is in your hearts. And God is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (3:154)
Truly, those of you who turned away on a day two multitudes met one another, only Satan caused them to slip back for some of what they earned. And, certainly, God pardoned them. Truly God is Forgiving, Forbearing. (3:155)

COMMENTARY°

Another passage **(3:149-3:155)** within the context of the Quran's review of the Battle of Uhud and its events now begins. The comments it includes aim at correcting the concepts of the believers, enhancing their awareness of their situation, warning them of pitfalls which lie in their way and what the enemy may scheme against them. The defeat of the Muslims at Uhud provided the ungrateful, the hypocrites and the Jews in Madinah with a suitable climate to spread their hostile propaganda. Madinah was not yet a wholly Muslim city. The Muslims there were largely a foreign element, to which the spectacular victory at Badr imparted an awe-inspiring stature. When they were defeated at Uhud, attitudes were markedly changed. The enemies of Islam found in that defeat a chance to declare their hostility and spread their poisonous rumors. They were quick to exploit the tragedy which had affected every Muslim family and to try to create confusion in the minds of Muslims.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us here in an exchange of the believers to the ungrateful: *Say: Will we call to other than God what can neither hurt nor profit us? And are we to be repelled on our heels after God guided us like one whom the satans lured, bewildered in and on the earth although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying: Approach us? Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance. And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds* (6:71) *and to perform the formal prayer and be God-conscious of Him. And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.* (6:72)

Analyze this sign based on the Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialectical reasoning after studying these verses.
I understood that the guidance of God is The Guidance.

LESSON 89(15). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assignments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN)
SIGNS 3:156-3:171

Madinah: *O those who believed! Be not like those who were ungrateful and said about their brothers when they traveled through the earth or had been ones who are combatants: If they had been with us, neither would they have died, nor would they have been slain, so that God makes this a cause of regret in their hearts. And God gives life and causes to die. And God is Seeing of what you do.* (3:156)

And if you were slain in the way of God or died, certainly, forgiveness and mercy from God are better than what they gather in the present. (3:157)

And if you died or were slain, it is, certainly, to God you will be assembled. (3:158)

And it is by the mercy of God you were gentle with them. And if you had been hard, harsh of heart, they would have broken away from around you. So pardon them and ask for forgiveness for them. And take counsel with them in the affair. But when thou art resolved, then, put your trust in God. Truly, God loves the ones who put their trust in Him. (3:159)

If God helps you, then none will be one who is a victor over you. And if He withdraws His help from you, then, who is there who helps you after Him? And in God put their trust the ones who believe. (3:160)

It had not been for a Prophet that he defraud.
And whoever defrauds, what he defrauded will approach him
on the Day of Resurrection. Again, the account will be paid in full
of every soul for what he earned
and they will not be wronged. (3:161)
So, then, is he who followed the contentment of God like he who
drew the burden of the displeasure of God and whose place
of shelter will be hell?
And miserable will be the Homecoming! (3:162)
They have degrees with God.
And God is Seeing of what they do. (3:163)
Certainly, God showed grace to the ones who believe when he
raised up among them a Messenger from themselves who recounts
His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book
and wisdom. And, truly, before that they had been,
certainly, clearly wandering astray. (3:164)
And why, when an affliction lit on you, surely, you lit two times its
like on them. Say: Where is this from? Say: It is from yourselves.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (3:165)
And what lit on you on a day when the two multitudes met
one another was with the permission of God that He would know
the ones who believe (3:166)
and He would know those who were hypocrites.
It was said to them: Approach now! Fight in the way of God or
drive back. They said: If we would have known there would be
fighting, we would, certainly, have followed you.
They were nearer to disbelief on that day than to belief.
They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts.
And God is greater in knowledge of what they keep back. (3:167)
Those who said to their brothers while they sat back:
If they obeyed us, they would not have been slain.
Say: Then, drive off death from yourselves,
if you had been ones who are sincere. (3:168)
And assume not those who were slain in the way of God
to be lifeless. Nay! They are living with their Lord.
They are provided for, (3:169)
glad for what God gave them of His grace. And rejoice at the good
tidings for those who have not yet joined them from behind them.
There will be neither fear in them,
nor will they feel remorse. (3:170)
They rejoice at the good tidings of the divine blessing from God
and His grace and that God will not waste
the compensation of the ones who believe, (3:171)

COMMENTARY°

As for those of you who turned away on the day when the two hosts met in battle, Satan caused them to slip only in consequence of something that they themselves had done. But now God has pardoned them. Indeed, God is Much forgiving, Forbearing. Believers, be not like those who disbelieve and say of their brethren, when they travel on earth or go forth to war, Had they stayed with us they would not have died, nor would they have been killed, so that God places a source of despair in their hearts. It is God alone Who grants life and causes death. God sees all that you do. If you should be slain or die in God's cause, surely forgiveness by God and His grace are better than all the riches they amass. If you should die or be slain, it is to God that you shall be gathered. **(3:155-3:158)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

Lesson 89(16). Critical Thinking Strategy
Deep Questioning

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran)
Signs 3:172-3:180

Madinah: *those who responded to God and the Messenger after wounds lit on them. For those of them who did good among them and were God-conscious, there is a sublime compensation.* (3:172)

Those to whom humanity said: Truly, humanity has gathered against you, so dread them, but it increased them in belief and they said: God is enough for us.
And how excellent is He, The Trustee. (3:173)

So they turned about with divine blessing from God and grace and evil afflicts them not and they followed the contentment of God and God is Possessor of Sublime Grace. (3:174)

It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors.
So fear them not, but fear Me
if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

And let not those who compete with one another in ingratitude dishearten you. Truly, they will never injure God at all. God wants to assign no allotment for them in the world to come and for them is a tremendous punishment. (3:176)

Truly, those who bought ingratitude at the price of belief will never injure God at all.
And for them will be a painful punishment. (3:177)

And those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them.
We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin!
And for them is a despised punishment. (3:178)

God will not forsake the ones who believe to what you are in until He differentiates the bad from what is good.
And God will not inform about the unseen, but God elects from His Messengers whom He wills.
So believe in God and His Messengers.
And if you believe and are God-conscious, then,

for you there is a sublime compensation. (3:179)
And assume not those who are misers that what God gave them of His grace is better for them. Nay! It is worse for them. To be hung around their necks will be what they were misers with on the Day of Resurrection. And to God belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And God is Aware of what you do. (3:180)

COMMENTARY°

The fact that God's Messenger singled out those who had actually fought at Uhud for this new call is particularly significant. Perhaps the Prophet did not wish the feelings of defeat and misfortune to be the last that remained with the Muslims after the battle. He called on them to chase the pagans in order to drive home to them that all that had happened was merely a test and an experience which was not the end of the matter. They remained strong while their victorious enemies were weak. It was an experience which was certain to be followed by victory once they had shaken off their weakness and failure, and responded to the call issued to them by God and His messenger.

As a corollary, the Prophet may have decided that the pagans should not leave the battlefield overjoyed and boastful at their victory. He, therefore, followed the pagans so as to make it clear to them that they had not caused any permanent damage to the Muslims; there still remained enough of them to chase off the pagan army. Those objectives were fulfilled, according to historical reports.

The Prophet might have also wished to make clear to the Muslims and to all humanity the birth of a faith that meant everything to its adherents. They had absolutely no aim or objective in their lives other than to serve the cause of their faith. They lived for it and they looked to nothing beyond it. They spared nothing of themselves. They offered all as a sacrifice for their faith. This was a new phenomenon the like of which had never been seen before. It was necessary that all humanity realized this after the believers themselves had realized it. Nothing could reflect the birth of this faith better than the marching of those who responded to God's call after misfortune had befallen them. Their march was both spectacular and awesome. It clearly reflected the fact that they relied totally on God. They did not care for people"s scaremongering about the size of the pagan host as told by the messengers sent by Abu Sufyan, their chief.

Similarly, the hypocrites depicted the pagans as extremely mighty. Those believers, however, cared nothing for all this: Those who responded to the call of God and the Messenger after misfortune had befallen them: a great reward awaits those of them who contin-

ued to do good. When other people warned them: A big force has gathered against you, so fear them, that only strengthened their faith and they answered: (3:172-3:173) In this way, the Muslim community declared in the clearest of terms the birth of this faith. The wisdom behind the Prophet's plan is now clearly apparent to us.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message (6:95-6:100) calls for the deep questioning of our believes. What information are we given about the creation? Can it be interpreted as coming from any other than God? How many concepts of creation can you nae from these verses? Can one assume that God had the jinn as associates in this endeavor? What are the implications of such a belief when God created them?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 89(17). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS

HOW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:181-3:189

Madinah: *Certainly, God heard the saying of those who said:*
Truly, God is poor and we are rich. We will write down what they said and their killing of the Prophets without right.
And We will say:
Experience the punishment of the burning! (3:181)
That is for what your hands put forward

and that God is not unjust to His servants. (3:182)
Those who said: Truly, God made a compact with us that we
believe not in a Messenger until He approaches with a sacrifice to
be consumed by the fire. Say: Surely, Messengers brought about to
you before me the clear portents and even of what you spoke.
Then, why have you killed them
if you had been ones who are sincere? (3:183)
Then if they denied you, surely,
Messengers before you were denied who drew near
with the clear portents and the Psalms
and the illuminating Book. (3:184)
Every soul is one that experiences death. Your account will be paid
with full compensation on the Day of Resurrection.
Then, whoever was drawn away from the fire and was caused to
enter the Garden, surely, won a triumph.
And what is this present life
but the delusion of enjoyment? (3:185)
You will, certainly, be tried with your wealth and yourselves and
you will, certainly, hear much annoyance from those who were
given the Book before you and from those who ascribed partners
with God. And if you endure patiently and are God-conscious,)
then, truly, that is of the commands to constancy. (3:186)
And when God took a solemn promise from those who were given
the Book: You will make it manifest to humanity and keep it not
back. Yet they repudiated it behind their backs and exchange it for
a little price. And miserable will be what they buy! (3:187)
Assume not that those who are glad for what they brought and who
love to be praised for what they accomplish not, assume not, then,
that they will be kept safe from the punishment.)
And for them, a painful punishment. (3:188)
To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and of the earth.
And God is Powerful over everything. (3:189)

COMMENTARY°

This section of the chapter reviews some Jewish activities and claims that reflect an attitude of impertinence and disrespect, not only towards the Muslims, but towards God Almighty Himself. Not only did some of the Jews refuse to honor their financial commitments to the state, but had the impudence to say: God is poor, we are rich. **(3:181)**

The chapter draws their attention to values that are enduring and fundamental as well as to those that are ephemeral and short-lived. It stresses that life is finite and short; all beings eventually die and in

the Hereafter there are rewards, and there are gains and losses. We read: He who shall be drawn away from the Fire and brought into Paradise shall indeed have gained a triumph. The life of this world is nothing but an illusory enjoyment. **(3:185)** They are told that they will be tested regarding their lives and their wealth; they will meet with hostility and harassment from the ungrateful and the people of earlier revelations which they can only resist with perseverance, with fear of God, and in steadfast compliance of His order which will also save them from the fire.

These divine directives continue to be as valid and as relevant for Muslims today as in the future. They are addressed to every Muslim community intending to revive and uphold the Quranic message. God will open their eyes to the hurdles and difficulties awaiting them, as well as the suffering and sacrifices they have to endure. Ultimately, their hearts and minds should aspire to rewards God has in store for them; suffering, death, and tribulation are all quite bearable. God calls to Muslims everywhere, as He did with that first generation, that: Every soul shall taste death, and you shall be paid on the Day of Resurrection only that which you have earned. He who shall be drawn away from the Fire and brought into paradise shall indeed have gained a triumph. The life of this world is nothing but an illusory enjoyment. You shall most certainly be tried in your possessions and in your persons; and you shall hear much hurting abuse from those who were given revelations before you, and from those who set up partners with God. But if you persevere and continue to fear God—that is indeed a matter requiring strong resolve. **(3:185-3:189)**

Today, the Quran, as the book of this timeless Muslim community, remains its comprehensive constitution, its beacon and trusted guide, just as its enemies and its mission remain the same.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?

4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What is the clear evidence that has drawn near us from our Lord according to the Quranic signs here? Analyze verses 6:104-6:105 as to information, interpretation, concepts, assumptions and implications.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to:
Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

LESSON 89(18). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:190-3:200

Madinah: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition,* (3:190)
*those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! **You** had not created this in vain. Glory be to **You**! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191)
*Our Lord! Whomever **You** have caused to enter the fire, surely, **You** had covered him with shame and there will not be for the ones who are unjust any helpers.* (3:192)
*Our Lord! Truly, we heard one who calls out, cries out for belief: Believe in your Lord! So we believed. Our Lord! So forgive **You** our impieties and absolve us of our evil deeds and gather us to **You** with the pious.* (3:193)
*Our Lord! Give us what **You** had promised us through **Your** Messengers and cover us not with shame on the Day of Resurrection. Truly, **You** will not break **Your** solemn declaration.* (3:194)
And their Lord responded to them: I waste not the actions of ones who work among you from male or female. Each one of you is from the other. So those who emigrated and were driven out from their abodes and were maligned on My way and who fought and were slain, I will, certainly, absolve them of their evil deeds. And I will, certainly, cause them to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers

run, a reward for good deeds from God. And God, with Him is the goodness of rewards for good deeds. (3:195)
Let not the going to and fro delude you
of those who were ungrateful in the land (3:196)
—a little enjoyment—again, their place of shelter will be hell.
And it will be a miserable Final Place. (3:197)
But those who were God-conscious of their Lord, for them will be Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, a hospitality from God.
And what is with God is best for the pious. (3:198)
And, truly, among the People of the Book are those who believe in God and what was caused to descend to you and what was caused to descend to them, ones who are humble toward God.
They exchange not the signs of God for a little price.
Those, for them, their compensation is with their Lord.
And, truly, God is Swift in reckoning. (3:199)
O those who believed! Excel in patience and be steadfast.
And be God-conscious of God
so that perhaps you will prosper. (3:200)

COMMENTARY°

This is the closing passage of a chapter rich in subject matter and imagery. It defines and establishes the fundamentals of the Quranic outlook and, through the debate with the people of earlier revelations and later on with the hypocrites of Madinah and the Arab ungrateful, removes all the confusion and misinterpretation all those groups tried to create. It expounds the divine order of life, its human and financial obligations, and teaches the Muslims how to honor those obligations and how to deal with the hardships and ordeals encountered in so doing. It shows the Muslims how to dedicate themselves and their possessions to fulfilling those enormous obligations.

These concluding strains resonate perfectly with the theme and the style of the chapter as a whole in content as well as context and presentation. This section presents a most profound concept: that the entire physical world is an open book which in itself conveys the signs and evidence of faith. It points to the hand that runs it with care and prudence, and reveals that beyond this life there is another where accountability and reward will be decided. These signs, however, are only perceived and appreciated by people who understand; those who do not go through life with their eyes and minds closed to the overwhelming marvels of this open book.

This represents one of the most fundamental concepts of the Quranic outlook on the physical world, and the very close and har-

monic relationship that exists between it and the human being's basic and pristine nature. This concept asserts that the physical world, in itself, is living and tangible proof of the existence of its Creator, on the one hand, as well as a manifestation of the system that underpins its existence, and the purpose, the principle and the meaning that define that existence, on the other. This concept is of the utmost importance in defining the human being's attitude towards the physical world and its Lord, God Almighty, and is, therefore, a central pillar of the Quranic outlook on all existence.

The closing sign encapsulates God's advice to the Muslims and represents what is required of them, and the obligations whose fulfilment will guarantee them success and accomplishment. Believers, be patient in adversity, and let your patience never be exhausted, be ever ready and fear God so that you may prosper. **(3:200)** It is an ending that fits beautifully with the central theme of the chapter and all the other subjects it deals with.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Write a paragraph in answer to these questions: What are signs 6:118-6:120 referring to? What is their purpose? What questions does it cause you to think about? What information does it give? What are the assumptions? How to you interpret it? What are the implications if someone does not follow what it says?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to:

Evaluate Reasoning by:•
Use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words
Develop criteria for evaluation
Recognize and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts

Lesson 90(1). Critical Thinking Strategy Developing Criteria for Evaluations: Clarifying Values and Standards

How is developing criteria for evaluation by clarifying values and standards used in the Quran?

Criteria Include

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

QURANIC CHAPTER 33: THE CONFEDERATES (AL-AHZAB) SIGNS 33:1-33:8

Madinah: *O Prophet! Be God-conscious*
and obey not the ones who are ungrateful
and the ones who are hypocrites.
Truly, God had been Knowing, Wise. (33:1)
And follow what is revealed to you from your Lord.
Truly, God is Aware of what you had been doing. (33:2)

And put thy trust in God. And God sufficed as a Trustee. (33:3)
And God made not two hearts for any man in his interior. Nor made He your spouses those whom you divorced saying: Be as the back of my mother! Nor made He your adopted sons, your sons. That is but a saying of your mouths.
And God says The Truth and He guides to the way. (33:4)
Call to them by the names of their fathers. That is more equitable with God.
But if you know not their fathers, they are your brothers in the way of life and your defenders. And there is no blame on you in what mistake you made in it, but what your hearts premeditated.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (33:5)
The Prophet is closer to the ones who believe than their own souls. And his spouses are their mothers and those imbued through the wombs, blood relations, some of them are closer to some other in what is prescribed by God than the other ones who believe and ones who emigrate, but accomplish what you may for your protectors as ones who are honorable— that which had been inscribed in the Book. (33:6)
Mention when We took a solemn promise from the Prophets and from you and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus son of Mary. We took an earnest solemn promise from them (33:7)
so that He ask the ones who are sincere about their sincerity. He prepared for the ones who are ungrateful a painful punishment. (33:8)

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter depicts a period of time when the Quranic character of both the community and the state had begun to take shape but had not yet developed sufficiently or acquired its full authority. That took place after Makkah fell to Muslims and people began to embrace the new faith in large numbers allowing the state and its new system to establish their roots.

The Chapter undertakes an important part of social reorganization imparting the distinctive Quranic features of family and community life, outlining their basis in Quranic teachings. It also modifies or outlaws certain practices and traditions, bringing all these within the framework of the Islamic concept of life and society.

It is within the overall discussion of these situations and regulations that the confrontation with the confederate tribes and the Qurayzah expedition are discussed. We are informed of the attitudes of the ungrateful, the hypocrites and the Jews during these events, their schemes to weaken the community and how they always tried

to undermine Quranic moral standards, even in homes. It was precisely this sort of derogatory behavior that aimed at undermining the community either through direct military action and a corresponding defeatism or through efforts to erode the social and moral fabric of the emerging society. Moreover, these events left clear marks on the community to the extent that certain social aspects and particular concepts required modification. Thus the Chapter appears to be an integrated unit with a common thread running through its subject matter. Moreover, the time frame around which it works also constitutes a unifying factor.

The Chapter begins with a directive issued to the Prophet that he must fear God and pay no heed to the ungrateful and the hypocrites. On the contrary, he should obey God and rely on Him alone. This opening relates all that the Chapter includes to the central principle that forms the basis of all Quranic teachings, legislation, its social system and morality. It is the principle that formulates the Quranic message of God and the requirements to submit to Him, implement the code He has outlined and place all our trust in Him.

A decisive word is then given on certain social traditions and practices. This starts with outlining a basic fact: **(33:4)** This alludes to the fact that the human being cannot live in two different universes or follow two different systems. Should he do so he would stumble and become a hypocrite. Since he has only one heart, he must look up to One God and follow one system to the exclusion of all other things, familiar and well established as these may be.

The Chapter immediately moves on to abolish the practice of *zihar*, which involves a man swearing to his wife that she is to him like his mother's back, meaning that she is as unlawful to him to marry as his mother: **(33:4)** It makes clear that these are mere words that cannot establish a fact. They do not make a mother out of a wife; the wife remains the man's wife.

It follows this with abolishing the practice of child adoption: **(33:4)** Thus inheritance within an adopting family is no longer valid. In contrast, the Chapter establishes the overall authority God assigns to His Messenger over all Muslims, placing his authority above what they may wish for themselves. It further establishes a sense of motherly relation between the Prophet's wives and all believers: **(33:6)** The practical effects of the bond of brotherhood established between Muslim individuals shortly after the migration of Makkan Muslims to Madinah are terminated, so as to restrict inheritance and the payment of blood money to real kinsfolk: **(33:6)** Thus, earlier temporary measures are abrogated in favor of natural and permanent ones.

The following comment makes clear that the new system derives

from the Quranic code and from God's ruling. It is written in God's book and established in the covenant made with all prophets, particularly those of them endowed with stronger resolve. In this way the Quran gives legislation and principles their appropriate place within people's thoughts and consciences.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 33:6 based on the criterion of closeness to the Prophet.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to develop and clarify criteria for evaluating writing.
Continually evaluate written material and discuss its criteria.
Specific points should be explained in terms of the nine standards that you support (such as clarity)

Lesson 90(2). Critical Thinking Strategy
Analyzing or Evaluating Actions

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab)
Signs 33:9-33:20

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Remember the divine blessing of God to you
when armies drew near you
and We sent the winds against them and armies you see not.
And God had been Seeing of what you do. (33:9)
When they drew near you from above you and from below you
and when the sight swerved and the hearts reached the throats
and you think thoughts about God, (33:10)
there the ones who believe were tested and were convulsed
with a severe convulsing. (33:11)
And when the ones who are hypocrites say,
as well as those who in their hearts is a sickness:
What God and His Messenger promised
is nothing but delusion. (33:12)
And when a section of them said: O people of Yathrib!
There is no habitation for you, so return.
A group of people among them
ask permission of the Prophet saying:
Truly, Our houses are exposed.
But they were not exposed. They want only to run away. (33:13)
And if entry was forced against them from all areas and, again,
they were asked to dissent, they would have given into it
and they would not have but briefly hesitated (33:14)
although, certainly, they made a contract with God before that they
would not turn their backs to the enemy. And about their compact
with God that had been, they are ones who will be asked. (33:15)
Say: Running away will never profit you
that you ran away from death or killing, then,
you will be given enjoyment but for a little. (33:16)
Say: Who will save you from harm from God if He wanted evil
for you or wanted mercy for you?
And they will not find for themselves
other than God a protector or a helper. (33:17)
Surely, God knows the ones of you who hold off and the ones who
converse with their brothers saying to us:
Come on! And they approach not the battle themselves

but a little, (33:18)
being covetous of you. Then, when fear drew near, you will see them looking on you, their eyes rolling like he who is overcome by death. But when their fear went, they abused you with sharp tongues in their covetousness for good things. Those believe not and God caused their actions to fail.
And that had been easy for God. (33:19)
They assume the confederates go not, withdrawing. And if the confederates approach you, returning, they would wish they were nomads among the ones who are desert dwellers, asking tidings about you.
And if they had been among you, they would fight but a little. (33:20)

COMMENTARY°

The second part shows God's great favor as He repelled the attacking forces of the confederates who besieged Madinah. It describes the confrontation with confederate forces and the Qurayzah Expedition vividly, painting successive images that show inner feelings, outward action and dialogue between groups and individuals. Within the overall picture of the battle and its events relevant directives are issued at the proper junctures. Furthermore, the reporting of events is followed by comments aimed at establishing sound values for the Muslim community. The Quranic method is to paint the action exactly as it took place, stating both apparent and inner feelings, and bringing these into sharp relief. It then gives believers its verdict about their actions, criticizing any deviation and praising what is sound and correct. It also gives directives to avoid error and confirm right practice and values. It relates all this to God's will, human nature and universal laws. Thus, the discussion of the confrontation and the battle starts with the following sign: **(33:9)** In the middle of the discussion, the following facts are highlighted: **(33:16-33:17)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Who are the hypocrites? Analyze the signs in this section based on the above criteria for Quranic Critical Thinking.

Answer the following questions.

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above signs?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

Lesson 90(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Distinguishing Relevant from Irrelevant Information

Developing Sensitivity to Relevance

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab) Signs 33:21-33:27

Madinah: *Surely, in the Messenger of God there is for you a fairer,*
good example for those whose hope had been in God
and the Last Day and remembered God frequently. (33:21)
When the ones who believe saw the confederates, they said:
This is what God and His Messenger promised us
and God and His Messenger were sincere.
And it increased them not but in belief
and to resign themselves to submission to God. (33:22)
Among the ones who believe are men who were sincere
in the contracts they made with God.
Of them are some who satisfied by fulfilling their vow with death
and of them are some who wait awhile.
And they substituted not any substitution (33:23)
so that God gives recompense to the ones who are sincere for their

sincerity and punish the ones who are hypocrites had He willed or
He turns to them in forgiveness.
Truly, God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (33:24)
God repelled those who were ungrateful in their rage
without their attaining any good.
And God spared the ones who believe in fighting.
And God had been Strong, Almighty. (33:25)
And He caused to descend those who were behind
among the People of the Book from their strongholds
and He hurled alarm into their hearts so that you kill a group of
people and make captives of another group of people. (33:26)
And He gave you their region as an inheritance and their abodes
and their wealth and a region you tread not.
And God had been Powerful over everything! (33:27)

COMMENTARY°

Alongside its discussion of events the Chapter shows how the true believers looked at the situation as it developed and portrays the contrasting feelings of the hypocrites. This enables us to distinguish sound values from false ones: **(33:22)** The outcome is then given in decisive terms: **(33:25)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 33:32 based on the above Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand distinguishing between something that is relevant to a conversation and something that is not..

I am practicing staying focussed in conversations I have with people.

LESSON 90(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QURANIC CHAPTER 33: THE CONFEDERATES (AL-AHZAB) SIGNS 33:28-33:33

Madinah: *O Prophet! Say to thy spouses: If you had been wanting this present life and its adornment, then, approach now. I will give you enjoyment and set you (f) free, releasing gracefully.* (33:28)

And if you had been wanting God and His Messenger, and the Last Abode, then truly God prepared for the ones who are doers of good among you a sublime compensation. (33:29)

O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you (f) approaches a manifest indecency, her punishment will be multiplied for her twofold. And that would have been easy for God. (33:30)

And whoever of you (f) is morally obligated to God and His Messenger and do as ones (f) in accord with morality, We will give her her compensation two times over. We made ready a generous provision for her. (33:31)

O wives of the Prophet! There is not among the wives any like you. If you (f) were God-conscious, then, be not soft in your saying so that he become desirous he in whose heart is a sickness, but say (f) a saying of one who is honorable. (33:32)

And settle down (f) in your (f) houses and flaunt (f) not your (f) finery as those who flaunted their finery in the previous Age of Ignorance. And perform (f) the formal prayer and give (f) the purifying alms and obey (f) God and His Messenger. God only wants to cause disgrace to be put away from you—People of the House—and purify you with a purification. (33:33)

COMMENTARY°

When this second part is concluded we are introduced to the decision that gave the Prophet's wives a choice. They had asked him for a more comfortable standard of living after the Muslim community became more prosperous, having gained much booty as a result of the siege of Qurayzah. They were asked to choose either the fine things of life or relinquish these in preference for pleasing God and His Messenger and earning a better position in the life to come. They

all chose to be with God and His Messenger, preferring this to all worldly riches. They were also told that they would have double the reward if they maintained the path of goodness and remained God-fearing, and double the punishment should they commit any gross indecency. The Chapter explains that this doubling of reward and punishment was a result of their noble status, their relation with the Prophet and the revelation and recitation of the Quran in their own homes, as well as the wisdom they received from the Prophet.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 33:28-33:29 based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

I was able to evaluate the Quranic signs in this Lesson in regard to the wives of the Prophet..

LESSON 90(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

QURANIC CHAPTER 33: THE CONFEDERATES (AL-AHZAB)
SIGNS 33:34-33:40

Madinah: *And remember (f) what is recounted in your (f) houses of the signs of God and wisdom. Truly, God had been Subtle, Aware.* (33:34)

Truly, the males, ones who submit to God and the females, ones who submit to God and the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe and the males, ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who are morally obligated and the males, ones who are sincere and the females, ones who are sincere and the males, ones who remain steadfast and the females, ones who remain steadfast and the males, ones who are humble and the females, ones who are humble and the males, ones who are charitable and the females, ones who are charitable and the males, ones who fast and the females, ones who fast and the males, ones who guard their private parts and the females, ones who guard and the males, ones who are remember God frequently and the females, ones who remember, God prepared for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation. (33:35)

It had not been for a male, one who believes and a female, one who believes, when God and His Messenger decreed an affair that there be any choice for them in their affair. And whoever rebels against God and His Messenger, certainly, he went astray, clearly wandering astray. (33:36)

And mention when you have said to him to whom God was gracious and to whom you were gracious: Hold back your spouse to yourself and be God-conscious. But you have concealed in yourself what God is One Who Shows and you have dreaded humanity whereas God has a better right that you have dreaded Him. So when Zayd satisfied the necessary formality, We gave her to you in marriage so that there be no fault for ones who believe in respect of the spouses of their adopted sons when they (m) satisfied the necessary formality. And the command of God had been one that is accomplished. (33:37)

There had been no fault with the Prophet in what is undertaken by him as a duty from God. This is a custom of God with those who passed away before. And the command of God had been a measured measure (33:38)

for those who state the messages of God and dread Him and dread none but God, and God sufficed as a Reckoner. (33:39)

Muhammad had not been the father of any men from among you,

but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets.
And God had been Knowing of everything. (33:40)

COMMENTARY°

The fourth part makes an indirect reference to the case of Zaynab bint Jahsh, a cousin of the Prophet belonging to a noble Qurayshi family and her marriage to Zayd ibn Harithah, a former slave given as a gift to Muhammad long before his prophethood. The first thing it says about Zayd makes it clear that all believers, men and women, are subject to God's decision in any matter; they do not even have a say in their own personal business. It is God's will that determines everything, and they have to submit to it fully: **(33:36)**

This marriage soon ends in divorce and the situation provides a practical example for the abolition of the effects of child adoption. God's Messenger himself is chosen to provide this example, because adoption was a deeply rooted tradition in the Arabian environment, and its practical effects were very difficult to break. Hence, God's Messenger was to bear this new burden as part of his mission to shape the new Muslim society: **(33:40)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze as many of the statements that can be interpreted as if ... then statements in the section in order to practice implications or conclusions. Add your personal experiences where possible.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

Lesson 90(6). Critical Thinking Strategy Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations

What is an argument?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab) Signs 33:41-33:52

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Remember God with a frequent remembrance (33:41)
and glorify Him at early morning dawn and eventide. (33:42)
He it is Who gives blessings to you and His angels
that He bring you out of the shadows into the light.
And He had been Compassionate to ones who believe. (33:43
Their greetings on the Day they will meet Him will be: Peace!
And He prepared for them a generous compensation. (33:44)
O Prophet! Truly, We sent you as one who bears witness
and as one who gives good tidings and as a warner (33:45)
and as one who calls to God with His permission
and as a light-giving illuminating lamp. (33:46)
And give good tidings to the ones who believe
that for them is a great grace from God. (33:47)
And obey not the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are

*hypocrites and heed not their annoyance and put **your** trust in God. And God sufficed as a Trustee.* (33:48)

O those who believed! If you married the females, ones who believe, and, again, divorced them before you touch them (f), then, there is no waiting period to reckon against; so make provision for them (f), and set them (f) free, releasing gracefully. (33:49)

*O Prophet! Truly, We have permitted to **you** your spouses (f), those whom **you** had given their (f) compensation and whom **your** right hand possessed from that God gave **you** as spoils of war and the daughters of your paternal uncles and the daughters of your paternal aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and the daughters of your maternal aunts those who emigrated with **you** and a woman, one who believes, if she bestowed herself on the Prophet. And if the Prophet wanted to take her in marriage—that is exclusively for **you**—not for the other ones who believe. Surely, We know what We imposed on them about their spouses and whom their right hands possessed (f) that there be no fault on **you**. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:50)

*You will put off whom **you** will of them (f) and **you** will give refuge to whom **you** will. And whomever **you** will be looking for of whom **you** had set aside, there is no blame on **you** to receive her again. That is likelier that will be refreshed their (f) eyes and they (f) not feel remorse and may they (f) be well-pleased with what **you** had given them (f), all of them (f). And God knows what is in your hearts. And God had been Knowing, Forbearing.* (33:51)

*Women are not lawful for **you** in marriage after this, nor that **you** were taking them (f) in exchange for other spouses, even though their (f) goodness impressed **you**, but whom **your** right hand possessed (f). And God had been watching over everything.* (33:52)

COMMENTARY°

The fifth part begins by making a statement on the status of a woman who gets divorced before the consummation of her marriage. It moves on to organize the Prophet's marital life, stating which women are lawful for him to marry and which are not. This is followed by directives defining the relation between Muslims and the Prophet's homes and wives, both during his lifetime and after his death. It requires them not to mix with any men other than their fathers, sons, brothers, paternal and maternal nephews, other women and their POW/slaves. It states that those who sought to disparage the Prophet and his wives would face severe punishment; they would

be punished both in this life and the life to come. This gives us an impression that the hypocrites and others frequently resort to such disparagement.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What is the conclusion to the arguments in these verses? What are its relative strengths? Are there any weaknesses? Are there any arguments you disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

Lesson 90(7). Critical Thinking Strategy Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations

The Middle Community Islamic Moderation:[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of the Quranic message that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of the Quranic message, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of the Quranic message together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the *umma* throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles have set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*umma*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab)

Signs 33:53-33:58

Madinah: *O those who believed! Enter not the houses of the Prophet for food unless permission be given to you without being ones who look for the proper time. And when you were called to enter, when you have eaten your meal, then, disperse, and be not one who lingers for conversation. Truly, such had been to harass the Prophet*

and he is ashamed to ask you to leave.
But God is not ashamed before The Truth.
And when you asked his wives for sustenance, then, ask them (f)
from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their (f)
hearts. And it had not been for you to harass the Messenger of God
nor marry you his spouses after him ever.
Truly, that would have been serious with God. (33:53)
Whether you show anything or conceal it,
truly, God had been Knowing of everything. (33:54)
There is no blame on them (f) to converse freely with their (f)
fathers nor their (f) sons nor their (f) brothers, nor the sons of their
(f) brothers nor the sons of their (f) sisters, nor their (f) women,
nor what their (f) right hands possessed. And be God-conscious.
Truly, God had been Witness over everything. (33:55)
Truly, God and His angels give blessings to the Prophet.
O those who believed! Give your blessings to him
and blessings of peace and invoke peace for him. (33:56)
Truly, those who malign God and His Messenger, God cursed them
in the present and in the world to come and prepared for them
a despised punishment. (33:57)
And those who malign the males, ones who believe
and the females, ones who believe without their deserving it,
surely, they lay a burden on themselves of false charges to harm
another's reputation and a clear sin. (33:58)

COMMENTARY°

The fifth part begins by making a statement on the status of a woman who gets divorced before the consummation of her marriage. It moves on to organize the Prophet's marital life, stating which women are lawful for him to marry and which are not. This is followed by directives defining the relation between Muslims and the Prophet's homes and wives, both during his lifetime and after his death. It requires them not to mix with any men other than their fathers, sons, brothers, paternal and maternal nephews, other women and their POW/slaves. It states that those who sought to disparage the Prophet and his wives would face severe punishment; they would be punished both in this life and the life to come. This gives us an impression that the hypocrites and others frequently resort to such disparagement.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life

Lesson 90(8). Critical Thinking Strategy
Recognizing Contradictions

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like-cases in a like-manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

The most conclusive arguments in the Quranic tradition to prove or disprove something is to use the Quran to prove another point in the Quran. Using this method, we get to the heart of the main reason why the word "beat" causes a man-made contradiction in the Quran.

We begin with two premises: The Quran encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The Prophet said: Marriage is half of faith. He also said: Divorce is deplorable.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The students can discuss their views on the two different versions and if they interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which

God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran)*

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be God-conscious and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

For the Muslim, the Prophet is the living Quran; that is, he practiced exactly whatever God revealed in the Quran. If it was a command to good such as fasting, daily formal prayer, pilgrimage, purifying alms, charity, he performed these commands. If it was to prevent a wrong like drinking alcohol, gambling or eating pork, he refrained from these things. As the living Quran, the life, behavior and sayings of the Prophet serve as a model for all Muslims.

In regard to 4:34 and the use of *daraba* in the imperative form allowing husbands to "strike, beat, hit, chastise or spank" a *nushuz* wife, in all of the canonical works there is no reference to Prophet Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him, having ever beaten women.

We read in 2:231: *When you divorce wives, and they (f) are about to reach their (f) term, then hold them (f) back honorably or set them (f) free honorably; but hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression.* (2:231)

In other words, the Quran is telling husbands not to harm their wives whom they want to set free, not to hold them back by injuring them. The word "injuring" (*dirar*) also means hurt, harm, use force or commit aggression.

We see a contradiction between 4:34 and 2:231. Jurists have created a contradiction that is not in the Quran by encouraging divorce and discouraging

marriage so that we can conclude, a Muslim woman who is to be divorced must be set free without injuring, hurting, or using force against her, but a Muslim woman who wants to remain married does do under the threat of being beaten!

Does this make sense? 4:34 as presently interpreted contradicts 2:231. How can we eliminate this contradiction? There is a very simple solution: Revert the interpretation back to how the Prophet understood it through his behavior. so that *daraba* here is understood to mean "go away."

Another example from the Quran as to why the word daraba in 4:34 creates a man-made contradiction. 24:6-24:9 states: *And those who accuse their wives—and there are no witnesses but themselves—let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies sworn to God that he is among ones who are sincere and a fifth that the curse of God be on him if he has been the one who lies. And it will drive off the punishment from her if she bears witness with four testimonies sworn to God that he is the one who lies, and the fifth, that the anger of God be on her if he has been among the ones who are sincere.*

The oaths of the wife prevail and punishment is averted from her. Therefore, she is not to be "beaten" by her husband. She is allowed to defend herself against any accusation he may have against her.

Thus a contradiction is created that is not in the Quran itself by interpreting *daraba* interpreted to mean "beat" instead of "go away" or "leave." The reality is that a wife who is to be divorced cannot be harmed. This protects a wife who wants to be set free. This is a right she is given in the Quran—not to be injured! When *daraba* is interpreted as beat, this reality becomes a myth.

It is a reality that 24:6-24:9 allows a wife who is accused by her husband without any witnesses other than himself to defend herself against the accusation and God and humanity accepts her defense, but because of a man-made contradiction of 4:34 and not following the behavior of the Prophet, the best model for humanity.

As critical thinkers, we immediately see a contradiction, not in the source itself, but in the way some husbands unjustly make themselves both judge and jury thereby allowing themselves to misinterpret God's Word.

QURANIC CHAPTER 33: THE CONFEDERATES (AL-AHZAB) SIGNS 33:59-33:68

Madinah: *O Prophet! Say to thy spouses (f) and your daughters and the females, ones who believe to draw closer their (f) outer garments over themselves (f). That is more fitting so that they (f) be recognized and not be maligned. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:59)
If the ones who are hypocrites refrain not themselves and those who in their hearts is a sickness and the ones who make a

commotion in the city, We will stir you up against them. Again, they will not be thy neighbors in it, but a little while. (33:60)
They are ones who are cursed. Whenever they were come upon, they were taken and were killed with a terrible slaying. (33:61)
This is a custom of God with those who passed away before. And you will never find in a custom of God any substitution. (33:62)
Humanity asks you about the Hour.
Say: The knowledge of it is only with God.
And what will cause you to recognize that perhaps the Hour be near? (33:63)
Truly, God cursed the ones who are ungrateful
and prepared a blaze for them, (33:64)
ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally. They shall not find a protector nor a helper. (33:65)
On a Day when will be turned upside down, their faces in the fire, they will say: O would that we obeyed God
and obeyed the Messenger! (33:66)
And they will say: Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way. (33:67)
Our Lord! Give them double the punishment
and curse them with a great cursing! (33:68)

COMMENTARY°

Then follows a directive to the Prophet's wives, daughters and all Muslim women, to draw some of their outer garments over their bodies. (**33:59**) It warns the hypocrites and others similar to them that they may be made to evacuate Madinah in a similar way as the two Jewish tribes of Qaynuqa and al-Nadir were made to do, or that they might be dealt with in the same way as the Qurayzah Jews. All this implies that these people resorted to foul methods to harm the Muslim community in Madinah.

The final part of the Chapter mentions that people frequently ask about the Last Hour. Such questions are answered simply by saying that its knowledge belongs to God. They only need to know that it could be very close. This is followed by an image of the punishment meted out on the Day of Judgement. (**33:66**) It also describes how unbelievers then feel towards their leaders for having led them astray: (**33:67-33:68**)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

When arguing opposing views, students should be encouraged to find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

What do the different translations of 4:34 and 2:231 say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other when darab is interpreted as "beat," spank," or any other similar synonym?
What does each sign (4:34 and 2:231) say?
Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agree?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

Lesson 90(9). Critical Thinking Strategy
Noting Significant Differences and Similarities

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases. They hesitate before they accept this or that analogy or comparison between 4:34 and 2:231 as the previous lesson showed. They recognize the purposes of the comparisons they make. They recognize that purposes govern noting significant similarities and differences.

Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab)
Signs 33:69-33:73

Madinah: *O those who believed! Be not like those who maligned*
Moses. God declared him innocent of what they said.
And he had been well-esteemed with God. (33:69)
O those who believed! Be God-conscious
and say an appropriate saying. (33:70)
He will make your actions right for you
and forgive you your impieties.
And whoever obeys God and His Messenger
surely, won a triumph, a sublime triumph! (33:71)
Truly, We presented the trust to the heavens and the earth
and the mountains, but they refused to carry it
and were apprehensive of it. But the human being carried it.
Truly, he had been wrongdoing, very ignorant. (33:72)
God punishes the males, ones who are hypocrites and the females,
ones who are hypocrites and the males,
ones who are idol worshippers
and the females, ones who are idol worshippers
and God will turn to forgiveness toward the males,
ones who believe and the females, ones who believe.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (33:73)

Commentary°

The Chapter ends on a highly powerful note that leaves a strong and lasting effect: (33:72-33:73) This conclusion illustrates the heavy

burden placed on humanity in general and the Muslim community in particular, since it is this community that shoulders this great trust of faith as well as its advocacy and implementation at individual and community levels. This is in perfect harmony with the particular atmosphere of the Chapter, and with the nature of the social system Islam lays down.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Thinking Works

What similarities and differences do the Quranic verses point out between the practice of the early Quraysh and the Quranic message?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.

Lesson 91(1). Critical Thinking Strategy Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Vocabulary

What is a concept?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

Quranic Chapter 60: She Who is Put to a Test (al-Mumtahanah)

Signs 60:1-60:6

Madinah: *O those who believed! Take not My enemies to yourselves and your enemies as protectors, giving a proposal of affection towards them while they were ungrateful for what drew near you of The Truth. They drive out the Messenger and you because you believe in God, your Lord. If you had been going forth struggling in My way and looking for My goodwill, you keep secret affection for them. Yet I am greater in knowledge of what you concealed and what you spoke openly. And whoever accomplishes that among you, surely, he went astray from the right path.* (60:1)

If they come upon you, they will be enemies against you. They extend their hands against you and their tongues with evil. And they wished that you be ungrateful. (60:2)

Your blood relations will never profit you nor your children. On the Day of Resurrection, He will distinguish among you. And God is Seeing of what you do. (60:3)

Madinah: Book 25: Abraham (60:4)

Madinah: Book 25: Abraham (60:5)

Madinah: Book 25: Abraham (60:6)

Commentary°

The Chapter begins with this friendly and inspiring address, calling on believers. **(60:1-60:2)** It is an address by their Lord in whom they believe, who calls on them in the name of faith that establishes

their bond with Him, to carefully consider their position. He also warns them against their enemies' schemes and reminds them of the task they have been assigned. In a kindly and friendly way, God makes their enemies His enemies. Thus, He makes the believers feel that they belong to Him. Whoever is hostile to them is actually hostile to Him. They are the people who bear His insignia on earth and the ones He loves. Therefore, it is inconceivable that they should show affection to those who are His and their enemies.

God reminds them of the crimes, aggression and injustice committed by those people against them, their faith and His Messenger: Having committed all such injustices, what basis could there be for friendship and affection? They rejected the truth and drove the Prophet and his followers out of their homes for no other reason than that they believed in God. He reminds the believers of all this, stating in effect that it was for their faith that the ungrateful fought them, not for any other reason. The real issue of contention, i.e. faith, is brought to the fore. They were driven out of their homes for no reason other than faith.

Having thus stated the true issue of conflict, the Chapter reminds the believers that there is no room for intimacy between them and the ungrateful, if they have truly left their homes for God's sake, and in quest of His pleasure. It is not possible for someone to migrate seeking God's pleasure and His cause to combine this with friendship with those who drove him out because of it. Such people are the enemies of God and His Messenger.

The Chapter then adds an implicit warning against what they conceal in their hearts of friendly feelings towards their enemies, God's enemies. He is fully aware of what hearts may secretly harbor and what they leave in the open. This is followed by a fearsome warning that strikes fear in believers' hearts. A believer fears nothing worse than going astray after he has known and followed guidance.

The threat and the warning come right in the middle of an explanation of the true character and evil intentions of the ungrateful. Further explanation follows: **(60:2)** Whenever they have the chance to take advantage of the Quranic message, they will act as open enemies, causing them whatever harm they can, verbal and physical, using every means available.

What is even worse is that they wish the believers to become ungrateful as well. To a believer, this is worse than any verbal or physical harm that can be done to him. To wish him to lose his most valuable treasure of faith and revert to ingratitude is to be his worst enemy. A person who has tasted the sweetness of faith after being ungrateful, who has seen its light after the darkness of ingratitude,

and who has experienced the reassurance and happiness generated by holding the concepts and feelings of a believer will hate to revert to ingratitude, just as much as he would hate being thrown into a fire. It is only an enemy of God who wishes to see him return to the hell of unbelief after he has experienced the happiness of living in the heaven of faith. How could he tolerate the emptiness of ingratitude after he has enjoyed life in the active world of being grateful?

The second round makes only one comment about the strong bond of blood relations, a tie that is deeply rooted in people's hearts. It is a bond that often forces its presence in the form of warm friendliness: **(60:3)** A believer works for the life to come, on which he focuses his hopes. Whatever he does in this life is merely the planting of the seeds. The harvest he awaits is in the life to come. This sign touches his heart with what happens there when all ties of blood are severed, and if the bond of faith is non-existent. This should make it easier for him to abandon such ties in the short life of this world, preferring the permanent bond that remains strong in both this life and the life to come. All these ties will be of no benefit to you. You will be separated from them, because the tie that binds people together is already severed. Belief is the only tie that counts in God's sight. God sees all that you do. **(60:3)** He is aware of the action itself and the intention behind it.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

CONCEPT MAPPING:

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be ef-

fective either in a group or by yourself:

PRE-QUESTIONS:
Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:
DEFINITION:
What is....?
Where does ... fit?
What group does ... belong to?

CHARACTERISTICS:
How would I describe...?
What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

EXAMPLES
What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

EXPERIENCE
What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

LESSON 91(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[3]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 60: SHE WHO IS PUT TO A TEST
SIGNS 60:7-60:13

Madinah: *Perhaps God will assign between you and between*
those to whom you were at enmity with them, affection.
And God is Powerful.
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (60:7)
God prohibits you not from those who fight not against you
because of your way of life nor drive you out of your abodes
so be good and act justly towards them.
Truly, God loves the ones who act justly. (60:8)
God prohibits you only from those who fought against you in your
way of life and drove you out of your abodes and were behind
expelling you, that you turn to them in friendship.
And whoever turns to them in friendship,
then, those, they are the ones who are unjust. (60:9)

O those who believed! When the females, ones who believe, drew near to you, ones who emigrate (f), put them (f) to a test. God is greater in knowledge as to their (f) belief. Then, if you knew them (f) as ones who believe (f), return them (f) not to the ones who are ungrateful. They (f) are not allowed to them (m) nor are they (m) lawful for them (f). And give them (m) what they (m) have spent. There is no blame on you that you (m) marry them (f) when you have given them (f) their compensation. And hold back conjugal ties with the ones who are ungrateful and ask for what you (m) spent and let them ask for what they (m) spent. That is the determination of God. He gives judgment among you. And God is Knowing, Wise. (60:10)

And if any slipped away from you of your spouses to the ones who are ungrateful, then, you retaliated and give the like to whose spouses went of what they (m) spent. And be God-conscious in Whom you are ones who believe. (60:11)

O Prophet! When drew near you the females, ones who are believers, to take the pledge of allegiance to you that they will ascribe nothing as partners with God nor will they steal nor will they commit adultery nor will they kill their children, nor will they approach making false charges to harm another's reputation that they devise between their (f) hands and their (f) feet, and that they rebel not against you in anything that is honorable. Then, take their (f) pledge of allegiance and ask forgiveness from God for them (f). Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (60:12)

O those who believed! Turn not in friendship to a folk against whom God was angry. Surely, they gave up hope for the world to come, just as gave up hope the ones who are ungrateful of the occupants of the graves. (60:13)

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter issues a ruling concerning women believers who might join the Muslim community: **(60:10-60:11)** The Prophet concluded the al-Hudaybiyah Treaty with the Quraysh in Makkah and this specified a condition whereby the Prophet and the Muslim community would return to them anyone who went over to the Muslims, even though that person might be a Muslim.

Reports mention that when the Prophet was about to leave al-Hudaybiyah, a few women came over to him seeking to join the Muslim community in Madinah. The pagans asked for their extradition in accordance with the terms of the treaty. It appears that those terms were not conclusive in the case of women. These two signs were revealed to block returning women believers to the ungrateful, for fear

that they would be persecuted on account of their faith. It should be mentioned here that the Prophet and the Muslims abided by this treaty, right from the first moment after its signing.

The first step required by these rules was to test migrating women in order to determine their reasons for migration. In other words, they must not be trying to escape from a marriage that had gone wrong, or be pursuing some other material benefit, or hoping to marry men they were in love with in the Muslim community.

Their test relied on statements made under oath. Whether such a woman had any different motive, God only knew. People simply cannot establish this with any measure of certainty as God knows best their faith. **(60:10)** When they have made their statements under oath, confirming that they are believers, then the Muslim community cannot send them back to the unbelievers. They are no longer lawful [as wives] for the ungrateful, and these are no longer lawful to them! **(60:10)**

After the Prophet's migration to Madinah this issue had been left open, with no rule stated about it in the Quran. Therefore, no couple were separated even if only one accepted Islam while the other did not. This was due to the fact that the Muslim society had not yet by then established firm roots. When al-Hudaybiyah Treaty was concluded, it was time that such a separation be made. Muslims, men and women, should understand that the bond that overrides all other bonds is faith, and they should put this rule into practice.

The provision for separating such couples was accompanied by a provision for compensation. Thus, an unbeliever whose wife left him because she was Muslim was entitled to receive back whatever he had paid to her in dowry at the time of their marriage. The same applied in reverse, should the man be a believer and his wife not.

When this had been done, the Muslims could marry such migrant women, provided that they paid them dowries. Scholars differ as to whether such women should observe a waiting period; as also over the length of the waiting period.

All these rules are then tied to the strongest guarantee a believer has, which is that of watching God and fearing Him: **(60:10)** Indeed, this is the only inviolable guarantee. God's judgment is that of the One who knows what is in people's hearts, the Almighty who has power over all creatures. It is enough that a Muslim should realize the source of this judgment in order to implement it fully, because he knows that he will ultimately return to God.

Should a believer lose what he had paid in dowry, because his unbelieving wife or her family refuses to refund her Muslim husband, as happened in some cases, the Muslim ruler would compensate him

for this, taking this from any money due to the unbelievers whose Muslim wives had migrated to join the Muslim community, or from any war gains made by the Muslim community: **(60:11)** Again this ruling is tied to the same guarantee that ensures the implementation of every Quranic rule to remember God, in whom you believe. (60:11) This is a profound and touching instruction for believers.

We see how these rulings concerning the separation of married couples provide an example of the practical implementation of the Quranic concept of life values and ties. They reflect the unity of the Muslim community and its being distinct from any other. It is a community where all life is based on faith, where all distinctions of race, color, language, family and land are insignificant. There is only one sign that distinguishes between people—the sign of the party to which they belong. There are only two parties: the party of God and the party of Satan.

WOMEN'S PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Prophet is then instructed on how women should pledge their allegiance, and what the terms of their pledge should be: **(60:12)**

These terms outline the major elements of faith, and provide the framework of the new social system established by the Quranic message. They comprise associating no partners with God in any way whatsoever. They confirm that offenses with prescribed penalties, such as theft and adultery, should never be committed. Women should also pledge never to kill their children. This is a reference to the pre-Quranic practice of burying girls alive, and includes killing embryos for any reason. Women are placed in trust of their pregnancies. Another term of the pledge women give is that they should never lie about who fathered their children.

Perhaps this term, coming as it does after that of refraining from adultery altogether, was to address some practices of pre-Quranic days, when a woman might sleep with several men and when she gave birth to a child, she would choose its father from among them on the basis of looks, or perhaps on some other basis when she knew who its true father was. However, the text includes this and any other case of falsehood in this regard.

The last term in women's pledge of allegiance is that they must not disobey you in anything reasonable. This means a commitment to obey the Prophet in everything he says, because he never ordered anything other than what is reasonable and good. However, this term is also one of the main elements of the Prophet's constitution. It makes clear that obedience of the Muslim ruler remains valid only

within what is reasonable, i.e. what is in line with the Quran.

When women give such a comprehensive pledge of allegiance, their pledges are accepted. The Prophet is asked to pray to God to forgive them what they might have done in the past: **(60:12)** It is God who forgives and pardons.

The Chapter concludes with a general directive: **(60:13)** This is addressed to believers in their capacity of faith, a faith that distinguishes them from all other communities. We have here a general text that applies to the Jews, the idol worshippers and all other enemies of God. All these groups have incurred God's anger. All of them despair of the life to come. They never take it seriously, and never give it a thought. Their despair of it is the same as that of the ungrateful who think that those who died will never return and be resurrected.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

What is too little courage?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary

and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height.

LESSON 92(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[4]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
SIGNS 4:1-4:10

Madinah: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord*
Who created you from a single soul and, from it, created its spouse
and from them both disseminated many men and women. And be
God-conscious through Whom you demand rights of one another
and the wombs, the rights of blood relations.
Truly, God had been watching over you. (4:1)
And give the orphans their property and take not in exchange the
bad of yours for what is good of theirs.
And consume not their property with your own property.
Truly, this had been criminal, a hateful sin. (4:2)
And if you feared that you will not act justly with the orphans, then,
marry who seems good to you of the women who have orphans, by
twos, in threes or four. But if you feared you will not be just, then,
one or what your right hands possessed.
That is likelier that you not commit injustice. (4:3)
And give wives their marriage portion as a spontaneous gift. Then,
truly, if they (f) were pleased to offer to you anything of it on their
(f) own, consume it wholesomely with repose. (4:4)
And give not the mentally deficient your wealth that God assigned
to you to maintain for them, but provide for them from it and clothe
them. And say honorable sayings to them. (4:5)
And test the orphans until when they reached the age for marriage.
Then, if you observed them to be of right judgment, then, release
their property to them and consume it not excessively and hastily,
for they will develop. And whoever had been rich, let him have re-
straint and whoever had been poor, then, let him consume as one
who is honorable. And when you released their property to them,
call witnesses over them. And God sufficed as a Reckoner. (4:6)
For men is a share of what was left by the ones who are their
parents and the nearest kin. And for women is a share of what was
left by the ones who are their parents and nearest kin whether it
was little or it was much—an apportioned share. (4:7)
And when the division is attended by those imbued with kinship
and the orphans and the needy, then, provide for them from it and
say honorable sayings to them. (4:8)
And let executors dread like those who, if they left behind weak
offspring, would fear for them. Then, let them be God-conscious
and let them say appropriate sayings. (4:9)
Truly, those who consume the wealth of orphans with injustice,
consume only fire into their bellies

and they will roast in a blaze. (4:10)

COMMENTARY°

These simple and basic facts are very profound, having much weight in human considerations. (4:1) Had people been truly mindful of these facts, it would have brought about great changes in their lives, helping them to move from their state of ignorance to a state of intelligence, whereby they would be able to receive proper guidance and accept the true faith. They would, thus, have been able to build a true civilisation worthy of man, the creature who acknowledges God as his Lord and Creator.

This powerful opening to the Chapter is followed with an outline of the foundation upon which the Quranic social system is built: mutual co-operation within the family and the community, care for the weak and vulnerable, protection and honor for women, looking after the property of the community, and the distribution of inheritance among heirs according to a system which ensures justice to individuals and prosperity to the community.

Guardians of orphans are commanded here to hand over to them all their property when they have attained the age associated with sound judgement. Moreover, they are commanded not to marry under-age orphan girls who are in their charge in the hope of absorbing their wealth. As for the weak-minded who, it is feared, will squander their wealth once it is given to them, they should not be handed their property, because it, in fact, belongs to the community which has an interest in it. Hence, it should not he given up to anyone who may use it improperly. Men are also ordered to maintain justice and fairness in their treatment of women generally.

These emphatic orders (4:2-4:6) give us an impression of what was common practice in the days of ignorance in pre-Quranic Arabia where the rights of the weak in general, and orphans and women in particular, were either usurped or denied them altogether. Some of these practices continued to exist in the Muslim community, which was originally carved out of the ignorant Arabian society, until the Quran began to eradicate them altogether. At the same time, the Quran gave the Muslim community new concepts, aspirations, traditions and a whole new face with distinctive features. (4:2)

The Muslims are ordered here to give to the orphans what belongs to them of property that is under their control. They must not exchange any good part of it for something inferior of their own, such as taking their good land, cattle, shares or cash—for even cash may differ a great deal in value—or any other property in which value differences occur. They must not absorb the wealth of the or-

phans, in whole or in part, by joining it to their own property. Any such action is a great sin which God here warns the Muslim community against. They are told **(4:3)** that if they fear they cannot act justly with orphans, then they may marry women who have orphans.

This opening passage of the Chapter now resumes its outline of legal provisions relevant to women, who are indeed the subject matter of much of this Chapter, which derives its title from them: **(4:4)** This sign gives every woman a clear and personal right to her marriage portion or dowry. It tells us something of the practices of a society of ignorance that undermined this right in a variety of ways. One such method was that a woman's guardian would receive this dowry and use it as his own, as if he had made a sale of a commodity he owned and received a fair price for it. Another such form, the mutual marriage, meant that a woman's guardian would give her in marriage to someone in return for the other giving him in marriage a woman under his own guardianship. Here, one woman is exchanged for another in a deal between the two guardians with the interests of both women totally ignored. It is a deal akin to that of exchanging one animal for another. The Quran totally forbids this form of marriage. It considers marriage a unity between two souls on the basis of free choice. The dowry belongs to the woman and she should receive it herself, not her guardian. It requires that the dowry be specified so that the woman can claim it as her own and it should be treated as an obligation that must be fulfilled. Islam further requires the husband to pay it willingly to his wife in the same manner as he gives her an absolutely free gift. If subsequently the woman decides, of her own free choice, to give up part or all of her dowry to her husband, she is free to do so without any sort of pressure whatsoever. In this case, the husband is free to accept what his wife willingly gives him. Relations between the married couple must be based on free choice, on the absence of pressure, and on mutual care and affection. Such a basis leaves no room for reluctance or embarrassment.

HANDING PROPERTY OVER TO ORPHANS

Having finished with this aspect of the discussion of marriage with orphan girls and other women who have orphan children, the Chapter again picks up the subject of orphans' inheritance. It provides detailed legislation concerning the handing over of their monies to them, having briefly referred to this in the second verse.

Although this property belongs to orphans, it remains, in essence, the property of the community given by God so that the community may make its best use of it. It is the community, therefore, which is the primary owner of property in general. Individuals,

including orphans and those who have left them this property upon their death, are in charge of it so that they may invest and benefit by it and provide benefit to the community at large. They may undertake this task as long as they are able to prove sound judgement. Individual ownership, with all its rights and restrictions, is based on this principle. Orphans who have property, but who are feeble minded and unable to look after their property wisely, are not given control over it. Although their rights of ownership remain intact and cannot be taken away from them, they are not allowed to administer their property. It belongs, as we have said, to the community. Therefore, someone who is able to administer it from the ranks of the community is given charge of it, taking into consideration his degree of kinship to the orphan. Thus, the principle of mutual care within the family, which is the basis of general care within the greater family of the society, is fulfilled. The feeble-minded, however, enjoy the rights of adequate maintenance and clothing out of their property, as well as the right to be treated kindly: **(4:5)**

Feeble-mindedness and sound judgement can be easily detected after a person has attained puberty. Such matters are easily recognized, and they do not require any specific definition. The community can always recognize a person of sound judgement as also one with a feeble mind. The community evaluates the behavior of all. The test, therefore, to make sure that the orphan has reached the age of puberty, which is referred to in the Quranic text by the term "marriage", is the function that can be fulfilled only after the attainment of puberty. **(4:6)**

Inheritance: A Fair System of Social Security

In the days of Ignorance in pre-Islamic Arabia, no share of inheritance was given to females, and little, if any, was given to young boys. The reason being that neither group could fight against any aggressor. God's law, on the other hand, made inheritance due to all kinsfolk, according to their degree of kinship and their shares, which will be detailed later. It is the view of the Quranic message that members of the same family should help and look after one another. Everyone is required to look after his relatives when they are in need, and to share their liability in paying compensation in cases of causing death to or inflicting injury or bodily harm on others. Therefore, it is only right that relatives should inherit each other, when they leave behind some property, according to their respective kinship. This gives practical effect to the rule that: "gain is commensurate with liability". The Quranic message contains a complete and perfectly coherent system. This is reflected most clearly in the distribution of

rights and obligations. **(4:7)**

Under the Quranic system of inheritance, some relatives take precedence over others. This means that certain relatives do not inherit anything because those who are nearer of kin to the deceased take precedence over them. Therefore, the Chapter states that if such relatives attend the division of inheritance, they may have an unspecified share by way of compensation; so that they do not feel deprived when they see the division which otherwise may have given them a share. This helps to promote family ties, bringing relatives closer together. The same verse also states that orphans and needy people also have a similar claim: **(4:8)**

Before defining the respective shares of inheritance which are due, the Chapter gives another warning against absorbing orphans' property. The way the warning is delivered cannot fail to have a strong effect on people's hearts. It does this by stimulating feelings of love, of compassion for one's own children, of parental fear for them when they are young and weak, and similarly of fear of God who watches over all our actions. It also arouses fear for one's safety in the life to come. The fear of burning in the fire is portrayed here in a very vivid and powerful scene: **(4:9-4:10)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

LESSON 92(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*umma* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA) SIGNS 4:11-4:14

Madinah: *God enjoins you concerning your children. For the male, the like allotment of two females. And if there had been women, more than two, then, for them (f) two-thirds of what he left. But if there had been one, then, for her is half. And for one's parents, for each one of them a sixth of what he left, if he would have a child. Then, if he be with no child and his parents inherited, then, a third to his mother. Then, if he had brothers, then a sixth for his mother. This is after any bequest he enjoins or any debt. Your parents or your children, you are not informed which of them is nearer to you in profit. This is a duty to God. Truly, God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:11) *And for you is a half of what your spouses left if they be with no child. Then, if they (f) had a child, then, for you is a fourth of what they (f) left. This is after any bequest which they bequeath or any debt. And for them (f) a fourth of what you left if you be with no child. And if you had a child, then, for them (f) is an eighth of what you left. This is after any bequest which you bequeath or any debt. And if a man would have no direct heirs, or a woman, but indirect heirs, and has a brother or sister, then, for each one of them (f), a sixth. Then, if there would be more than that, then, they would be ascribed associates in a third. This is after any bequest which is bequeathed or any debt without being one who presses the heirs.*
This is the enjoinment from God.
And God is Knowing, Forbearing. (4:12)
These are the ordinances of God. And whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will cause to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever.
And that is the winning the sublime triumph. (4:13)
And whoever rebels against God and His Messenger and violates His ordinances, He will cause him to enter fire, one who shall dwell in it forever and he will have a despised punishment. (4:14)

COMMENTARY°

At this point, the Chapter explains the Quranic system of inheritance. It starts with an order, made in the form of a strong recommendation, made by God to parents, to maintain justice among their children. This order shows that God, limitless is He in His glory, is kinder, fairer and more merciful than parents are to their own children. It also shows that the whole system of inheritance has been laid down by God, who has given His verdict on every issue concerning parents and children, or that may come up among relatives. People have no choice but to receive their orders from Him and to implement His rulings. This is the proper concept of religion which the Chapter, in its entirety, seeks to explain in the clearest of terms.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.

Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.

Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a way t o get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.

Do not negate or embarrass the students.

Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.

Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Why? If that is so, what follows? Are you assuming that...?

How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...? For example? Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?

Can I summarize your point as ...? What is your reason for saying that?

What do you mean when using this word? Is it possible that...?

Are there other ways of looking at it?

How else could we view this matter?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked. Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

Lesson 92(3). Critical Thinking Strategy
Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully, try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic as Prophet Abraham did. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the people around Prophet Abraham tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers like Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)
Signs 4:15-4:22

Madinah: *And those who approach indecency among your wives, call to four among you to bear witness against them (f). Then, if they bore witness to the affair, then, hold them (f) back in their houses until death gathers them (f) to itself*

or God makes a way for them (f). (4:15)
And those two who among you approach that,
then penalize them both.
Then, if they repented and made things right,
then, turn aside from them.
Truly, God had been Accepter of Repentance,
Compassionate. (4:16)
To turn only to God for forgiveness is for those who do evil
in ignorance and, again, soon they are remorseful.
Then, those are whom God turns to in forgiveness.
And God had been Knowing, Wise. (4:17)
And there is not remorsefulness for those who do evil deeds until
when one of them was attended by death, he would say:
I truly repented now nor for those who die
while they are ones who are ungrateful.
Those, We made ready for them a painful punishment. (4:18)
O those who believed! It is not lawful for you that you inherit
women unwillingly, and place not difficulties for them (f) so that
you take away some of what you gave them (f), unless they
approach a manifest indecency. And live as one who is honorable
with them (f).) Then, if you disliked them (f) perhaps you dislike
something in which God makes much good. (4:19)
And if you wanted to exchange your spouse in place of another
spouse and you gave one of them (f) a hundredweight, so take not
anything from it. Would you take it by false charges to harm her
reputation and in clear sin? (4:20)
And how would you take it when one of you had sexual intercourse
with the other and they (f) took from you
an earnest solemn promise? (4:21)
And marry not women whom your fathers married unless it was in
the past. Truly, it had been an indecency and repugnant
and how evil a way! (4:22)

COMMENTARY°

In this passage, the Chapter continues with its purpose of organizing Muslim society, aiming at purifying it of all gross indecency. It provides for the isolation of those who commit such indecency, men and women, while at the same time opening the door for those of them who want to repent, purify themselves and lead a clean and chaste life. It also rescues women from what they used to suffer of humiliation and injustice under ignorant systems, so that the family could establish its firm and sound basis. That was the only way to build the society on firm foundations and within a clean atmosphere.

It concludes with giving a list of the women whom a man is forbidden to marry under Islamic law. This constitutes a part of the organization of family life.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 92(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
SIGNS 4:23-4:25

Madinah: *Your mothers were forbidden to you and your daughters and your sisters and your paternal and maternal aunts and daughters of your brothers and daughters of your sisters and your foster mothers, those who breast fed you, and your sisters through fosterage and mothers of your wives and your stepdaughters, those who are in your care from wives, those with whom you have lain— but if you have not yet lain with them (f), then there is no blame on you; and wives of your sons who are of your loins; and that you*

should not gather two sisters together unless it be from the past. Truly, God had been Forgiving, Compassionate (4:23)

Forbidden to you are the ones who are married women, but from females whom your right hands (f) possessed. This is prescribed by God for you. And were permitted to you those who were beyond these so that with your wealth you be looking as males, ones who seek wedlock, not as ones who are licentious males. For what you enjoyed of it from them (f), give them (f) their bridal due as their dowry portion. And there is no blame on you for what you agreed on among yourselves after the duty. Truly, God had been Knowing, Wise. (4:24)

And whoever of you is not affluent to be able to marry the ones who are free, chaste females, the female believers, then, from females whom your right hands possessed, the ones who are female spiritual warriors, female believers And God is greater in knowledge about your belief. You are of one another. So marry them (f) with the permission of their people, and give them (f) their bridal due as one who is honorable, they being ones who are free, chaste females, without being ones who are licentious females, nor females, ones who take lovers to themselves. And when they (f) are in wedlock, if they (f) approached indecencies, then on them is half of the ones who are free, chaste females of the punishment. That is for those who dreaded fornication among you. And that you endure patiently is better for you. God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (4:25)

COMMENTARY°

Now the Chapter mentions in detail the classes of women whom men may not marry. This is one of the measures designed to organize the family and society as a whole.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find

in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act im-*

morally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to? (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

Lesson 92(5). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)

Signs 4:26-4:33

Madinah: *God wants to make manifest to you and to guide you to*
customs of those who were before you and to turn to you
in forgiveness. And God is Knowing, Wise. (4:26)
God wants that He turn to you in forgiveness
while those who follow their lusts want that you turn against God
in a serious deviation. (4:27)
God wants to lighten the burden on you.
And the human being was created weak. (4:28)
O those who believed! Consume not your wealth between you with
falsehood, but that it be a transaction
of agreeing together among you. And kill not yourselves.
Truly, God had been Compassionate to you. (4:29)
But whoever accomplishes that through deep seated dislike
and injustice, We will scorch him in a fire.
And that would have been easy for God. (4:30)

If you avoid major sins that you are prohibited, We will absolve you of your minor sins and cause you to enter a generous gate. (4:31)

And covet not what God gave as advantage of it to some of you over others. For men is a share of what they deserved and for women is a share of what they (f) deserved. And ask God for His grace. Truly, God had been Knowing of everything. (4:32)

And to everyone We assigned inheritors to what the ones who are your parents and the nearest kin left. And those with whom you made an agreement with your sworn oaths, then, give them their share. Truly, God had been Witness over everything. (4:33)

COMMENTARY°

These signs **(4:26-4:28)** provide a perfect and comprehensive comment on the detailed legislation provided by the Quran for the family. It is through this legislation that Quranic society is elevated psychologically, morally and socially to a very high, clean and healthy summit. The comment given in these verses reveals to the Muslim community the truth of what God wants for it by His prescription of these laws and regulations. At the same time, the aims of those who follow their lusts are also revealed.

This passage **(4:29-4:33)** begins with a prohibition against illegally devouring other people's money, explaining that it is only through trade that people may gain money from one another. Illegal gains are described as killing oneself and as utter loss. This is coupled with a warning against incurring punishment in the hereafter as well as a comforting touch in the form of a promise of forgiveness and assured help. The passage also emphasizes that people must not covet what others may have. They should instead ask God to give them what they wish, for He is the One who gives in abundance. These directives come side by side with the establishment of the rights of earning and ownership to both man and woman. At this point, the Quran stresses that God is aware of all things. Instructions given with regard to contracts of allegiance stressing the duty to fulfil these contracts and pledges are followed with a statement that God witnesses everything. Both statements of God's knowledge leave very strong impressions on us. They come, after all, from God, who is well aware of man's constitution and what influences his attitude.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

LESSON 92(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA) SIGNS 4:34-4:42

Madinah: *Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality are the females, ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great.* (4:34)

And if you feared a breach between the two, then, raise up an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people. If they both want to make things right, God will reconcile it between the two. Truly, God had been Knowing, Aware. (4:35)

And worship God and ascribe nothing as partners with Him. And kindness to the ones who are your parents and to the possessors of kinship and the orphans and the needy, to the neighbor who is as a possessor of strangeness and the neighbor who is kin and to the companion by your side and the traveler of the way and whom your right hands possessed. Truly, God loves not ones who had been proud, boastful, (4:36)

those who are misers and command humanity to miserliness and keep back what God gave them of His grace. And We made ready for the ones who are ungrateful a despised punishment (4:37)
and for those who spend their wealth to show off to humanity and believe neither in God nor in the Last Day. And to whomever Satan would be a comrade, then how evil a comrade! (4:38)
And what would be for them if they believed in God and the Last Day and spent out of what God provided them? God had been Knowing of them. (4:39)
Truly, God does not wrong even the weight of an atom. And if there be benevolence, He multiplies it and gives that which proceeds from His Presence a sublime compensation. (4:40)
Then, how will it be when We brought about from each community a witness and We brought you about as witness against these? (4:41)
On a Day those who were ungrateful and rebelled against the Messenger will wish that the earth be shaped over them but they will not keep back God's discourse. (4:42)

COMMENTARY°

The last topic in this passage concerns the regulation of the family and the allocation of duties and responsibilities within it. The Chapter also outlines the measures to be taken in order to protect this social institution against the effects of quarrels and disputes so as to eliminate, as far as possible, any negative effects that could destroy it. (4:34) (Note: See Lesson 90(8) for further information.)

It is also part of the nature and essential characteristics of a devoted, believing woman to guard the sanctity of her relationship with her husband. This she maintains in his presence as well as in his absence. She does not reveal what belongs only to him, as one half of the single soul which combines both of them, even inasmuch as a passing look, let alone a full dishonorable relationship. What is forbidden to reveal is decided neither by him nor by her. It is determined by God. It is "the intimacy which God has ordained to be guarded". It is not a matter of pleasing a husband or allowing what he does not mind to be revealed or what society requires to be exposed, should the husband or society deviate from the divine code of living. There is only one rule to determine the limits of what must be guarded. She has to guard that "which God has ordained to be guarded".

This passage starts with fresh effort to regulate the life of the Muslim community, purging it of the remaining traces of the state of ignorance that prevailed in pre-Quranic days and giving more prominence to the main features of the new way of life. It adds a clear

warning against the scheming of the people of former religions. **(4:36-4:42)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

Lesson 92(7). Critical Thinking Strategy
Exploring Implications and Consequences

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)
Signs 4:43-4:50

Madinah: *O those who believed! Come not near the formal prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying nor defiled but as one who passes through a way until you wash yourselves. And if you had been sick or on a journey or one of you drew near from the privy or you came into sexual contact with your wives and you find no water, then, aim at getting wholesome, dry earth. Then, wipe your faces and your hands. Truly, God had been Pardoning, Forgiving.* (4:43)

Hast thou not considered those who were given a share of the Book? They exchange fallacy and they want you to go astray from the way. (4:44)

And God is greater in knowledge of your enemies. And God sufficed as a protector. And God sufficed as a helper. (4:45)

Among those who became Jews are those who tamper with words out of context. They say: We heard and we rebelled and: Hear—without being one who is caused to hear and: Look at us—distorting their tongues and discrediting the way of life. And if they said: We heard and we obeyed and: Hear you and: Wait for us, it would have been better for them and more upright, except God cursed them for their ingratitude. So they believe not but a few. (4:46)

O those who were given the Book! Believe in what We sent down, that which establishes as true what was with you, before We obliterate faces, and repel them backward or curse them as We cursed the Companions of the Sabbath. And the command of God had been one that is accomplished. (4:47)

Truly, God forgives not to ascribe partners with Him and He forgives other than that whomever He wills. And whoever ascribes partners with God, then, surely, he devised a serious sin. (4:48

Have you not considered those who make themselves seem pure?

Nay! God makes pure whom He wills
and they will not be wronged in the least. (4:49)
Look on how they devise a lie against God;
and it sufficed as clear sin. (4:50)

COMMENTARY°

The Quranic approach is gentle, gradual. It benefits from God's absolute knowledge of the human being, what is suitable for him and his social environment. The first statement in this approach was a sign revealed in Chapter 2. This was given by way of an answer to questions which indicate that people with a fine conscience based on the Quranic message had begun to feel uneasy about drinking and gambling: **(2:219)** This was the first loud knock on the door that was bound to have its effect on a conscience based on the Quranic message. The criterion which makes something lawful, discouraged or forbidden is whether its harm or evil is greater than its benefit. In this verse we have a clear statement that the case is such with regard to intoxicants and gambling. Their evil is far greater than their benefit. The question, however, went deeper than that.

Then the sign we are now discussing was revealed to tell the believers: **(4:43)** Here we find the wise, gentle approach in action, the sign representing the middle stage between showing drink as repugnant because its harm is greater than its benefit and a state of total prohibition where drink is seen as an impurity of Satan's work. The purpose of this middle stage being to break the habit of drinking by prohibiting it near prayer times, which span the whole day. Some prayers are too close to each other to allow anyone who is given to alcohol time to take one or two drinks and regain enough sobriety to be fully aware of what he is saying. Besides, there were special times for drinking, either early in the day or in the evening. Plus there were prayers that must be offered both in between these times and following them. Hence, a person with a sense of the Quranic message was sure to weigh up the enjoyment he derives from drinking against neglecting his duty of prayer. At this stage, a good Muslim would not abandon his prayers for anything.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

LESSON 92(8). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to

support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation. thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It i knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expressio (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[5]

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

SIGNS 4:51-4:59

Madinah: *Have you not considered those who were given a share of the Book? They believe in false gods and false deities and they*

say to those who were ungrateful: These are better guided than those who believed in the way! (4:51)
Those are those whom God cursed. And for whomever God curses, then, you will not find a helper for him. (4:52)
Or share they in the dominion?
Then, they give not humanity in the least. (4:53)
Are they jealous of humanity for what God gave them of His grace? Then, surely, We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom and We gave them a sublime dominion. (4:54)
Then, among them are some who believed in him and among them are some who barred him. And hell sufficed for a blaze. (4:55)
Truly, those who were ungrateful for Our signs, We will scorch them in a fire. As often as their skins were wholly burned, We will substitute with other skins so that they will experience the punishment. Truly, God had been Almighty, Wise. (4:56)
And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We will cause them to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. For them in it will be purified spouses. And We will cause them to enter into plenteous shady shadow. (4:57)
Truly, God commands you to give back trusts to the people. And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly. Truly, how excellent God admonishes you of it. Truly, God had been Hearing, Seeing. (4:58)
O those who believed! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those imbued with authority among you. Then, if you contended with one another in anything, refer it to God and the Messenger if you had been believing in God and the Last Day. That is better and a fairer interpretation. (4:59)

Commentary°

The Chapter continues to draw people's attention to the singular attitude of those who claim to be pure, while they believe in falsehood and in arbitrary deviation away from divine guidance. At the same time, they testify that the pagan Arabs were better guided than those who believed in God, His message, and the divine constitution. This is followed by an outright denunciation of these people and their attitude. They are shown as envious and stingy. The true reason for their opposition to Islam which marks their deviation from the faith of Abraham, in belonging to which they took pride, is given together with a clear warning to them that persistence in such an attitude will inevitably lead to Hell.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

LESSON 92(9). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD DEFINITIVE (TO BE PRECISE)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
SIGNS 4:60-4:70

Madinah: *Have you not considered those who claim that they believed in what was caused to descend to you and what was caused to descend before you? They want to take their disputes to another for judgment—to false deities—while they were commanded to disbelieve in them but Satan wants to cause them to go astray —a far wandering astray.* (4:60)

And when it was said to them: Approach now to what God caused to descend and approach now to the Messenger you had seen the ones who are hypocrites barring you with hindrances. (4:61)

How then will it be when they are lit on by an affliction for what their hands put forward? Again, they drew near you, swearing by God: Truly, we wanted but kindness and conciliation! (4:62)

They are those whom God knows what is in their hearts. So turn aside from them and admonish them and say to them concerning themselves penetrating sayings. (4:63)

And We never sent a Messenger, but he is obeyed with the permission of God. And if, when they did wrong themselves, they drew near to you and asked for the forgiveness of God and the Messenger asked for forgiveness for them, they found God Accepter of Repentance, Compassionate. (4:64)

But no! By thy Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in what they disagreed about between them. Again, they find within themselves no impediment to what you had decided, resigning themselves to submission, full submission. (4:65)

And if We prescribed for them that you: Kill yourselves, or: Go forth from your abodes, they would not have accomplished it, but a few of them. And had they accomplished what they are admonished by it, it would have been better for them

and a stauncher confirming. (4:66)
And, then, We would have given them from that which proceeds from Our Presence a sublime compensation. (4:67)
And We would have guided them on a straight path. (4:68)
And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, those are to whom God was gracious among the Prophets and just persons and the witnesses and the ones in accord with morality. And excellent were those as allies! (4:69)
That is the grace from God. And God sufficed as Knowing. (4:70)

COMMENTARY°

This passage tackles a very serious issue in the life of the Muslim community. It speaks about the conditions that must obtain for faith to exist and the boundaries that must be observed, i.e. the system laid down for the Muslim community to implement.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

LESSON 92(10). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

SIGNS 4:71-4:76

Madinah: *O those who believed! Take your precautions.*
Then, move forward in companies of men
or move forward altogether. (4:71)
And, truly, among you is he who lingers behind. Then, if affliction
lit on you, he would say: Surely, God was gracious to me
that I not be a witness to them. (4:72)
And if the grace of God lit on you, certainly, he would say, as if
there be not any affection between you and between him:
Would that I had been with them
so that I would have won a triumph,
winning a sublime triumph! (4:73)
Then, let fight in the way of God those who sell this present life for
the world to come. And whoever fights in the way of God,
then, is slain or is vanquished,
We will give him a sublime compensation. (4:74)
And why should you not fight in the way of God and for the ones
taken advantage of due to weakness among the men and the
women and the children, those who say: Our Lord! Bring us out
from this town whose people are the ones who are unjust
and assign for us a protector from ***Your*** *Presence and assign for us*
a helper from ***Your*** *Presence?* (4:75)
Those who believed fight in the way of God. And those who were
ungrateful fight in the way of the false deity. So fight the protectors
of Satan. Truly the cunning of Satan had been weak. (4:76)

COMMENTARY°

The Quran not only teaches the Muslims the rules of worship and religious rites, or moral and ethical principles, as the pathetic view of religion suggests, but it also deals with their life as a whole, covering all the developments and ramifications of life in the real

world. On this basis, the Quranic message rightfully demands full hegemony over human life. It accepts from Muslims, individuals as well as societies, nothing less than total submission and compliance with its way of life and teachings. It specifically rejects the idea that Muslims should, individually or collectively, seek several sources for organizing their life: one for their personal life—religious, ethical and moral aspects as well as rituals of worship—based on God's revelations, and another for economic, social, political and international matters taken from different sources or based purely on human thought. The duty of such thought is nothing more than to derive and deduce from the Quran detailed rules and principles applicable to life's practical and ever-changing situations and developments, as outlined in the last passage of this Chapter. Otherwise, all claims of true belief in Islam are meaningless. Those who adopt such double standards have not fully absorbed the faith and spirit of Islam or appreciated its fundamental principles.

The Muslims are advised to mobilize themselves into either small parties or as a fully-fledged fighting force, and not to allow any of their numbers to dither or lag behind, as often happened in practice. They must be vigilant, not only with respect to their external enemy, but also towards those among them who stayed behind and who discouraged others from joining this battle. They look at it, from their narrow, worldly perspective, as a refusal to join a winning battle, according to their narrow and short-term understanding of victory and success.

The Quran recognizes no legitimate fighting other than what is taken in support of God's cause. It does not accept fighting merely for material gain, dominance or glory, whether personal or national. It does not advocate fighting for the occupation of land or the domination of other communities. It does not approve of fighting which aims at the acquisition or control of industrial raw materials, or consumer markets or for capital and investment. It does not promote fighting for the glory of a particular individual, dynasty, class, state, nation or race. The only fighting it approves of is that undertaken for God's cause, to establish His order and way of life in the world, and to ensure that humanity gains from its benefits, blessings and universal justice. Beyond that, everyone is free to choose one's beliefs, according to one's convictions, under the universal, humane and divine system Islam advocates.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

LESSON 92(11). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS (TO BE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
SIGNS 4:77-4:87

Madinah: *Have you not considered those who when it was said to them: Limit your hands from warfare and perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms? Then, when fighting was prescribed for them, there was a group of people among them who dread humanity, even dreading God or with a more severe dreading, and they said: Our Lord! Why had You prescribed fighting for us? Why had You not postponed it for another near term for us?*
Say: The enjoyment of the present is little and the world to come is better. For whomever was God-conscious, you will not be wronged in the least. (4:77)
Wherever you be, death will overtake you, even if you had been in imposing towers. And when benevolence lights on them, they say: This is from God. And when an evil deed lights on them, they say: This is from you. Say: All is from God. So what is with these folk that they understand almost no discourse? (4:78)
Whatever of benevolence lit on you is from God. And whatever evil deeds lit on you, then, is from yourself.

And We sent you to humanity as a Messenger.
And God sufficed as Witness. (4:79)
Whoever obeys the Messenger, surely, obeyed God and whoever turned away, then We sent you not as a guardian over them. (4:80)
And they say: Obedience! Then, when they departed from you, a section of them spent the night planning on other than what you have said. And God records what they spend the night planning.
So turn aside from them and put your trust in God.
And God sufficed as Trustee. (4:81)
But no! They meditate not on the Recitation.
And if it had been from other than God, certainly,
they would have found in it many contradictions. (4:82)
Whenever drew near them a command of public safety or fear, they broadcasted it. But if they referred it to the Messenger, and to those imbued with authority among them, they would have known it—
those who investigate from among them. And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, certainly,
you would have followed Satan, but a few. (4:83)
So fight you in the way of God. You are not placed with a burden but for yourself. And encourage the ones who believe.
Perhaps God will limit the might of those who were ungrateful.
And God is Stauncher in might and Stauncher in making an example. (4:84)
Whoever intercedes with a benevolent intercession, there will be for himself a share of it. And whoever intercedes with an intercession for bad deeds,
there will be for himself a like part of it.
And God had been over everything One Who Oversees. (4:85)
And when you were given greetings with greetings,
then, give greetings fairer than that or return the same to them.
Truly, God had been over everything a Reckoner. (4:86)
God, there is no god but He. He will, certainly, gather you on the Day of Resurrection. There is no doubt about it.
And who is one who is more sincere in discourse than God? (4:87)

COMMENTARY°

Most probably, the Chapter is referring to that group of Muslims whose dignity did not allow them to tolerate harassment and humiliation in Makkah and who, thus, requested that the Prophet grant them permission to fight. The Prophet, in such matters, was complying with God's instructions of restraint, patience, careful preparation and education, awaiting the right moment. But once they were safely settled in Madinah and securely living out of harm's way, they no

longer saw any justification or, at least, no great urgency to fight the enemy.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

LESSON 92(12). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

WORTHINESS (FOCUSSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT THE TRIVIAL)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

SIGNS 4:88-4:91

Madinah: *Then, what is it with you that you be two factions concerning the ones who are hypocrites? And God overthrew them for what they earned? Want you to guide whom God caused to go astray? And whomever God causes to go astray, you will never find for him a way.* (4:88)

They wished for you to be ungrateful as they were ungrateful so you become equals. So take not to yourselves protectors from them until they emigrate in the way of God. Then, if they turned away, then, take them and kill them wherever you found them. And take not to yourselves from them either a protector or a helper, (4:89)

but those who reach out to a folk who between you and between them is a solemn promise or when they drew near to you, their breasts were reluctant that they fight you or they fight their folk? And if God willed, He would have given them authority over you and they would have fought you. So if they withdrew from you and fight not against you and gave a proposal of surrender to you, then, God has not assigned any way for you against them. (4:90)

You will find others who want that they be safe from you and that they be safe from their folk. Whenever they were returned to temptation, they were overthrown in it. So if they withdraw not from you, nor give a proposal of surrender to you and limit not their hands, then, take them and kill them wherever you came upon them. And those, We made for you a clear authority against them. (4:91)

COMMENTARY°

The description is that of a group within the Muslim community who lacked discipline and who underestimated the effects of rumor in weakening the community, or its potentially devastating consequences. This group were not in tune with what was happening and did not appreciate the seriousness of the situation. They did not understand how a casual word or a slip of the tongue could lead to unimaginable and unavoidable repercussions for individuals and the whole society. Perhaps because they did not feel complete loyalty to

the Muslim community and were, therefore, not concerned about the effects on it of the spread of malicious rumors at times of both war and peace.

The danger can be devastating in both cases. The dissemination of news of peace in a community ready and preparing for war will spread a degree of relaxation, despite orders to be on the alert, because vigilance due to a threat is stronger than that due to obeying orders. Such moderation of watchfulness can be fatal. Similarly, spreading fear of war in a peaceful self-assured community can disrupt and unsettle it, forcing it to take measures that might be unnecessary and could also be fatal.

These are the features of a community that has not fully completed its organization, or has not demonstrated full loyalty to its leadership, or both. Indeed both qualities were evident in the Muslim community at the time, consisting as it did of groups of various levels of conviction, understanding, and allegiance. It is this disharmony that the Quran deals with here.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Stage 1

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

Stage 2

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?

What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!
Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

Stage 3
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase. but in completing the whole project.

Summary of Critical Thinking:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

Lesson 92(13). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan*, *wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)

Signs 4:92-4:96

Madinah: *And it had not been for the one who believes to kill one who believes unless by error. And whoever killed one who believes by error the letting go of a believing bondsperson and blood money should be handed over to his family unless that family be charitable. And if he had been from the enemy folk of yours and he be one who believes, then, there should be the letting go of a believing bondsperson. And if he had been of a folk who between you and between them is a solemn promise, then, blood money should be handed over to the family and the letting go of a believing bondsperson. Then, whoever finds not the means, then, formally fast for two successive months as a penance from God. And God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:92)

And whoever kills one who believes as one who is willful, then, his recompense is hell, one who will dwell in it forever. And God was angry with him and cursed him and He prepared for him a tremendous punishment. (4:93)

O those who believed! When you traveled in the way of God, then be clear and say not to whomever gave you a proposal of peace: You are not one who believes, looking for advantage in this present

life. With God is much gain. Thus, you had been like that before,
then God showed grace to you, so be clear.
Truly, God had been Aware of what you do. (4:94)
Not on the same level are the ones who sit at home among the ones
who believe—other than those imbued with disability—and the
ones who struggle in the way of God with their wealth and their
lives. God gave advantage to the ones who struggle with their
wealth and their lives by a degree over the ones who sit at home.
And to each God promised the fairer. And God gave advantage to
the ones who struggle over the ones who sit at home
with a sublime compensation (4:95)
degrees from Him and forgiveness and mercy.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (4:96)

COMMENTARY°

Never should a believer kill another believer, unless it be by mistake. He who kills a believer by mistake must free a believing soul from bondage and pay an indemnity to his family, unless they forego it by way of charity. If the victim belonged to a people who are at war with you, while he himself was a believer, then let his killer free a believing soul from bondage. If he (the victim) belonged to a people with whom you are bound by a covenant, then the penalty is an indemnity to be paid to his family and the freeing of a believing soul from bondage. He who cannot afford the wherewithal must fast for two consecutive months. This is the atonement ordained by God. God is All- Knowing, Wise. **(4:92)**

The Chapter provides legal provisions for four cases of killing, three of which may happen by mistake among Muslims in the same community or in different communities. The fourth is that of deliberate murder which, the Quran insists, should never happen in the first place. Nothing should bring the relationship between two Muslims so low for a murder of this sort to take place. The relationship between two Muslims is too strong, deeply rooted, precious and dearly cherished for such a serious breach to be contemplated. Hence, the Chapter begins by legislating for accidental killing.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

LESSON 92(14). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

RIGHT JUDGMENT

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

SIGNS 4:97-4:100

Madinah: *Truly, those whom the angels gathered to themselves—*
ones who are unjust to themselves—they will say:
In what condition had you been? They will say: We had been ones
taken advantage of due to weakness on the earth.
They will say: Be not the earth of God that which is extensive
enough to emigrate in it?
Then, for those, their place of shelter will be hell.
And how evil a Homecoming! (4:97)
But the ones taken advantage of due
to weakness of the men and the women
and the children who are neither able to access some means
nor are they truly guided to the way (4:98)
then those, perhaps God will pardon them.
And God had been Pardoning, Forgiving. (4:99)
And whoever emigrates in the way of God will find in and on the
earth many places of refuge and plenty. And whoever goes forth
from his house as one who emigrates for God and His Messenger,
and, again, death overtakes him, then, surely,
his compensation will fall on God.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (4:100)

COMMENTARY°

The subject matter here is migration to the lands that follow the Quranic message. Those who had accepted the message, but who still remained in their homes in the land of war are strongly urged to join the Muslim community in Madinah which was striving hard for God's cause, sacrificing their lives and possessions. They are clearly required here to abandon their relatively more comfortable positions in Makkah, where they lived with their families and clans. These were perhaps the ones who are described in these verse as "remaining passive". For, there was no Muslim "remaining passive" in Madinah, other than the hypocrites whose situation was discussed in a totally different tone in the preceding passage.

This first point is followed by a stern warning to those who stay in the land of unfaith. This they do despite their ability to join the Muslim community where they can add to the strength of the believers. Nonetheless, they remain safe in their homes until their souls are gathered by the angels, still in a condition of "wronging themselves". Their abode is hell which is described as an evil destination.

Following this, we have a guarantee from God to anyone who migrates to serve His cause. The guarantee is effected from the moment he leaves home, having no purpose other than joining the camp of believers. The guarantee deals with all the fears entertained by anyone who undertakes such a risky and costly adventure. It also legislates for relations between the Muslim community and others who remain outside its land, including Muslims who have chosen not to migrate.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea).

Lesson 92(15). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)

Signs 4:101-4:104

Madinah: *And when you traveled on the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the formal prayer if you feared that you would be persecuted by those who were ungrateful. The ones who are ungrateful, they had been for you a clear enemy.* (4:101)

And when you had been among them, performing the formal prayer with them, let a section of them stand up with you and take their weapons. And when they prostrated themselves, then, let them move behind you and let another section approach who has not yet formally prayed. Then, let them formally pray with you and let them take their precaution and their weapons. Those who were ungrateful wished for you to be heedless of your weapons and your sustenance. They would turn against you with a single turning. And there is no blame on you if you had been annoyed because of rain or you had been sick that you lay down your weapons. And take precaution for yourselves. Truly, God prepared for the ones who are ungrateful a despised punishment. (4:102)

Then, when you satisfied the formal prayer, then, remember God when upright and sitting and on your sides. And, then, when you were secured, perform the formal prayer. Truly, the formal prayer had been —for the ones who believe — a timed prescription. (4:103)

And be not feeble in looking for the folk. If you be suffering, they suffer as you suffer, yet you hope for from God what they hope not

for, and God had been Knowing, Wise. (4:104)

COMMENTARY°

At this particular juncture, the Chapter speaks of the concession God gives to those who migrate or go forth on earth, either on battle or on business, should they fear being taken prisoner by the ungrateful or fear being subjected to hardship and pressure to turn away from their faith. The concession is to reduce formal prayer. This is different from shortening prayers, which is a concession given to any traveler, whether he has anything to fear from the ungrateful or not. The concession to which the passage refers is a special type.

The first thing which draws our attention is the determination to maintain formal prayer even on the battlefield. Yet, this is only natural from the point of view of faith. Since formal prayer is the main weapon in the battle, its use must be regulated in a way suitable to a military battle. Those men whose education was accomplished through the Quran and in accordance with the divine method used to face their enemies with the one weapon which gives them superiority over all others. They were superior because they believed in One God whom they knew very well and whom they were certain would be with them in battle. Another factor in their superiority is their belief in a most noble cause. Moreover, their concept of the universe, life and the purpose of human existence, as well as their social system were elements which added to their superiority. Formal prayer symbolized all this and reminded them of it. Therefore, it worked as a weapon; indeed the most effective weapon in the battle.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) **to interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

Lesson 92(16). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard
Fairness (right-minded)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)
Signs 4:105-4:112

Madinah: *Truly, We caused to descend to you the Book with The Truth so that you will give judgment between humanity by what God caused you to see. And be you not the pleader for ones who are traitors.* (4:105)
And ask God for forgiveness. Truly, God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (4:106)
And dispute not for those who are dishonest to themselves. Truly, God loves not anyone who had been a sinful betrayer. (4:107)
They conceal themselves from humanity, but they conceal themselves not from God, as He is with them when they spend the night planning with sayings with which He is not well-pleased. God had been One Who Encloses what they do. (4:108)
Lo, behold! You are these who disputed for them in this present life. Then, who will dispute with God for them

on the Day of Resurrection?
Or who will be a trustee over them? (4:109)
And whoever does evil or does wrong to himself, again,
asks for forgiveness from God will, truly,
find God Forgiving, Compassionate. (4:110)
And whoever earns a sin, truly, he earns it only against himself.
And God had been Knowing, Wise. (4:111)
And whoever earns a transgression or a sin, and, again, accuses
an innocent one, surely, laid a burden on himself of false charges
that harm another's reputation and a clear sin. (4:112)

COMMENTARY°

This passage tells of a story which is unparalleled in the history of humanity. It is a story that proves, on its own, that the Quran must, by necessity, originate with God. Human beings, no matter how sublime or idealistic they may be and how high the standard of purity and morality they may achieve, cannot on their own raise themselves to the standard drawn in these signs without being inspired by God Himself. The standard is as high as a line drawn over the horizon which people can only attain by following the Quranic message. They will never be able to achieve it except through the implementation of it.

At that highly critical juncture in the life of the new Muslim community in Madinah, this whole passage was revealed from on high giving instructions to God's Messenger and the Muslim community to ensure that justice was done to a Jewish person who was wrongly accused of theft. The passage also condemns the actions of a particular household among the Helpers, who were at the time the main supporters and defenders of the Prophet's message and faith.

What standard of purity, justice and morality is this? Indeed, what words could justly describe this standard? For a certainty, whatever we say by way of comment or explanation is dwarfed by the sublime standards that the Quranic message sets and which human beings cannot attain on their own. Only when they give and work hard under the leadership of the Islamic code can they aspire to such heights.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

How Does Open-Minded Critical Thinking Help?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

Summary of critical thinking:

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 92(17). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
SIGNS 4:113-4:115

Madinah: *And were it not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, a section of them was about to do something that would cause you to go astray. And they cause none to go astray but themselves and they injure you not at all. And God caused the Book to descend to you and wisdom and taught you what you are not knowing. The grace of God had been sublime upon you.* (4:113)

No good is there in most of their conspiring secretly, but for him who commanded charity or one who is honorable or makes things right between humanity. And whoever accomplishes that —looking for the goodwill of God—then, We will give him a sublime compensation. (4:114)

And whoever makes a breach with the Messenger after the guidance became clear to him and follows a way other than that of the ones who believe, We will turn him away from what he turns to and We will scorch him in hell. How evil a Homecoming! (4:115)

COMMENTARY°

The style here is very firm, smacking of anger in support of the truth. Real concern for justice is felt throughout the passage. The first aspect of this is the reminder to God's Messenger of the fact that God's book was, in truth, bestowed on him from on high so that he may arbitrate between people in accordance with what God imparted to him of true knowledge. This reminder is followed by an order requiring him never to defend those who betray their trust. He must not contend for them or argue on their behalf. He is further directed to seek God's forgiveness for such arguments in their defense.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

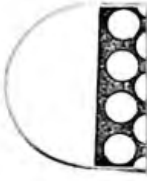
WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.

Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others



LESSON 92(18). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

SIGNS 4:116-4:126

Madinah: *Truly, God forgives not to ascribe partners with Him. And He forgives other than that whomever He wills. And whoever ascribes partners with God, then, surely, went astray,*

a wandering far astray. (4:116)
They call to other than Him none but female gods and they call to
but the rebellious Satan. (4:117)
God cursed him. And Satan said: Truly, I will take to myself of
Your servants, an apportioned share, (4:118)
and I will cause them to go astray. And I will fill them with false desires. And I will command them, then they will slit the ears of the flocks. And I will command them, and they will alter the creation of God. And whoever takes Satan to himself for a protector other than
God, then, surely, he lost, a clear loss. (4:119)
Satan promises them and fills them with false desires
and Satan promises them nothing but delusion. (4:120)
Those, their place of shelter will be hell
and they will find no way to escape from it. (4:121)
But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We will cause them to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever,
eternally. The promise of God is true.
And who is One More Sincere in speech than God? (4:122)
Paradise will be neither after your fantasies, nor the fantasies of the People of the Book. Whoever does evil will be given recompense for it and he will not find for himself other than God
either a protector or a helper. (4:123)
And whoever does as the ones in accord with morality—whether male or female—and is one who believes then, those will enter the
Garden and they will not be wronged, in the least. (4:124)
And who is fairer in the way of life than he who submitted his face
to God and he is one who is a doer of good
and followed the creed of Abraham, a monotheist?
And God took Abraham to Himself as a friend. (4:125)
And to God is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on
the earth. And God had been
One Who Encloses everything. (4:126)

COMMENTARY°

The order to refrain from secret talks is repeated more than once in the Quran. Here, it is a group of people who meet away from the rest of the Muslim community and leadership in order to decide on a certain matter in secret. The Quranic method of education and organization in the Muslim community was such that any person could put his question or problem to the Prophet, either in private if the matter was personal, or in public, if it was of common interest. The aim was that no "pockets" should be formed within the Muslim com-

munity and that no groups be isolated by concepts, interests, ideas or aims different from the rest of the Muslim community. No group within the Muslim community should decide on any matter under the cover of darkness, and then either confront the community with it as a *fait accompli*, or conceal it. Whatever such a group may do, it cannot conceal its action from God who remains present in all situations. The prohibition of secret talks in this case is only one of several Quranic references objecting to such clandestine dealings, away from the rest of the Muslim community.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with

each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.

LESSON 92(19). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
SIGNS 4:127-4:134

Madinah: *And they ask you for advice about women. Say: God pronounces to you about them (f) and what is recounted to you in the Book about women who have orphans, those to whom (f) you give not what was prescribed for them (f) because you prefer that you marry them (f) and about the ones taken advantage of due to weakness among children and that you stand up for the orphans with equity. And whatever you accomplish of good, then, truly, God had been Knowing of it.* (4:127)

And if a woman feared resistance or turning aside from her husband no blame on either of them that they make things right between the two, that there be reconciliation. And reconciliation is better. And persons were prone to stinginess. And if you do good and are God-conscious, then, truly, God had been Aware of what you do. (4:128)

You will never be able to be just between wives, even if you were eager so incline not with total inclination away from her, forsaking her as if she be one who is in suspense. And if you make things right and are God-conscious, then, truly, God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (4:129)

And if the two split up, God will enrich each of them from all His plenty. And God had been One Who is Extensive, Wise. (4:130)

And to God is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on

the earth and, certainly, We charged those who were given the Book before you, and to you, that you be God-conscious alone. And if you are ungrateful, then, truly, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And God had been Sufficient, Worthy of Praise. (4:131)
And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And God sufficed as a Trustee. (4:132)
If He wills, He will cause you to be put away—O humanity—and approach with others. And over that God had been Powerful. (4:133)
Whoever had been wanting a reward for good deeds in the present, then with God is The Reward for good deeds in the present and in the world to come. And God had been Hearing, Seeing. (4:134)

COMMENTARY°

This passage complements what the early parts of this Chapter have set out to do. It aims to eradicate all traces of past ignorant days, still manifesting themselves in ideas and practices, especially concerning women, their place in society and the treatment of other vulnerable groups such as orphans and children. The whole Muslim community needed to be purged of such traces in order to allow the family to be established on the basis that man and woman are two parts of a single soul and they both must be given their due and honorable positions. Their interests are to be looked after and family ties need to be strengthened. Any dispute that breaks out within the family should be settled early, before it develops and leads to a severing of ties and the destruction of homes. It is to be remembered that in such cases, the first to suffer are young children who are still in their formative years. The Muslim community, on the other hand must be established along the lines of looking after its vulnerable groups, so that they are not oppressed by those who wield power.

The present passage deals with certain aspects of family relationships, providing a linkage between them and the system that governs the universe. This imparts to us a feeling that the question of the status of women, the role of the family and care for the helpless and vulnerable in society are very serious matters. This is indeed the case.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and

resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

LESSON 92(20). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

SIGNS 4:135-4:141

Madinah: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor, then God is Closer to both than you are. So follow not your desires that you become unbalanced. And if you distort or turn aside, then, truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:135)

O those who believed! Believe in God and His Messenger and the Book which He sent down to His Messenger and the Book that He caused to descend before. And whoever is ungrateful to God and

His angels and His Books and His Messengers and the Last Day, then, surely, went astray, a wandering far astray. (4:136)
Truly those who believed, and, again, disbelieved, and, again, believe and, again, disbelieve, and, again, added to disbelief neither will God be forgiving of them nor guide them to a way. (4:137)
Give you good tidings to the ones who are hypocrites that, truly, for them is a painful punishment, (4:138)
those who take to themselves the ones who are ungrateful as their protectors instead of the ones who believe! Are they looking for great glory with them? Truly, then, all great glory belongs to God alone. (4:139)
And, surely, He sent down to you in the Book that when you heard the signs of God being unappreciated and being ridiculed, then, and sit not with them until they discuss in conversation about other than that or else, you will be like them. Truly, God is One Who Gathers the ones who are hypocrites and the ones who are ungrateful altogether in hell. (4:140)
Those who lie in wait for you, if there had been a victory from God for you, they would say: Have we not been with you? If the ones who are ungrateful had been with a share, they would say: Gain we not mastery over you and secure you from among the ones who believe? And God will give judgment between you on the Day of Resurrection. God will never assign the ones who are ungrateful any way over the ones who believe. (4:141)

COMMENTARY°

This passage provides another module in the process of the Muslim community's education to achieve the status God has assigned to it. He, Himself, describes it as *the best community ever raised for humanity*. At the same time, it is part of the consistent line of action aiming to educate the human soul and cure it of all deviation and error. It is a line determined by God, the Creator of the human soul who knows its complexity, nature, desires, aspirations, ability and potential.

This module outlines the basic education process which applies to all generations, and which aims to elevate people from whatever standard they may be at to the heights the Quranic message wants humanity to achieve. At the same time, it gives us a picture of the prevailing situation of the first Muslim community addressed by the Quran. It gives a true image of that community with all its human aspects, including its strengths and weaknesses, traces of their past days of ignorance and their instinctive feelings. It shows the Quranic

method of treating and strengthening the human soul, and encouraging it to stick to the truth of Islam, with all that involves of hard work and sacrifice.

The passage begins with an address to the Muslim community to fulfil the duties its role implies. This means to uphold absolute justice, attaining an ideal standard never before achieved in history except through this Muslim community. It is a standard of justice which requires the community to deal directly with God, disregarding every emotion, prejudice or interest, including what is often called community or national interests. Its only aim is to maintain the God- fearing path which leads to earning His pleasure.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was

emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

LESSON 92(21). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

SIGNS 4:142-4:152

Madinah: *Truly, the ones who are hypocrites seek to trick God. And He is The One Who Deceives them, and when they stood up for formal prayer, they stood up lazily to make display to humanity. And they remember not God but a little,* (4:142)

ones who are wavering between this and that, neither with these,

nor with these. And whom God causes to go astray
thou wilt never find a way for him. (4:143)
O those who believed! Take not to yourselves
the ones who are ungrateful as protectors
instead of the ones who believe.
Want you to assign to God clear authority
against yourselves? (4:144)
Truly, the ones who are hypocrites
will be in the lowest, deepest reaches of the fire.
And you will not find for them any helper, (4:145)
but those who repented and made things right and cleaved firmly
to God and made sincere their way of life for God, then, those will
be with the ones who believe. And God will give
the ones who believe a sublime compensation. (4:146)
What would God accomplish by your punishment if you gave
thanks to Him and believed in Him?
God had been One Who is Responsive, Knowing. (4:147)
God loves not the open publishing of evil sayings,
the open publishing of evil sayings, but by him who was wronged.
God had been Hearing, Knowing. (4:148)
If you show good or conceal it or pardon evil, then, truly,
God had been Pardoning, Powerful. (4:149)
Truly, those who are ungrateful to God and His Messengers and
they want to separate and divide between God and His Messengers
and they say: We believe in some and we disbelieve in others, they
want that they take themselves to a way between that. (4:150)
Those, they are, in truth, the ones who are ungrateful.
We made ready for the ones who are ungrateful
a despised punishment. (4:151)
And those who believed in God and His Messengers
and they separate and divide not between any of them, those,
He will give them their compensation.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (4:152)

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter moves on to paint another ugly picture of the hypocrites, adding further facts that show their designs to be hollow. It reiterates God's warnings to them: **(4:142-4:143)** These verses again touch believing hearts, which will undoubtedly feel disgust with people who try to deceive God. A believer knows that God, limitless is He in His glory, cannot be deceived. How could that be possible when He knows the innermost secrets of people's hearts and what is even more deeply concealed. Believers realize that a person who tries

to deceive God must have within him a great measure of evil, ignorance and naivety. Hence, they are disgusted with such people and look upon them with contempt.

The Chapter states that while they try to deceive God, it is indeed He who causes them to be deceived. He simply allows them to travel along their erring way, without alerting them by a calamity that opens their eyes. He leaves them to go along until they fall into the abyss towards which they aim. Calamities and trials can often be an act of mercy, as they deter people from going further into error, or they alert them to what they have overlooked. Favors and affluence may also be a temptation for those who have been hardened in sin. As a result, they are left without any shock to wake them up to the realities of which they have become oblivious to. They continue in their sinning ways until they reach their most evil destination.

At this point when contempt of the hypocrites is at its strongest and believers' feelings of the hypocrites' weakness is at its highest, the believers are warned against taking the same way as the hypocrites. As we have explained, the way the hypocrites follow is that of taking the unbelievers for their allies in preference to the believers. They are warned against God's punishment, and shown the destiny of the hypocrites in the hereafter, which is both fearful and humiliating.

Believers! Do not take the unbelievers for your allies in preference to the believers. **(4:144-146)**

Finally, we have a remarkable, inspiring and profoundly effective touch. It comes after mentioning terrible punishment and great, splendid reward, in order to make people realize that God has no need to punish anyone. **(4:147)**

Those who deny God and His Messengers, and want to make a distinction between [belief in] God and [belief in] His Messengers, and say: We believe in some but we deny others, and want to pursue a path in-between those, in truth, are unbelievers. We have prepared for unbelievers humiliating suffering. As for those who believe in God and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them—to them He will give their reward. God is indeed Much-Forgiving, Merciful. **(4:150-152)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and

resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

Lesson 92(22). Critical Thinking Strategy
Thinking Independently

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)
Signs 4:153-4:162

Madinah: *The People of the Book ask you that you have sent down to them a Book from heaven. Surely, they had asked Moses for greater than that. Then, they said: Cause us to see God publicly. So a thunderbolt took them for their injustice. Again, they took the calf to themselves after what drew near to them— the clear portents. Even so We pardoned that.*

And We gave Moses a clear authority. (4:153)
And We exalted the mount above them for their solemn promise.
And We said to them: Enter the door as ones who prostrate themselves. And We said to them: Disregard not the Sabbath!
And We took from them an earnest solemn promise (4:154)
for their breaking their solemn promise and their ingratitude for the signs of God and their killing the Prophets without right and their saying: Our hearts are encased. Nay! God set a seal on them for their ingratitude—so they believe not but a few— (4:155)
and for their ingratitude and their saying against Mary serious, false charges to harm her reputation (4:156)
and for their saying: We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God. And they killed him not, nor they crucified him. Rather, a likeness to him of another was shown to them. And, truly, those who were at variance in it are in uncertainty about it. There is no knowledge with them about it but they are pursuing an opinion. And they for certain killed him not. (4:157)
Nay! God exalted him to Himself.
And God had been Almighty, Wise. (4:158)
Yet there is none among the People of the Book but will, surely, believe in Jesus before his death.
And on the Day of Resurrection
he will be a witness against them. (4:159)
So for the injustice of those who became Jews,
We forbade them what was good that was permitted to them and for their barring many from the way of God (4:160)
and for their taking usury—although they were prohibited from it—and for their consuming the wealth of humanity with falsehood.
We made ready for the ones who are ungrateful among them a painful punishment. (4:161)
But the ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge among them and the ones who believe, they believe in what was caused to descend to you and what was caused to descend before you. They are the ones who perform the formal prayer. And they are the ones who give the purifying alms. They are the ones who believe in God and the Last Day. It is those to whom
We will give a sublime compensation. (4:162)

COMMENTARY°

Having established this basic principle of the Quranic message with regard to the truth of faith and unfaith, God's Messengers and their messages, the Chapter now refers to the attitudes adopted by some of the ungrateful in Madinah on a number of occasions and how they openly spoke evil. It denounces their attitude towards the

Prophet and his message, particularly their demands asking him to provide them with signs and evidence proving his message. It compares this attitude to the one they adopted towards their own Messenger, Moses, and to their attitude towards Jesus and his mother, Mary.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

LESSON 92(23). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (meta-cognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present*

and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
SIGNS 4:163-4:170

Madinah: *Truly, We revealed to you, as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him. And We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon. And We gave David the Psalms.* (4:163)
And Messengers We related to you before and Messengers We relate to you not.
God spoke directly to Moses, speaking directly. (4:164)
Messengers are ones who give good tidings and ones who warn so that humanity not be in disputation against God after the Messengers. And God had been Almighty, Wise. (4:165)
And God bears witness to what He caused to descend to you. He caused it to descend with His knowledge. And the angels also bear witness. And God sufficed as witness. (4:166)
Truly, those who were ungrateful and barred others from the way of God, they, surely, went astray, a wandering far astray. (4:167)
Truly, those who were ungrateful and did wrong, God will never be forgiving of them, nor guide them to a road (4:168)
but the road to hell, ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally. And that had been easy for God. (4:169)
O humanity! Surely, the Messenger drew near you with The Truth from your Lord. So believe, it is better for you. And if you are ungrateful, then, truly, to God is whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And God had been Knowing, Wise. (4:170)
O People of the Book! Go not beyond the limits in your way of life and say not about God but The Truth: That the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was a Messenger of God and His Word that He cast to Mary and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers. And say not: Three. To refrain yourselves from it is better for you. There is only One God. Glory be to Him that He have a son! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth and God sufficed as a Trustee. (4:171)

COMMENTARY°

The Chapter continues its confrontation with the people of earlier revelations, particularly their rejection of the Prophet Muhammad's message and their false claim that God did not send him as a Messenger. It refers to the distinction they tried to draw between mes-

sengers and their arrogant demands for proof of this message in the form of a book sent to him, Muhammad, from heaven. This Chapter states clearly that revelation to a messenger is not something new or strange. Indeed, it is the normal practice with all messengers since the time of Noah to that of Muhammad. All of them have been sent as messengers bringing happy news and delivering strong warnings. This is an aspect of divine mercy bestowed by God on His servants that they may have no argument to justify their disbelief. They have been amply warned before the Day of Judgment. All these messengers were sent for the same aim, and to convey the same message.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 92(24). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO- AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of themselves without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in

the extremist ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assignment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teach how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions e plicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to app the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find

that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
SIGNS 4:172-4:176

Madinah: *The Messiah will never disdain*
that he be a servant of God
nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him.

And whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself. (4:172)
Then, as for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, then, He will pay their compensation in full and increase His grace for them. And as for those who disdained and grew arrogant, He will punish them with a painful punishment. They will not find for themselves other than God a protector or a helper. (4:173)
O humanity! Surely, there drew near you proof from your Lord. And We caused to descend to you a clear light. (4:174)
So for those who believed in God and cleaved firmly to Him, then, He will cause them to enter into mercy from Him and grace and guide them to Himself on a straight path. (4:175)
They ask you for advice. Say: God pronounces to you about indirect heirs. If a man perished and he be without children and he has a sister, then, for her is half of what he left. And he inherits from her if she be without children. And if there had been two sisters, then, for them (f), two-thirds of what he left. And if there had been brothers/sisters, men and women, the man will have the like allotment as two females. God makes manifest to you so that you go not astray, and God is Knowing of everything. (4:176)

COMMENTARY°

As the Chapter moves to its conclusion, it makes a general cal to all humanity. It tells people that this final message brings its own proof from God and that it is a glorious light which removes all doubt. Those who accept its guidance will receive God's mercy and His grace. They will find themselves guided by this light along a straight path.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN

Outline: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details,

and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Prove: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

Relate: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

Review: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

State: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

Summarize: When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

Trace: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way?
Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•
Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.
Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.
Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•
Why was she willing to do this? Was she scared?
What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?
Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi-

dent you have learned.

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
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66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES

1. Mohammad Hisham Kamali, "Reading the Signs."
2. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance from Error.*
3. Ali Shariati, *Shariait on Shariati and the Muslim Woman.*
4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*
5. Mohammad Hisham Kamali, "Reading the Signs."

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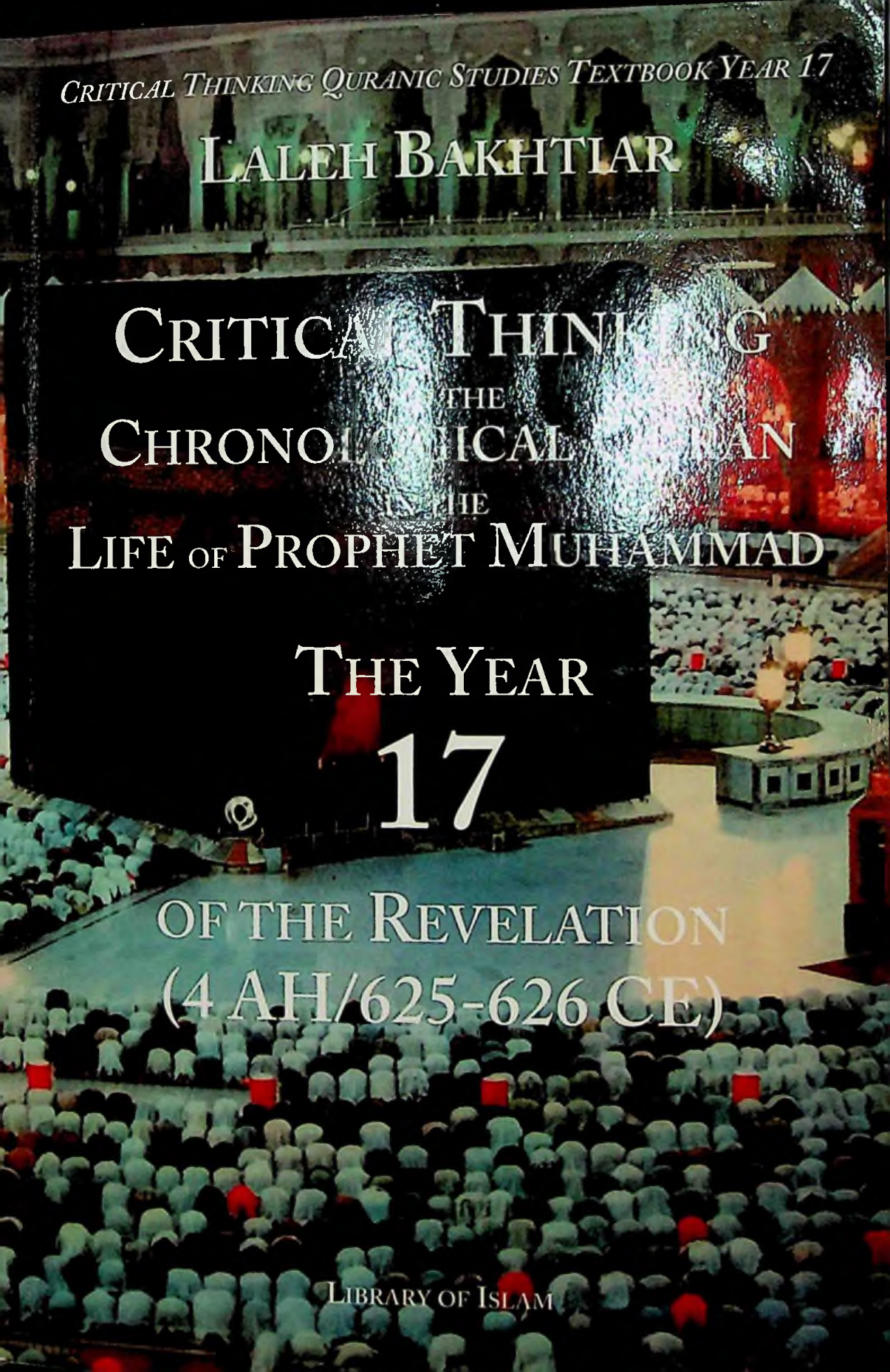
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 17, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 4 AH/ca. June 13, 625 CE-June 1, 626 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: ʿAQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

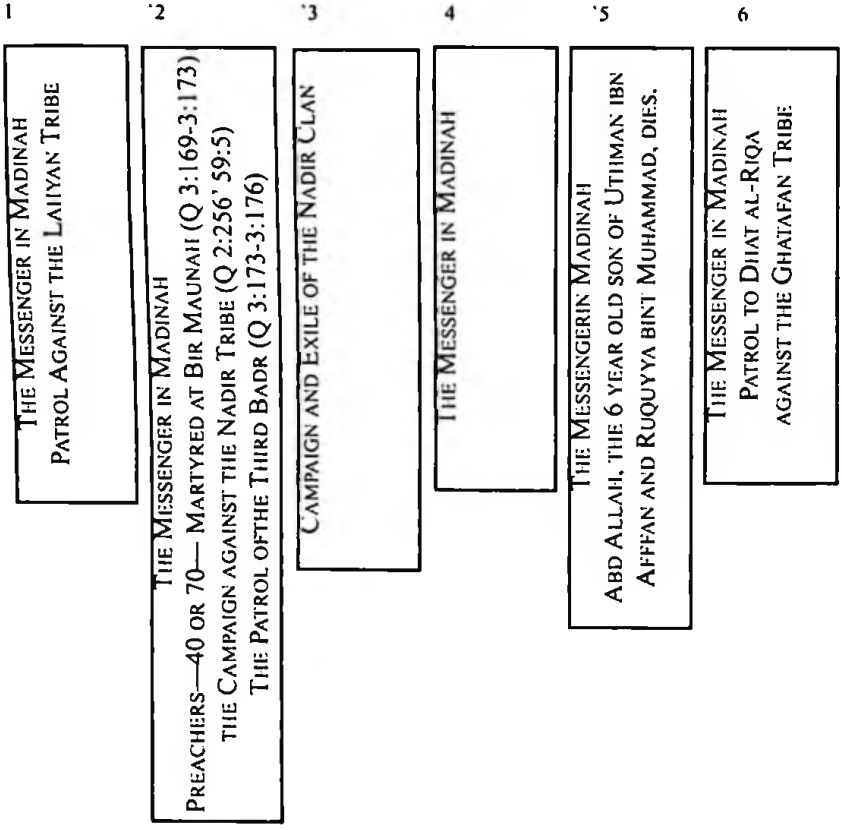
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 17*

TIMELINE



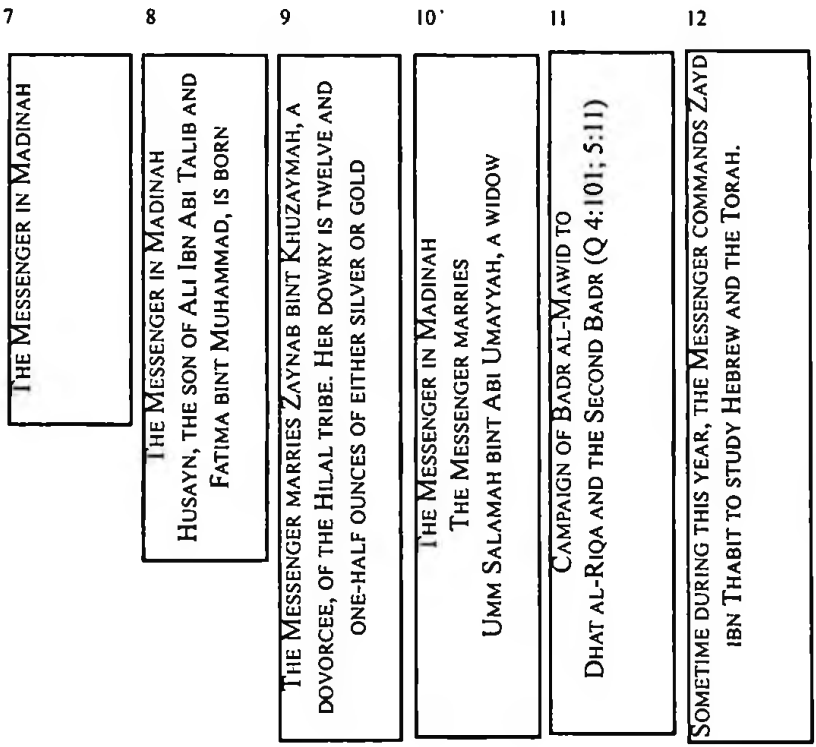
Key

1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Preview *Book Year 17*

Timeline



Key
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 17* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. It begins with Lesson 93 and Quranic Chapter 99, the 93rd chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 57, 47, 13, 55, 76, 65, 98 and, finally, Quranic Chapter 59 in Lesson 101.

LESSON 93. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

The Quran cautions:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 99: THE CONVULSION (AL-ZALZALAH) SIGNS 99:1-99:8

Madinah: *When the earth will be convulsed*
with a convulsion, (99:1)
and the earth brought out its ladings (99:2)
and the human being said: What is with it? (99:3)
On that Day it will divulge its news (99:4)
for your Lord revealed it. (99:5)
On that Day humanity will issue, separately,
that they may be caused to see their actions. (99:6)
And whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. (99:7)
And whoever does the weight of an atom
of the worst will see it. (99:8)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter makes a violent wake-up call to drowsy hearts; the subject matter, scene drawn and rhythm all contributing to the effect of this jolt. It is a powerful blast that makes the earth and all that is

on it quake and tremble. People hardly recover their senses when they find themselves confronted with the reckoning, weighing and evaluating of actions and deeds. They immediately receive their recompense. All this is expressed in just a few short phrases, which is characteristic of this part of the Quran as a whole and forcefully portrayed in this particular chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Here the Prophet is told to tell the servants of God that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. How will the servants of God be treated in the next life? They will be amidst gardens and springs. They will enter in peace as ones who are safe. God will reward His servants. Those who are the servants of God will receive a great compensation. The consequences for those who are servants of God will be eternal peace. The servants of God will be rewarded.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of my own thoughts and feelings.

LESSON 94(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment just as Umar al-Khattab had been regarding the conversion of the people around him. What were they listening to? What was Muhammad telling them: Why would my sister and her husband have converted? What is special about this message?.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 57: IRON (AL-HADID)
SIGNS 57:1-57:10

Madinah: *Whatever is in the heavens glorified God*
and whatever is in and on the earth.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (57:1)
To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
He gives life and causes to die.
And He is Powerful over everything. (57:2)
He is The First and The Last, The One Who is Outward
and The One Who is Inward.
And He is Knowing of everything. (57:3)
It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.
Again, He turned His attention to the Throne.
He knows what penetrates into the earth and what goes forth from
it, and what comes down from the heaven and what goes up to it.
And He is with you wherever you had been.
And God is Seeing of what you do. (57:4)
To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
All commands are returned to God. (57:5)
He causes the nighttime to be interposed into the daytime and
causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime.
And He is Knowing of whatever is in the breasts. (57:6)
Believe in God and His Messenger and spend out of what He made
you ones who are successors in it. Those among you who believed
and spent, for them is a great compensation. (57:7)
And what is the matter with you that you believe not in God
while the Messenger calls to you to believe in your Lord?
And He took your solemn promise,

if you had been ones who believe. (57:8)
It is He Who sends down to His servant clear portents, signs,
that He brings you out from the shadows into the light.
And, truly, God is to you Gentle, Compassionate. (57:9)
And what is the matter with you
that you spend not in the way of God?
And to God belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth?
Not on the same level among you are whoever spent before the victory and fought. Those are more sublime in degree than those who spent afterwards and fought.
And God promised the fairer to all.
And God is Aware of what you do. (57:10)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter, in its totality, is an address to the Muslim community, calling upon it to fulfil faith within its own society. The community should become an embodiment of the truth of faith, enabling hearts to become so dedicated that they are ready to sacrifice all, life and property, feelings and emotions, for it. With this truth, human souls are elevated to a divine level while they still live on earth. Thus, their standards are those that God has established, and their values are those that are given weight on God s scales. This truth enables hearts to feel the presence of God, to humble themselves when He is mentioned and to discard everything that may hinder them from turning to Him in complete dedication. On the basis of this truth of faith, the chapter calls upon the Muslim community to sacrifice life and property for God s cause: (57:7-57:10)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret**

the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran reiterates in many places that the Hour is that which will come. How does the Quranic message tell the Prophet to behave towards the ungrateful? Be graciously forgiving of them as their fate rests with God. The fate of everyone is in the hands of God. We are not responsible for the actions of others. We are each responsible for our own actions. The Hour will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes Ie worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 94(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

QURANIC CHAPTER 57: IRON (AL-HADID) SIGNS 57:11-57:19

Madinah: *Who is he who will lend to God a fairer loan*
that He multiply it for him
and he will have a generous compensation? (57:11)
On a Day you will see the males, ones who believe
and the females, ones who believe, their light coming eagerly in
advance of them and on their right: Good tidings for you this Day,
Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them
forever. That, it is the winning the sublime triumph! (57:12)
On a Day the males will say, ones who are hypocrites and females,
the ones who are hypocrites, to those who believed:
Wait for us that we will borrow from your light.
It will be said: Return behind and search out for a light.
There would be a fence between them for which there is a door.
That which is inward is mercy and that which is outward
is towards the punishment. (57:13
The hypocrites will cry out to the believers:
Have we not been with you?
They will say: Yea! And you let yourselves be tempted
and you awaited and you were in doubt and you were deluded by
following your fantasies until the command of God drew near and
the deluder deluded you in regard to God. (57:14)
So this Day ransom will not be taken from you nor from those who
were ungrateful. Your place of shelter will be the fire.
It is your defender.
And miserable will be the Homecoming! (57:15)
Is it not time for those who believed that their hearts be humbled
by the Remembrance of God and to The Truth that came down to
them and that they not be like those

who were given the Book before?
Then, the space of time was long for them so their hearts became
hard. And many of them were ones who disobey. (57:16)
Know you that God gives life to the earth after its death.
Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps
you will be reasonable. (57:17)
Truly, the males, ones who are charitable and the females,
ones who are charitable and who lent a fairer loan to God,
it will be multiplied for them
and for them there is a generous compensation. (57:18)
And those who believed in God and His Messengers,
those, they are the just persons.
And the witnesses to their Lord.
For them is their compensation and their light.
And those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs,
those are the Companions of Hellfire. (57:19)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter goes a stage further in motivating addressees to be true believers and to make financial sacrifices. It provides further incentives and inspiration: (57:11-57:19) This address is not merely inspiring; it is captivating. This part continues with the main theme of the chapter, fulfilment of the true meaning of faith in people's hearts so that they come forward with financial sacrifice purely for God's sake. It includes inspiring touches similar to those found in the first part. It begins with a note of remonstration addressed to the believers who had not at that time attained the standard God wanted them to attain. It puts before them the situation of communities from among the people of earlier revelations whose hearts had hardened as time went by and, as a result, transgressed. The believers are warned against ending up in the same position, but a pleasant prospect is also put before them, telling them that God gives hearts a fresh life in the same way as He restores life to the earth after it has been lifeless. Then we take a look at the next world. This is coupled with a repeat call to offer a generous loan to God, one that promises multiple repayment and a generous reward. This, thus, mirrors what was stated in the first part of the chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells the Prophet to say to the people that he was commanded to be the first who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God. He was not among the polytheists, the ungrateful who worshipped more gods than there are. There is only One God and a Muslim is one who submits to the One God. To submit means that one does not rebel against God's will. To submit to the One God is to be saved. That Muhammad was commanded to be the first one [among you] who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God.

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

LESSON 94(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 57: IRON (AL-HADID)
SIGNS 57:20-57:25

Madinah: *Know that this present life is only a pastime, a diversion*
and an adornment and a mutual boasting among you
and a rivalry in respect to wealth and children
as the likeness of plenteous rain water.
The plants impressed ones who are ungrateful.
Again, it withers; then, you have seen it yellowing.
Again, it becomes chaff while in the world to come there is severe
punishment and forgiveness from God and contentment.
And this present life is nothing but a delusion of enjoyment. (57:20)
Move quickly towards forgiveness from your Lord and the Garden
whose depth is as the breadth of the heavens and earth.
It was prepared for those who believed in God
and His Messengers. That is the grace of God. He gives it to whom
He wills. And God is The Possessor of the Sublime Grace. (57:21)
And no affliction lit on the earth nor on yourselves
but it is in a Book that We fashion before.
Truly, that is easy for God, (57:22)
so that you not grieve over what slipped away from you
nor be glad because of what was given to you.
And God loves not any proud, boaster, (57:23)
those who are misers and who command humanity to miserliness,
and whoever turns away then, God,
He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise. (57:24)
Certainly, We sent Our Messengers with the clear portents
and We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance
so that humanity may uphold equity.
And We caused iron to descend in which is vigorous might
and profits for humanity that perhaps God would know
whoever helps Him and His Messengers in the unseen.
Truly, God is Strong, Almighty. (57:25)

COMMENTARY°

The comments on this call reach to a high standard of faith and the sacrifice of life and property. It shows the life of this world to be too trivial to have any value for people who aspire to heaven. Know that the life of this world is but a play, a passing delight, a beautiful show, a cause of boasting among you and a quest for more riches and children. It is like the rain that causes the plants to grow, and thus gives delight to the sowers. Then it withers, and you can see it turn yellow, and in the end it crumbles into dust. In the life to come there is terrible suffering, as well as God's forgiveness and His goodly acceptance. The life of this world is no more than an illusory pleasure. **(57:20)**

The chapter calls the believers to compete in the proper field for the one and only worthwhile prize that will define their permanent status in the everlasting world: Vie with one another in seeking to attain your Lord's forgiveness, and a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who believe in God and His messengers. Such is God's bounty which He grants to whomever He pleases, God's bounty is great indeed. **(57:21)**

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The chapter now adds a profound note about God's will, which will always be done: **(57:22-57:24)**

The next part of the chapter briefly outlines the history of the divine message, starting with Noah and Abraham. It states its aims and objectives in peoples lives, referring briefly to the conditions of the people of earlier revelations, particularly those who followed Jesus: We sent Our Messengers with clear evidence of the truth, and through them We bestowed the book from on high, setting the bal-

ance, so that people could uphold justice. We have also sent down iron, with its mighty strength and diverse uses for mankind. Thus God may mark out those who would stand up for Him and His Messengers, even though He is beyond the reach of human perception. God is indeed powerful, almighty. **(57:25)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
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6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful what the result of their denying the signs of God will be. What is the result of the ungrateful's denial of the signs of God? On the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful will wish that they could be returned to this life in order to accept the signs of God. When before their Lord, they would admit that the Quran is stating the Truth. It would be too late to avoid the punishment. Those who deny the Last Day will not be returned to this life to change their ways and even if they were to be returned to this life, they still would not believe. The Day of Judgment is the Day when each person will be judged for what they did. Those who deny the Day of Judgment in this life will be punished in the next life. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

LESSON 94(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 57: IRON (AL-HADID)
SIGNS 57:26-57:29

Madinah: *And, certainly, We sent Noah and Abraham*
and We assigned to their offspring prophethood and the Book.
And of them are ones who are truly guided
while many of them are ones who disobey. (57:26)
Again, We sent Our Messengers following their footsteps.
And We sent following them Jesus son of Mary.
And We gave him the Gospel.
And We assigned in the hearts of those who followed him,
tenderness and mercy. But as for monasticism, they made it up
themselves. We prescribed it not for them but they were so looking
for the contentment of God. Then, they gave it not the attention
giving its right attention so We gave those who believed
among them their compensation.

And many of them are ones who disobey. (57:27)
O those who believed! Be God-conscious
and believe in His Messenger.
He will give you a double like part of His mercy.
And He assigns you a light to walk by.
And He will forgive you.
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (57:28)
Certainly, the People of the Book know that they have no power
over anything of the grace of God and that the grace of God
is in the hand of God. He gives it to whomever He wills.
And God is Possessor of the Sublime Grace. (57:29)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter concludes with this address to the believers that is full of encouragement to compete for the great prize of God s mercy and heaven. It is a fitting conclusion to a chapter that repeatedly calls on believers to fulfil the requirements of their faith, humble themselves before God and make the necessary sacrifices of self and property, in complete dedication to Him.

In conclusion, we say that this chapter is a clear example of the Quranic method of addressing human hearts in a profound and effective way. In its opening, flow and conclusion, in its music, images and connotations, in its handling of its subject matter and how it develops it stage after stage, the chapter provides a highly effective lesson to advocates of the divine message. It teaches them how to address people and how to bring human nature and hearts alive. It is a lesson taught by the Maker of hearts, the author of the Quran, and the Creator of everything in due measure. It is from this school that successful advocates of God's message graduate.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

QURANIC SIGN 2:260

When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how You shall give life to the dead. He said: Shall you (Abraham) not believe? He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest. He (God) said: Then take four birds and

twist them to yourself. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach you coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise. (2:260)

QUESTIONS 2:260:

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?

What example does it give?

Is this an example of everyone having to agree?

What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

You can use a number of techniques to learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just finding a definition of a word, try to paraphrase the word or concept to something that you already understand. You can also add examples from your classmates to the list.

Rewrite passages, making them clear to yourself. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

LESSON 95(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[12]

QURANIC CHAPTER 47: MUHAMMAD

SIGNS 47:1-47:11

Madinah: *Those who were ungrateful and who barred from the way of God—He caused their actions to go astray.* (47:1)
And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality and believed in what was sent down to Muhammad—for it is The Truth from their Lord—He will absolve them of their evil deeds and will make right their state of mind. (47:2)
That is because those who were ungrateful followed falsehood, while those who believed followed The Truth from their Lord. Thus, God propounds for humanity their parables. (47:3)
So when you met those who were ungrateful, then, strike their thick necks until you gave them a sound thrashing.
Then, tie them fast with restraints.
And afterwards either have good will towards them or take ransom for them until the war ends, laying down its heavy load. Thus, it is so!
But if God willed, He Himself would have, certainly, avenged you.

But it is to try some of you with some others.
As for those who were slain in the way of God, He will never cause
their actions to go astray. (47:4)
He will guide them and He will make right
their state of mind. (47:5)
And He will cause them to enter the Garden
with which He acquainted them. (47:6)
O those who believed! If you help God, He will help you
and make firm your feet. (47:7)
As for those who are ungrateful, for them is falling into ruin!
And He caused their actions to go astray. (47:8)
That is because they disliked what God caused to descend
so He caused their actions to fail. (47:9)
Journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the
Ultimate End of those who were before them? God destroyed them.
And for ones who are ungrateful is its likeness. (47:10)
That is because God is the Defender of those who believed.
And for the ones who are ungrateful,
there is no defender of them. (47:11)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter, Muhammad, was revealed in Madinah. It also goes by another name, *al-Qital*, meaning 'fighting'. This secondary title is very apt because fighting is the chapter's subject matter providing most of its images and giving it its distinctive beat. It begins with an explanation of the true nature of both the ungrateful and the believers which takes the form of a moral attack on the former and a monologue of praise of the latter. The clear implication is that God is the enemy of the ungrateful and the protector of those who have faith. Furthermore, this is a true fact in God s sight. Thus, the opening of the chapter serves as a declaration of war by God against His enemies who are hostile to His faith: **(47:1-47:3)**

Once this declaration of war against the ungrateful is made, an express, resounding order is given to the believers to join this war against them. This order is followed by an outline of the rules that apply to captives of war once the bloody battle is over: **(47:4)** Added to this order is an explanation about the purpose of fighting and encouragement to the believers to join with it and do well, and a promise of honor for those who fall as martyrs. A further promise of help is given to those who join the fighting in support of God s cause, with an added rejoinder making clear that the unbelievers will be destroyed and their deeds will come to nothing: **(47:4-47:11)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

LESSON 95(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

QURANIC CHAPTER 47: IRON (AL-HADID)
SIGNS 47:12-47:19

Madinah: *Truly, God will cause to enter those who believed*
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
gardens beneath which rivers run.
While those who were ungrateful, take joy in eating
as the flocks eat,
the fire will be the place of lodging for them. (47:12)
And how many a town had there been which was stronger in
strength than thy town which drove thee out, that We have caused
to perish? And there was no one who helps them! (47:13)
Is he who had been on a clear portent from his Lord like him
for whom was made to appear pleasing his dire actions
and they followed their own desires? (47:14)
This is the parable of the Garden
which was promised the ones who are God-conscious:
In it are rivers of unpolluted water and rivers of milk,
the taste of which is not modified and rivers of intoxicants
delightful to ones who drink and rivers of clarified honey,
and in it for them all kinds of fruits and forgiveness
from their Lord.
Is this like ones who will dwell forever in the fire
and they were given scalding water to drink
so that it cuts off their bowels? (47:15)
And among them are some who listen to you

*until when they went forth from **you**.*
They said to those who were given the knowledge:
What was that he said just now?
Those are those upon whose hearts God set a seal.
And they followed their own desires. (47:16)
And those who were truly guided, He increased them in guidance
and He gave to them their God-consciousness. (47:17)
Look they, then, on not but the Hour,
that it approach them suddenly?
Certainly, its tokens drew near. Then, what will it be like for them
when their reminder drew near to them? (47:18)
*So know **you** that there is no god but God and ask forgiveness*
for thy impieties and also for the males, ones who believe and the
females, ones who believe, and God knows your place of turmoil
and your place of lodging. (47:19)

COMMENTARY°

Having opened with such a strong attack on the ungrateful, the chapter adds a varied discourse on faith, describing the states of the believers and the ungrateful both in this world and in the life to come. It distinguishes between a believer's enjoyment of goodly things and the way the ungrateful enjoy the pleasures of this world in a way that does not differ from that of cattle: **(47:12)** It describes what the believers will drink in heaven, variously pure water, milk with unaltered taste, delightful wine and pure, clarified honey. These drinks are so plentiful that they flow like rivers. Moreover, they have plenty of every type of fruit, together with God s forgiveness and His being pleased with them. A rhetorical question is then added: **(47:15)**

This first round in the ever-raging battle between the believers and the ungrateful over, the chapter starts another round with the hypocrites who, together with other groups in Madinah, represented a danger to the Muslim community.

References to the hypocrites are made in the same confrontational and fighting manner as the rest of the chapter. This is noticeable right from their first mention, which describes how they are absent minded when they sit with the Prophet and its comment that describes them as being far astray, following their desires: **(47:16)**

They are warned that the Last Hour will inevitably come, and, then, they will not even be able to take heed: **(47:18)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance ... (6:52) the Quranic message tells us. Who is one who drives them away? Those who drive them away are the unjust. It is unjust to drive away anyone who calls on his or her Lord in the morning or evening wanting His Countenance, His Presence. This behavior is the sign of a believer no matter what his social status may be. Their reckoning is not on us and our reckoning is not on them. Therefore, a believer knows the answer to the Quranic question: *Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR LISTENING CRITICALLY ARE:

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying. Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

LESSON 95(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible **fashion.**[15]

QURANIC CHAPTER 47: IRON (AL-HADID)
SIGNS 47:20-47:28

Madinah: *And those who believed say:*
Why was a chapter of the Quran
not caused to descend?
But when was caused to descend a definitive chapter of the Quran
*and fighting was remembered in it, **you** had seen those who in their*
*hearts is a sickness looking on **you***
with the look of one who is fainting at death. (47:20)
But better for them would be obedience and an honorable saying!
And when the affair was resolved, then,
if they were sincere to God,
it would have been better for them. (47:21)
Will it be that if you turned away, you would make corruption in
the earth and cut off your ties with blood relations? (47:22)
Those are those whom God cursed,
so He made them unwilling to hear
and their sight, unwilling to see. (47:23)
Meditate they not, then, on the Quran
or are there locks on their hearts? (47:24)
Truly, those who went back—turn their back— after the guidance
became clear to them, it was Satan who enticed them
and He granted them indulgence. (47:25)
That is because they said to those who disliked
what God sent down: We will obey you in some of the affair.
And God knows what they keep secret. (47:26)
Then, how will it be for them when the angels will call them to
themselves, striking their faces and their backs? (47:27)

That is because they followed what displeased God
and they disliked His contentment
so He caused their actions to fail. (47:28)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then describes their panic when they are confronted with an express Quranic order to fight. They have pretended to be believers, and here we see how the chapter makes abundantly clear the difference between them and true believers: **(47:20)** While they are urged to obey God and His Messenger and to be truthful and firm, the chapter condemns their behavior and declares war against them. They are expelled from God s mercy: **(47:20-23)** The hypocrites' schemes are exposed: they listen to Satan and befriend the Jews and conspire with them against the believers. Therefore, they are warned about torture that would be inflicted on them at the point of death. They are also warned about exposure within the Muslim community to which they pretend to belong when they are not really part of it. On the contrary, they scheme against it: **(47:25-47:28)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication**(s)?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here contains three "say" verses, messages the Prophet is specifically told to relate regarding faith. What are the three? To worship other than God is to go astray; to follow the desires of another is to go astray; God has sent the Prophet with a clear sign by which He distin-

guishes truth from falsehood that the ungrateful deny. If the command that the ungrateful wish to hasten to come were to arrive, the command of God would already have been decided. "Say" verses are an important concept in the Quran as a means of Quranic commands—imperatives—to be followed. Knowing the Quran as the first source for information about the Prophet is essential. This will give us a "new view" into his life.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

LESSON 95(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 47: IRON (AL-HADID)
SIGNS 47:29-47:38

Madinah: *Or assumed those who in their hearts is a sickness*
that God will never bring out their rancor? (47:29)
If We will, We would have caused thee to see them.
You would have recognized them by their mark.
But, certainly, you will recognize them by the twisting of sayings.
And God knows all your actions. (47:30)
And, certainly, We will try you until We know the ones who struggle
among you and the ones who remain steadfast
and We will try your reports. (47:31)
Truly, those who were ungrateful and barred from the way of God
and made a breach with the Messenger
after guidance became clear to them,
they never hurt or profit God at all,
but He will cause their actions to fail. (47:32)
O those who believed! Obey God and obey the Messenger
and render not your actions untrue. (47:33)
Truly, those who were ungrateful and barred from the way of God,
again, they died while they were ones who are ungrateful,

then, God will never forgive them. (47:34)
So be not faint and call for peace while you have the upper hand.
God is with you
and He will never cheat you out of your actions. (47:35)
This present life is only a pastime and a diversion.
But if you believe and are God-conscious,
He will give you your compensation
and will not ask of you for your property. (47:36)
When He asks it of you and, then, urges persistently, you would be
a miser and He will bring out your rancor. (47:37)
Lo and behold! These are being called to spend in the way of God,
yet among you are some who are misers. And whoever is miser,
then, he is a miser only to himself. God is Sufficient and you are
poor. And if you turn away, He will have a folk other than you in
exchange. Again, they will not be the like of you. (47:38)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter's third and final round again takes up the attack against the ungrateful from among the Quraysh and the Jews: **(47:29-47:32)** It warns the believers against falling into the same traps as their enemies: **(47:33-47:34)** They are encouraged to remain firm during the fight: **(47:35)**

The life of this world is shown to be trivial. Believers are urged to spend some of their money to support God's cause. They are not meant to give away all they have; God knows their human nature and that they would find it too difficult to make such a sacrifice should it be asked of them: **(47:36-47:37)** The chapter concludes with a note of warning to the Muslims, should they be niggardly, unwilling to spend some of their money for Gods cause: **(47:38)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret**

the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)?**
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View?**

What does the Quranic message say we should do with those who take their way of life (din, religion) as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded? *Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up to destruction for what it earned. Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor. And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (6:70)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.

Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.

Question the relevance of what we are studying.

Probe the evidence for and against what others say.

Question myself and others.

LESSON 96(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D) SIGNS 13:1-13:7

Madinah: *Alif Lam Mim Ra.*
That are the signs of the Book,
and what were caused to descend to ***you***
from ***your*** *Lord is The Truth,*
except most of humanity believes not. (13:1)
It is He Who exalted the heavens without any pillars so that you
see them. Again, He turned his attention to above the Throne.
And He caused to become subservient the sun and the moon,
each run for a term, that which is determined.
He manages the command.
He explains distinctly the signs
so that perhaps of the meeting with your Lord
you would be certain. (13:2)
And it is He Who stretched out the earth and made on it firm
mountains and rivers. And with all kinds of fruits,
he made in it two, a pair.
He covers the nighttime with the daytime.
Truly, in that are signs for a folk who reflect. (13:3)
And in the earth there are strips, that which neighbor one another
and gardens of grapevines and plowed lands and date palm trees
coming from the same root and not coming from the same root that
are given to drink from one water. And We give advantage to some
of them over some others in produce.

Truly, in these things there are signs
for a folk who are reasonable. (13:4)
And if you have marveled, then, wonder at their saying:
When we had been earth dust, will we, truly, be in a new creation?
And those are those who were ungrateful to their Lord.
Those will have yokes around their necks.
And those will be the Companions of the Fire.
They, ones who will dwell in it forever. (13:5)
And they seek you to hasten on evil deeds before the benevolence.
And, surely, passed away before them exemplary punishments.
But, truly, thy Lord is certainly, The Possessor of Forgiveness for
humanity in spite of their injustice.
And, truly, thy Lord is Severe in repayment. (13:6)
And those who were ungrateful say:
Why was a sign not caused to descend to him from his Lord?
You are only one who warns, and one who guides every folk. (13:7)

COMMENTARY°

The present chapter is a remarkable one, maintaining the same rhythm and giving the same ambience from start to finish. The Quranic musical rhythm uses a variety of elements, including harmony between the place and manner of articulation of individual sounds within a single word, sound harmony in each sentence or clause, the type of long vowels chosen, and the long vowels and the consonants used in the final words of each sign. All the elements of rhythm used in this chapter are consistent throughout, except for the long vowels and consonants in the final words of its verses. We note that the first five signs use words with an non (*fin*) ending. The rest of the chapter uses a long a (*ā*) followed by a plosive, or semi-plosive consonant, such as aab (*āb*), aad (*ād*), aal (*āl*), aar (*ār*) with our hearts to wider worlds, times and horizons, keeping us fully aware, understanding everything we see and hear. Nevertheless, it presents us with a multitude of images, feelings and thoughts that fill our imagination and address our hearts and souls in every possible way. With its brilliant light and endless meanings, it travels

What we have here is not words and sentences; rather, a strong, hammering rhythm pervades the entire chapter, permeating its images, meanings, and finer touches. The chapter opens with a basic issue of faith, namely the revelation of God's book, the Quran, and the truth it contains. This formulates the foundation over which all the other issues of faith are built, including those of the Oneness of God, belief in the hereafter, and the need to do good in this life. All these branch out from the central point of believing that the One who

gives all orders is God, and that the Quran is His revelation to the Prophet Muhammad.

The chapter then moves on to wonder at these people who are unable to see all the signs in the universe, each of which is a miracle on its own. They ask the Prophet for a miraculous sign. But what will they do with such a sign when the universe around them is full of signs pointing to the Creator. (13:7) They demand a miracle when miracles are neither of the Prophet's own making nor part of his business. It is God who decides, in His wisdom, whether it is necessary.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

LESSON 96(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)
SIGNS 13:8-13:18

Madinah: *God knows what every female carries*
and how much her womb absorbs
and what they add.
And everything with Him is in proportion. (13:8)
He is One Who Knows the unseen and the visible,
The Great, The One Who is Raised High. (13:9)
It is equal to Him whether you kept secret his saying
or you published it.
Or whoever he be, one who conceals himself by nighttime
or one who goes about carelessly in the daytime. (13:10)
For him there are Ones Who Postpone from before him
and from behind him to keep him safe by the command of God.
Truly, God alters not a folk
until they alter what is within themselves.
And when God wanted evil for a folk, then,
there is no turning it back. And there is not for them
other than He anyone who is a safeguarder. (13:11)
It is He Who causes you to see the lightning in fear and in hope.
And it is He Who causes the clouds to grow heavy, (13:12)
and thunder glorifies His praise and the angels,
because of their awe of Him.
And He sends thunderbolts and He lights on whom He wills.
And they dispute about God, and He is a Severe Force. (13:13)

For Him is the call of The Truth. And those whom they call to other than Him, they respond not to them at all, but like one who stretches out the palms of his hands for water so that it should reach his mouth, but it is not that which reaches it. And supplication of the ones who are ungrateful is only wandering astray. (13:14)

And to God prostrates whatever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly as does their shade at the first part of the day and the eventide. (13:15)

Say: Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth? Say: God!
Say: Took you to yourselves other than Him protectors? They control not themselves, neither profiting nor hurting.
Say: Are the unwilling to see on the same level as the seeing? Are the shadows on the same level as the light? Made they ascribed associates with God who created as His creation so that creation resembled one another to them? Say: God is One Who is Creator of everything. And He is The One, The Omniscient. (13:16)

He caused water to descend from heaven and it flowed into valleys according to their measure. Then, the flood bears away the froth. And from what they kindle in a fire, looking for glitter or sustenance, there is a froth the like of it. Thus, God compares The Truth and falsehood. Then, as for the froth, it goes as swelling scum while what profits humanity abides on the earth. Thus, God propounds parables. (13:17)

For those who responded to their Lord there is the fairer. And for those who respond not to Him, if they had all that is in and on the earth and its like with it, they would offer it as ransom. Those, for them will be a dire reckoning and their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the cradling! (13:18)

COMMENTARY°

Now the chapter enters a totally different realm, that of human souls and feelings and other creatures. God knows what every female bears, and by how much the wombs may fall short [in gestation], and by how much they may increase. With Him everything has its definite measure. He knows all that lies beyond the reach of human perception and all that anyone may witness. He is the Greater, the Almighty. It is all alike [to Him] whether any of you speaks in secret or aloud, whether he seeks to hide under the cover of the night or

walks openly in the light of day. Each has guardian angels before him and behind him, who watch him by God's command. Indeed God does not change a people's conditions unless they first change what is in their hearts. When God wills people to suffer some misfortune, none can avert it. Besides Him, they have none to protect them. **(13:8-13:11)**

The chapter now takes us on another round to a different but related stage. Here we see natural scenes and human feelings mixed in a perfect harmony of picture and effect. The whole image casts an atmosphere of awe, apprehension, expectation and appeal. We are on our guard as we watch, and the verses here produce a profound effect on us: **(13:12-13:16)**

The chapter moves on to give an example of truth and falsehood, the prayer that is fulfilled and the one that goes with the wind, of quiet goodness and boasting evil. The example provided depicts an aspect of God's power and His elaborate planning of creation: **(13:17)**

Whoever responds to Him will have a fine reward, and whoever turns away will face great suffering. So much so that the latter will want to offer the earth's riches twice over, in order to release himself. But there is no chance of release. There is only an awful reckoning and a fitting abode in hell: **(13:18)**

Here again the contrast is clear between those who respond to their Lord and those who do not. Between the rich reward and the awful reckoning, hell and its painful abode. This follows the same pattern of the chapter in providing one contrasting image after another.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

LESSON 96(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)
SIGNS 13:19-13:26

Madinah: *Then, is he who knows what was caused to descend to*
***you** from **your** Lord to be The Truth*
like he who is unwilling to see?
It is only those imbued with intuition who recollect. (13:19)
Those who live up to their compact with God
and break not their solemn promise (13:20)
and those who reach out to what God commanded be joined
and dread their Lord and they fear the dire reckoning (13:21)
and those who endured patiently,
looking for the Countenance of their Lord
and who performed the formal prayer
and spent out of what We have provided them
in secret and in public,
and they drive off the evil deed with benevolence—
those, for them is the Ultimate Abode: (13:22)
Gardens of Eden which they will enter along with whoever
was in accord with morality from among their fathers
and their spouses and their offspring.
And angels will enter to them from every door saying: (13:23)
Peace be to you for what you endured patiently.
How excellent is the Ultimate Abode! (13:24)
But those who break the compact of God after its solemn promise
and sever what God commanded to be joined and make corruption
in and on the earth, those, for them is the curse
and for them is the Dire Abode. (13:25)
God extends the provision for whom He wills and measures it.
They were glad in this present life. And there is nothing in this
present life like the world to come but a brief enjoyment. (13:26)

COMMENTARY°

Great scenes drawn from the vast universe and the world beyond, as well as the depths of the human soul were presented in the first half of the chapter. Now, this second half adds a fine rationality that deals with the great issues of revelation and the divine message, God's Oneness, the pagans attributing partners to Him, as well as their demand for miracles and their hastening of God's punishment.

This new phase opens with a demonstration of the natures of belief and denial of the truth. The former is evidence of true knowledge, while the latter is blindness. Another touch delineates the nature of believers and ungrateful, and the distinctive qualities of both. This is followed by a scene of the Day of Judgment and the bliss it brings to the former and suffering to the latter. We then have a description of plentiful and stinted provisions as determined by God. Then follows an image of believing hearts gaining reassurance through remembrance of God. Then we move to a description of the Quran which almost makes mountains move, or the earth split apart, or the dead speak. A further image touches on the calamities that befall unbelievers or which strike a short distance from their quarters. This is followed by a sarcastic remark directed at the unbelievers' false gods. Mention is then made of the doom of past communities so as to rid the earth of them time after time. The closing part contains a stern warning to those who deny the message of the Prophet Muhammad threatening to leave them to their inevitable doom. All this shows that the strong beat we encountered in the first half of the chapter now prepares us for a close look at the issues raised. Our minds are open to receive these issues and accept the message of the chapter. The two parts are mutually complementary, although each has its special effects, all of which serve one issue and promote the same goal.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?

3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message (6:95-6:100) calls for the deep questioning of our believes. What information are we given about the creation? Can it be interpreted as coming from any other than God? How many concepts of creation can you nae from these verses? Can one assume that God had the jinn as associates in this endeavor? What are the implications of such a belief when God created them?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 96(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS

OW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)
SIGNS 13:27-13:31

Madinah: *And those who were ungrateful say:*
Why was a sign not caused to descend to him from his Lord?
Say: Truly, God causes to go astray whom He wills
and guides to Himself whomever was penitent, (13:27)
those who believed and their hearts are at rest
in the remembrance of God,
no doubt in the remembrance of God hearts are at rest. (13:28)

Those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality,
there is joy for them and a goodness of destination. (13:29)
Thus, We sent you to a community.
Surely, passed away other communities before it
so that you would recount to them what We revealed to you
and they are ungrateful to The Merciful.
Say: He is my Lord. There is no god but He.
In Him I put my trust and to Him
I am turning in repentance. (13:30)
If there were a Recitation that would have set mountains in motion with it, or the earth would be cut off with it or the dead would be spoken to with it, nay! The command is altogether with God. Do those who believed not have knowledge that if God wills He would have guided humanity altogether. Will disaster cease not to light on
those who were ungrateful
because of what they crafted?
Or will it alight close to their abode
until the promise of God approaches?
Truly, God breaks not His solemn declaration. (13:31)

COMMENTARY°

The answer to the demand of the ungrateful asking for miracles is that miracles are not what lead people to believe. Faith has its solid foundation within the human soul. There are causes that lead to it, but these have to originate within the soul: **(13:27)** It is their turning to Him which makes them worthy of His guidance. It is clearly understood that those who do not turn to God are those who deserve to be left to go astray. This is indeed what happens to them. What matters, then, is one's own heart and its being ready to receive God's guidance. If so, it seeks it and appeals to God for it. Hearts which do not make any positive move to seek God's guidance remain far removed from it.

This is followed by an image of believing hearts which enjoy a congenial atmosphere of reassurance, happiness and peace: **(13:28)** They find comfort in their feeling that their bond with God is a real one, and that they are close to Him, secure with His support.

Such comfort **(13:28)** is a profound reality in the hearts of believers who deeply and truly feel the meaning of faith. They have a bond with God which they recognize. They cannot express the meaning of such a bond in words.

In life we often experience moments which none can withstand unless we are certain of God's support and protection, regardless of whatever resources of fortitude, perseverance and power may be at

our command. There are moments in life that render all that useless. But such moments can be faced easily by those who find their comfort in God: **(13:28)**

Those who turn to God are reassured when they remember Him, and find fine welcome when they return to Him. This is the same as the outcome of their turning to Him in this life presenting their good deeds: **(13:29)** The Arabic term, ṭūbā, which is used here for 'happiness' is chosen for its added connotations of greatness. Hence, their happiness is great, unending.

Conversely, those who demand a sign are those who have deprived themselves of the contentment, comfort and happiness of faith. They live in worry, and it is this anxiety that makes them demand miracles and signs. The chapter then tells the Prophet that he is not the first messenger to preach the divine message to his people. This means that they should not find the matter too strange. Before them there were numerous communities and many messengers. If they persist with their rejection of the divine faith, you, the Prophet, should continue to follow your own way, putting your trust in God alone: **(13:30)**

What is extremely odd is that they refuse to believe in God, the Most Gracious, in the remembrance of whose mercy people find inner comfort and contentedness. God's Messenger is being told that all his task requires is that he read to them what God has revealed to him. This is the purpose for which God has given him this message. If they persist in rejecting it, he has to make it clear to them that he places his trust in God alone, and that he turns to Him, seeking help from no one else.

The task the Prophet is sent to accomplish is to recite this remarkable Quran to them. Had there been a divine writ with which mountains move, or the earth split asunder, or the dead made to speak, this Quran would have had the necessary characteristics to achieve such supernatural phenomena. But this Quran is meant to address the living who are accountable for their deeds. If they will not respond, then the believers may despair of their ever turning to God and submitting to Him. They should leave them alone until God's threat to the unbelievers has come true: **(13:31)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What is the clear evidence that has drawn near us from our Lord according to the Quranic signs here? Analyze verses 13:31-13:32 as to information, interpretation, concepts, assumptions and implications.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.

LESSON 96(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)

SIGNS 13:32-13:37

Madinah: *And, certainly, Messengers were ridiculed before you,*
but I granted indulgence to those who were ungrateful.
Again, I took them. How had been My repayment! (13:32)
Is He, then, One Who Sustains Every Soul for what it earned?
And yet they ascribe associates with God!
Say: Name them! Or will you tell Him
of what He knows not in the earth?
Or name you only them in the manifest sayings?
Nay! Made to appear pleasing to those who were ungrateful was
their planning and they were barred from the way.
And whomever God causes to go astray,
for him there is no one who guides. (13:33)
For them is a punishment in this present life
and, certainly, punishment in the world to come
will be one that presses hard.
And for them is no one who is a defender against God. (13:34)
A parable of the Garden which was promised
to the ones who are God-conscious;
beneath it rivers run.
Its produce is one that continues as is its shade.
That is the Ultimate End of those who were God-conscious;
and the Ultimate End
of the ones who are ungrateful is the fire. (13:35)
And those to whom We gave the Book are glad
at what was caused to descend to you.
And there are among the confederates

some who reject some of it.
Say: I was commanded to worship only God and not to ascribe
partners with Him. I call to Him
and to Him is my destination. (13:36)
And, thus, We caused to descend an Arabic determination. If you
had followed their desires
after what drew near you of the knowledge,
you would not have against God either a protector
or one who is a defender. (13:37)

COMMENTARY°

The second point discussed here is that of the partners people associate with God. The issue was also discussed in the first part of the chapter. It is raised here in the form of a sarcastic question which compares such alleged partners with God who deals with every soul and rewards it for what it earns in this life. The scene is concluded with a description of the suffering those who invent this fallacy are certain to endure in this life and the greater suffering they will meet in the hereafter. This contrasts with the security and blessings awaiting the righteous: **(13:33-13:35)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Write a paragraph in answer to these questions: What are signs 6:118-6:120 referring to? What is their purpose? What questions does it cause you to think about? What information does it give? What are the assumptions? How to you interpret it? What are the implications if someone does not follow what it says?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to:

Evaluate Reasoning by:•

Use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them

Clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words

Develop criteria for evaluation

Recognize and pinpointing contradictions

Distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts

Lesson 96(6). Critical Thinking Strategy Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards

How is Developing Criteria for Evaluation by Clarifying Values and Standards used in the Quran?

Criteria Include

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)

SIGNS 13:38-13:43

Madinah: *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you*
and We assigned for them spouses and offspring.
And it had not been for a Messenger to bring a sign
but with the permission of God.
For every term there is a Book. (13:38)
God blots out what He wills
and brings to a standstill what He wills;

and with Him is the essence of the Book. (13:39)
And whether We cause ***you*** *to see some*
of what We have promised them
or call you to Ourselves, on ***you*** *is delivering the message*
and on Us is the reckoning. (13:40)
Consider they not that We approach the earth,
reducing it from its outlying parts?
And God gives judgment. There is no one who postpones
His determination. And He is Swift in reckoning. (13:41)
And, surely, those who were before them planned,
but to God is the plan altogether.
He knows what every person earns.
And the ones who are ungrateful will know
for whom will be the Ultimate Abode. (13:42)
And those who were ungrateful say: ***You*** *are not one who is sent.*
Say: God sufficed as a witness between me and between you
and whoever has knowledge of the Book. (13:43)

COMMENTARY°

Whether God inflicts any of His threats upon them during the Prophet's lifetime or causes him to die before that, the fact of the matter remains the same. The nature of the message and the nature of God remain the same: **(13:40)** This clear and decisive directive illustrates the nature of the message and the role of its advocates. Such advocates are required to fulfil their role, as it may be at every stage. They are not responsible for reaching any goal other than that determined by God. It is not for them to precipitate the attainment of any goal. They should never entertain any thought of failure when they see that their efforts have not attained power in the land. They are merely advocates of a message, and they should never go beyond this advocacy role.

God's might is clearly seen in everything around us. When strong and affluent communities deny God, allow corruption to spread and claim that they make their own affluence, God's hand begins to reduce their power, wealth and general standing. They are confined to a limited stretch of land after having had an extended area of rule and influence. When God determines that such communities shrink in their power and area, His rule is carried out, with no power able to stand in its way: **(13:41)**

Those ungrateful in Arabia are not stronger or more powerful in their scheming than the communities which lived before them. Yet those were smitten by God who is more powerful and more elaborate in His planning: **(13:42)**

The chapter concludes by mentioning the fact that the ungrateful deny God's message given to the Prophet Muhammad. Its opening confirms the truth of his message. Thus the beginning and the end address the same point. God's testimony is called for, and it is certainly sufficient. After all, He has absolute knowledge of this book, or divine writ, and of all other revealed books: **(13:43)**

Thus ends the chapter which has taken us along a trip to discover the great horizons of the universe and to show us some of the inner aspects of the human soul. It makes profound and lasting impressions on our hearts and minds, leaving the final testimony to God, which is made at both the beginning and the end. It is a testimony to put an end to all arguments.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 13:38-13:39 based on the criterion above..

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. :

I was able to develop and clarify criteria for evaluating writing.
Continually evaluate written material and discuss its criteria.
Specific points should be explained in terms of the nine standards that you support (such as clarity)

Lesson 97(1). Critical Thinking Strategy
Analyzing or Evaluating Actions

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

Quranic Chapter 55: The Merciful (al-Rahman)
Signs 55:1-55:25

Madinah: *The Merciful.* (55:1)
He taught the Quran. (55:2)
He created the human being. (55:3)
He taught him the clear explanation. (55:4)
The sun and the moon are to keep count. (55:5)
And the stars and the trees both prostrate. (55:6)
And the heaven He exalted. And He set in place the Balance (55:7)
that you be not defiant in the Balance. (55:8)
Set up the weighing with justice
and skimp not in the Balance. (55:9)
And He set the earth in place for the human race. (55:10)
On and in it are many kinds of sweet fruit
and date palm trees with sheathed fruit trees (55:11)
and grain possessor of husks and fragrant herbs. (55:12)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:13)
He created the human being
from earth mud like potter's clay. (55:14)
He created the ones who are spirits
from a smokeless flame of fire. (55:15)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:16
The Lord of the Two Easts, and the Lord of the Two Wests! (55:17)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:18
He let forth the two seas to meet one another. (55:19)
Between them is a barrier which they wrong not. (55:20)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:21
From both of them go forth pearls and coral. (55:22)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:23
His are ones that run
with that which is displayed in the sea like landmarks. (55:24)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:25)

COMMENTARY°

It is the Merciful who has taught the Quran. The Merciful created the human being and taught him to articulate thought and speech. The sun and the moon function in due measure. The stars and the trees prostrate themselves before God. He has raised the skies high, and has set the balance, so that you may not exceed the balance. Weigh, therefore, with justice and do not fall short in the balance. He has laid the earth for His creatures, with all its fruits, its palm trees with sheathed clusters, its husked grain and its sweet-smelling plants. Which, then, of your Lords blessings do you both deny? **(55:1-13)**

We now turn back to the earth and its waters, which God has made in exact measure that determines quantity, type, how it runs and how it is used. He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they may meet; yet between them is a barrier which they do not cross. Which, then, of your Lords blessings do you both deny? **(55:19-55:25)**

The two bodies of water, expressed in the Arabic text as the two seas, are in fact the salty bodies of water including seas and oceans and the un-salty ones or rivers. God left them free to run and to meet, but did not allow them to exceed their limits. Each will fulfil its own function. In between them there is a barrier of the same nature, which God has put in place. The quantities of water on earth are not the result of any coincidence; they are determined by exact measure. Salty waters cover three-quarters of the earth's surface and they are mostly connected, while dry land represents only about one quarter of the earth. This very large quantity of salty water is the amount needed to keep the earth's atmosphere clean and suitable for supporting life.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze what is being denied of the blessings of God.

Answer the following questions.
What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above signs?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

LESSON 97(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY TO RELEVANCE

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

QURANIC CHAPTER 55: THE MERCIFUL (AL-RAHMAN)

SIGNS 55:26-55:45

Madinah: *All who are in or on it are ones*
who are being annihilated, (55:26)
yet the Countenance of thy Lord will remain forever,
Possessor of The Majesty and The Splendor. (55:27)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:28)
Of Him asks whoever is in the heavens and in and on the earth.
Every day He is on some matter. (55:29)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:30)
We will attend to you at leisure, O you two dependents. (55:31)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:32
O you both, assembly of jinn and humankind!
If you were able to pass through the areas of the heavens

and the earth, then, pass through them!
But you will not pass through, but with an authority. (55:33)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:34
There will be sent against you both a flame of fire
and heated brass. Will you not, then, help yourselves? (55:35)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:36
Then, when the heaven was split then
it had been crimson like red leather, (55:37)
so which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:38)
On that Day no one will be asked about his impiety
neither humankind nor ones who are spirits. (55:39)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:40)
Ones who sin will be recognized by their mark
and they will be taken by their forelocks and their feet. (55:41)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:42)
This is hell which the ones who sin deny! (55:43)
They will go around between it
and between scalding boiling water! (55:44)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:45)

COMMENTARY°

Having taken us on this round in the great universe, referring to different types of creatures that will inevitably die, the chapter now mentions the only One who is eternal, and to whom all glory and majesty belong. As we see death overtaking all creatures, we are conscious of the truth of God, the Eternal: All that lives on it perishes; but forever will remain the face of your Lord full of majesty, granting grace. Which, then, of your Lord's blessings do you both deny? **(55:26-55:28)**

All sounds become hushed, breathing faint, and limbs stop moving. The air of death spreads over all living creatures, stopping every move throughout the heavens and earth. Only the majesty of the Eternal face overshadows all creatures, time, place and the entire universe. Human expression cannot depict the scene. It cannot add to the Quranic text which gives us a feeling of humble tranquillity, complete silence and total majesty. It paints a scene of total emptiness that leaves the whole universe motionless after it had been bustling

with life. Yet it instils in us an image which we cannot understand from our experience but can comprehend. The same comment is added, as the chapter considers the full understanding of this fact to be one of the blessings humans and jinn are reminded of: **(55:28)**

APPEALS FROM ALL

The truth of God s eternity gives rise to another truth: all creatures are bound to perish and, therefore, they all address everything related to their existence to the One who is without equal, eternal and in control of everything in the universe:

Everyone in heaven and earth entreats Him. Every day He manifests Himself in some wonderful way. **(55:29-55:30)**

A FRIGHTENING THREAT

What a frightening threat that neither human being nor jinn can face. **(55:31-55:36)** Indeed firm mountains, stars and galaxies tremble to hear it. God Almighty, in all His power and majesty, says that He will attend to the reckoning of these two humble creatures, the human being and jinn giving His statement an air of warning! It is unimaginably terrible!

This **(55:39)** applies to a particular situation on that day when all will be present. It is a day with different situations: in some people will be questioned and in some others no question will be put to them. In some, every soul will argue its own case, trying to put the blame on its associates, and in others no word of argument or dispute will be allowed. It is a long, extended day, with many positions and situations, each of which is awesome, and each is witnessed by multitudes of creatures. This verse speaks of a particular situation when no human or jinn will be asked about their sins. Everything is already well known, and the deeds of all are out in the open. Signs of misery appear as black on some faces, and signs of triumph appear white on others. Every face tells of what is going to happen. Can there by any denial on that day?

This **(55:41)** is a scene that combines force with humiliation: forelocks and feet are tied together and the guilty are so cast into hell. Can there be any denial then? As this is going on, the chapter addresses its audience, as if they are witnessing this continuing process of casting the guilty, with their forelocks and feet combined, into hell: **(55:43)** It is present here, as you are now seeing it. **(55:44)** It is exceedingly hot; they have nowhere to go other than round and between the flames and scorching fluids. Look at them as they go round now: **(55:45)** This is all that is said about those enduring this most painful suffering. The chapter then turns its attention to those enjoying honor and bliss.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

In determining the difference between relevance, the Quran asks a rhetorical question: Had you been witnesses when God charged you with this way of forbidding certain animals? The Quranic message mentions two kinds of flocks—beasts of burden and those who are for slaughtering. It is God Who provides them. Satan has created nothing. The only prohibitions come from God. To state otherwise is to cause humanity to go astray.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand what a rhetorical question is.

I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.

It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 97(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QURANIC CHAPTER 55: THE MERCIFUL (AL-RAHMAN) SIGNS 55:46-55:78

Madinah: *For him who feared the station before his Lord*
are two Gardens. (55:46)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:47)
Possessor of wide shade. (55:48)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:49)
Two springs will be running. (55:50)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:51)
In them both every kind of sweet fruit of diverse pairs. (55:52)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:53
Ones who are reclining on places of restfulness the inner linings of which are of brocade. And the fruit plucked from trees while fresh, that which draws near from the two Gardens. (55:54)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:55)
In them both are ones who are restraining their (f) glance.
No humankind touched them (f) sexually before
nor ones who are spirits. (55:56)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:57)
They are as if they were like rubies and coral. (55:58)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:59)
Is the recompense for kindness other than kindness? (55:60)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:61)
Besides these are two other Gardens. (55:62)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:63)
Dark green. (55:64)
So which of the benefits of the Lord

of you both will you both deny? (55:65)
In them both are two springs gushing. (55:66)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:67)
In them both are sweet fruits and date palm trees
and pomegranates. (55:68
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:69)
In them both are the good deeds, fairer. (55:70)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:71
Most beautiful eyed ones who will be restrained in edifices. (55:72)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:73
No humankind touched them (f) sexually
before nor ones who are spirits. (55:74)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:75
Ones who are reclining on green pillows
and fairer carpets. (55:76)
So which of the benefits of the Lord
of you both will you both deny? (55:77
Blessed be the Name of thy Lord,
Possessor of The Majesty and The Splendor. (55:78)

COMMENTARY°

For the first time in the Quran so far two gardens are mentioned, and there are probably more within the great garden of heaven. Their mention here, in particular, may be to stress their importance. In the next chapter. The Inevitable Event, we learn that the dwellers of heaven form two large groups: the ones to the fore who will be brought nearest to God, and the people to the right. Each will experience great bliss. Here also we feel that these two gardens are designated for a group with a high position. It may be the group described in the next chapter as being closest to God. We see another two gardens which are less refined than the first two and we feel that they belong to a group that comes next to the ones already mentioned. This group may be the people to the right. Whatever the case may be, let us look at this first grouping of two gardens, feeling their bliss. They are: **(55:48)** The Arabic word used for branches conveys in particular newly springing branches that spread an air of freshness. These gardens have: **(55:50)** Thus, they are never short of water.

Moreover, they are: **(55:52)** Their fruits are plentiful and varied.

How will the dwellers of these gardens live? **(55:54)** Such is the lining of their couches: the top is left to our imagination. And then **(55:54)** It is near and easy to reach.

This, however, does not complete the aspects of luxury that await these people. There is still more to consider: **(55:56)** Their modest gaze reflects their chastity. They do not look to anyone other than their spouses. Besides, they instil a sense of luxury and brightness, appearing: **(55:58)**

All this comes as the reward for a person who stands in this life in fear of his Lord's presence and worships Him as if he sees Him. He feels that God sees him and he works to attain the superior grade of excellence that the Prophet described as to worship God as if you see Him. If you do not, then know that He sees you. As such they deserve more from the Lord of Grace for their excellence: **(55:60)**

In this presentation of these two lofty gardens and what they contain, every aspect of blessing and comfort is followed by the familiar comment: **(55:61)**

The chapter then describes what the other group, also with two gardens, will have: **(55:62)** The description shows them to be in some way less than the first two: **(55:64)** Their green color is very dark, almost black. They have: **(55:66)** Their water gushes forth, which is again different from, or less than, the flowing water of the springs in the first two gardens. Here we have: **(55:68)** while we had there: **(55:52)** Moreover: **(55:70)** Further aspects are added in the next sign: **(55:72)** The pavilions, or decorated tents, add connotations of bedouin luxury, gratifying those used to desert life. The mates they have here are sheltered, while the ones in the other two gardens are of modest gaze. However both groups of mates share in the same qualities of chastity and faithful devotion: **(55:74)**

We see the dwellers of these two gardens enjoying their luxuries: **(55:76)** The fine quality of the carpets in these gardens is given a special description in Arabic, which is an adjective used of the Abqar Valley; in olden times the Arabs believed this to be the dwelling place of the jinn. Hence they attributed every marvellous thing to this valley, describing it as Abqari, as the carpets are here described. When compared with what the first two gardens contain, these are clearly more modest. Yet the familiar comment is added after every aspect of blessing mentioned here: **(55:77)**

The chapter concludes with a final note of glorification of the Lord whose face, full of majesty, will remain after all creation has perished. This is the most apt conclusion to a chapter that bears the name of the Lord of Grace: **(55:78)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze **6:149-6:150** based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

LESSON 98(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE HUMAN BEING (AL-INSAN)
SIGNS 76:1-76:22

Madinah: *Approached the human being a long course of time*
when he will be nothing remembered? (76:1)
Truly, We made the human being of a mingling of seminal fluid
that We may test him. So We made him hearing, seeing. (76:2)
Truly, We guided him on the way,
whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful. (76:3)
Truly, We made ready for ones who are ungrateful chains
and yokes and a blaze. (76:4)
Truly, the pious will drink from a cup
that had been a mixture of camphor, (76:5)
a spring where the servants of God will drink,
causing it to gush forth, a great gushing. (76:6)
They live up to their vows and they fear a Day
when the worst will be that which flies far and wide. (76:7)
In spite of their love for it, they feed with food one who is needy
and the orphan and the prisoner of war saying: (76:8)
We feed you only for the Countenance of God.
We want no recompense from you nor any thankfulness. (76:9)
Truly, we fear our Lord
on a frowning, inauspicious Day. (76:10)
So God would protect them from worse on that day,
and would make them find radiancy and joyfulness. (76:11)
And He will give them recompense for their enduring patiently
with a Garden and silk, (76:12)
and ones who are reclining in it on raised benches.
In it they will see neither sun
nor excessive cold of the moon. (76:13)
And that which draws near them is its shade and clusters of grapes
will be subdued, a subduing. (76:14)
And are passed around among them receptacles of silver
and goblets that had been of crystal, (76:15)
crystal like silver, and that they calculated a calculating. (76:16)
And they are given to drink in it a cup
that had been with a mixture of ginger. (76:17)
There is a spring in it named Salsabil. (76:18)
And ones who are immortal youths will go around them whom,
when ***you*** *had seen them,*
you *would assume them to be scattered pearls.* (76:19)
And when ***you*** *had seen them, again*
you *will have seen bliss and a great dominion.* (76:20)

Upon them are garments of fine green silk and brocade.
And they will be adorned with bracelets of silver.
Their Lord will give to drink undefiled drink. (76:21)
Truly, this had been your recompense.
What had been that which is your endeavoring. (76:22)

COMMENTARY°

In totality, the chapter is a calm address encouraging people to turn to God, obey Him, seek His pleasure, remember His favors, work to avoid His punishment, maintain alertness to the test He puts His servants to and understand His wisdom in creation, bestowing favors, testing and giving the ungrateful respite. The chapter begins with an inspiring touch, asking the question: where was the human being before coming into this life? Who gave him his existence? Who gave him the position he occupies in this life after he had none: **(76:1)**

This is followed by a second touch speaking about human origins and God's wisdom manifested in his creation and His giving him his energies and faculties: **(76:2)** The third touch speaks of guiding person to the right way, giving him help to go along this way before leaving him to choose the way he wants to go and the fate he wants to end up with: **(76:3)** These three touches set the human heart thinking deeply, glancing back and casting a look forward, and then reflecting before choosing which way to go. Then the chapter gives clear advice to a person as he stands at the crossroads, warning him against taking the way leading to hell and encouraging him in every way to take the way to heaven, pointing to the great variety of pleasure that awaits him there: **(76:4-76:6)**

Before completing its description of what believers will enjoy, the chapter now draws a sketch showing the features of those righteous people. In so doing, it uses some fine words and expressions that are in perfect harmony with the splendid bliss these people enjoy in heaven: **(76:7-76:10)**

The chapter then presents the reward which will be given to these people who willingly attend to difficult duties, who fear the bleak, grim day, the generous who feed others despite themselves being in need, and who only seek God's pleasure, hoping for no reward from anyone else. As the chapter presents this, we find that it is a reward of security, happiness and perfect enjoyment: God will save them from the woes of that day, and will grant them radiance and joy, and will reward them for their patience in adversity with a garden and [garments of] silk. They will recline there on soft

couches, feeling neither burning sun nor severe cold. Its shades will come low over them, audits clusters of fruit will hang low, within easy reach. They will be served with silver plates and goblets that seem to be crystal, crystal-clear, but made of silver, the measure of which they are the ones to determine. They will be given to drink of a cup flavored with ginger, from a spring there called Salsabll. They will be waited upon by immortal youths. If you see them, you would think they were scattered pearls. If you were to look around, you would see only bliss and a vast kingdom. They shall be arrayed in garments of fine green silk and brocade; and adorned with bracelets of silver. And their Lord will give them a most pure drink. This is a reward for you. Your endeavours are well appreciated. **(76:11-76:22)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze as many of the statements that can be interpreted as if ... then statements in the section in order to practice implications or conclusions. Add your personal experiences where possible.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

LESSON 98(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

QURANIC CHAPTER 76: THE HUMAN BEING (AL-INSAN) SIGNS 76:23-76:31

Madinah: *Truly, We sent down to **you** the Quran,*
a sending down successively. (76:23)
*So have **you** patience for the determination of **your** Lord*
and obey not anyone of them,
not the ones who are perverted nor the ungrateful. (76:24)
*And remember thou the Name of **your** Lord*
at early morning dawn and eventide. (76:25)
*And during the night, prostrate **yourself** to Him*
and glorify Him a lengthy part of the night. (76:26)
Truly, these are they who love that which hastens away
and they forsake a weighty day behind them. (76:27)
We created them and We strengthened their frame.
And when We willed, We will substitute their likes
with a substitution. (76:28)
Truly, this is an admonition.
And whoever willed, he took himself on a way to his Lord. (76:29)

But you will it not unless God wills it.
For God had been Knowing, Wise. (76:30)
He causes to enter whom He wills into His mercy.
And the ones who are unjust,
He prepared for them a painful punishment. (76:31)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then addresses the Prophet encouraging him to stand firm in the face of those who turn away, persist in ingratitude and deny the truth. He is directed to remain patient in the face of all this adversity and to await God's judgment. He should maintain his ties with his Lord, deriving strength from Him whenever he feels that the road he has to travel is too long: **(76:23-76:26)**

In conclusion, the chapter reminds the ungrateful of the heavy day that they do not reckon with. This is the day feared by the righteous who are keen to guard against its punishment. It tells them that they represent no serious issue to God who gave them all the power they have and is able to replace them with others. He bestows His favors on them in fulfilment of His wish to put people to the test. The chapter ends with a brief mention of the results of this test: **(76:27-76:31)**

Between the opening and close, the chapter gives one of the longest descriptions of the blessings granted to the people of heaven. These are mostly material, but they are coupled with God's acceptance and the honor He grants. **(75:22-75:23)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What is the conclusion to the arguments in these verses? What are its relative strengths? Are there any weaknesses? Are there any arguments you disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.

I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.

I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

Lesson 99(1). Critical Thinking Strategy Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations

The Middle Community

Islamic Moderation:[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of Islam that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of Islam, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts of Islam include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the *umma* throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts of Islam include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of Islam set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*umma*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

Quranic Chapter 65: Divorce (al-Talaq)

Signs 65:1-65:7

Madinah: *O Prophet! When you divorced your wives,*
then, divorce them (f) after their (f) waiting periods
and count their (f) waiting periods.
And be God-conscious, your Lord.
And drive them (f) not out from their (f) houses
nor let them (f) go forth

unless they approach a manifest indecency.
These are the ordinances of God.
And whoever violates the ordinances of God,
then, truly, he did wrong to himself.
***You** are not informed so that perhaps God*
will cause to evoke something after that affair. (65:1)
Then, when they (f) reached their (f) term, either hold them (f) back
as one who is honorable or part from them (f)
as one who is honorable and call to witnesses from two possessors
of justice from among you and perform testimony for God.
That is admonished for whomever had been believing in God
and the Last Day. And he who is God-conscious,
He will make a way out for him. (65:2)
And He will provide him with where he not anticipate.
And whoever puts his trust in God, then,
He will be enough for him.
God is One Who Reaches Through His command.
Surely, God assigned a measure to everything. (65:3)
And as for those who gave up hope of menstruation among your
women, if you were in doubt, their (f) waiting period is three
months and for those who have not yet menstruated. As for those
(f) who are imbued with pregnancy, their (f) term is that they (f)
bring forth their (f) burden. And whoever is God-conscious,
He will make his affair with ease for him. (65:4)
That is the command of God which He caused to descend to you.
And whoever is God-conscious,
He will absolve him of his evil deeds
and will enhance for him a compensation. (65:5)
Cause them (f) to dwell where you inhabited
according to what you are able to afford
and be not pressing them (f), putting them (f) in straits.
And if they (f) had been imbued with pregnancy,
then, spend on them (f) until they bring forth their (f) burden.
Then, if they (f) breast feed for you,
give them (f) their compensation.
And each of you take counsel between you
as one who is honorable.
But if you make difficulties for one another,
then, another would breast feed on behalf of the father. (65:6)
The possessor of plenty spends from his plenty.
And he whose provisions were measured, he will spend out of what
God gave him. And God places not a burden on any person beyond
what He gave him. God will make ease after hardship. (65:7)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter, Divorce, is an outline by God of the rules governing divorce. The chapter deals with a number of other family issues that result from divorce. It specifies the time when divorce may take place if it is to gain God's approval and to follow His law: **(65:1)** It states the divorced woman's right and duty to stay in her family home, i.e. her divorcing husband's home, during her waiting period. She cannot be turned out and should not leave of her own accord except in situations where a woman has committed an act of gross indecency: **(65:1)** It also specifies the woman's right to leave home after the end of her waiting period and her freedom to do what she likes, unless her husband has reinstated the marriage within the waiting period. Should this occur, it should only be to resume normal married life between them. It cannot be done to cause the woman any harm or to deprive her of the chance to marry a different man: **(65:2)** Whichever option is followed, retaining the marriage or allowing the break up to be complete, it should be in the presence of witnesses: **(65:2)**

In Chapter 2: The Cow (*al-Baqarah*), the waiting period of a woman who has not yet reached the menopause is specified as three cycles, counting either the time of menstruation or the time of cleanliness. The scholarly difference here is based on the linguistic meaning of the term used in the chapter which applies to either period. In this chapter, the waiting period of a divorced woman who has passed the menopause or who is too young to have a period is specified: **(65:4)** Likewise, the waiting period of a pregnant divorcee is specified: **(65:4)**

The chapter also includes rulings on the home where a divorcee woman lives during her waiting period and, if she is pregnant, her right to maintenance until she has delivered the baby: **(65:6)** The chapter then goes on to give detailed rules about the breast-feeding of a divorcee's child and her right to financial compensation if she so breast-feeds the child, if the two parents agree this is in the child's best interests, as also provisions for the child's breast-feeding by another woman if the two cannot agree: **(65:6)** The chapter then adds further details on maintenance and compensation in all cases, making it commensurate with the financial means of the divorcing husband: **(65:7)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life

LESSON 99(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like-cases in a like-manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

The most conclusive arguments in Islamic tradition to prove or disprove something is to use the Quran to prove another point in the Quran. Using this method, we get to the heart of the main reason why the word "beat" causes a man-made contradiction in the Quran.

We begin with two premises: Islam encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The Prophet said: Marriage is half of faith. He also said: Divorce is deplorable.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The students can discuss their views on the two different versions and if they interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran)*

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be God-conscious and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

For the Muslim, the Prophet is the living Quran; that is, he practiced exactly whatever God revealed in the Quran. If it was a command to good such as fasting, daily formal prayer, pilgrimage, purifying alms, charity, he performed these commands. If it was to prevent a wrong like drinking alcohol, gambling or eating pork, he refrained from these things. As the living Quran, the life, behavior and sayings of the Prophet serve as a model for all Muslims.

As the Quran refers to the Prophet as a mercy to humanity and the model whose example should be followed, it is clear that he would have carried out any and all of the commands (imperative forms of the verb) in the Quran that related to his life (there are commands specific to other Prophets as well) yet we find an exception in *daraba* according to the interpreters over the centuries.

In regard to 4:34 and the use of *daraba* in the imperative form allowing husbands to "strike, beat, hit, chastise or spank" a *nushuz* wife, in all of the canonical works there is no reference to Prophet Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him, having ever beaten women.

We read in 2:231: *When you divorce wives, and they (f) are about to reach their (f) term, then hold them (f) back honorably or set them (f) free honorably;*

but hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. (2:231)

In other words, the Quran is telling husbands not to harm their wives whom they want to set free, not to hold them back by injuring them. The word "injuring" (*dirar*) also means hurt, harm, use force or commit aggression.

Therefore, we see a contradiction between 4:34 and 2:231. Jurists have created a contradiction that is not in the Quran by encouraging divorce and discouraging marriage so that we can conclude, a Muslim woman who is to be divorced must be set free without injuring, hurting, or using force against her, but a Muslim woman who wants to remain married does do under the threat of being beaten!

Does this make sense? 4:34 as presently interpreted contradicts 2:231. How can we eliminate this contradiction? There is a very simple solution: Revert the interpretation back to how the Prophet understood it through his behavior. so that *daraba* here is understood to mean "go away."

Another example from the Quran as to why the word daraba in 4:34 creates a man-made contradiction. 24:6-24:9 states: *And those who accuse their wives—and there are no witnesses but themselves—let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies sworn to God that he is among ones who are sincere and a fifth that the curse of God be on him if he has been the one who lies. And it will drive off the punishment from her if she bears witness with four testimonies sworn to God that he is the one who lies, and the fifth, that the anger of God be on her if he has been among the ones who are sincere.*

The oaths of the wife prevail and punishment is averted from her. Therefore, she is not to be "beaten" by her husband. She is allowed to defend herself against any accusation he may have against her.

Thus a contradiction is created that is not in the Quran itself by interpreting *daraba* to mean "beat" instead of "go away" or "leave." The reality is that a wife who is to be divorced cannot be harmed. This protects a wife who wants to be set free. This is a right she is given in the Quran—not to be injured! When *daraba* is interpreted as beat, this reality becomes a myth.

It is a reality that 24:6-24:9 allows a wife who is accused by her husband without any witnesses other than himself to defend herself against the accusation and God and humanity accepts her defense, but because of a man-made contradiction of 4:34 and not following the behavior of the Prophet, the best model for humanity.

As critical thinkers, we immediately see a contradiction, not in the source itself, but in the way some husbands unjustly make themselves both judge and jury thereby allowing themselves to misinterpret God's Word.

QURANIC CHAPTER 65: DIVORCE (AL-TALAQ)

SIGNS 65:9-65:12

Madinah: *How many a town defied the command of its Lord and His Messengers,*

so we made a reckoning, a severe reckoning
and We punished it with a horrible punishment. (65:8)
So it experienced the mischief of its affair
and the Ultimate End of its affair had been loss. (65:9)
God prepared for them a severe punishment.
So be God-conscious, O those imbued with intuition,
those who believed!
Surely, God caused to descend to you a Remembrance, (65:10)
a Messenger who recounts to you the signs of God,
ones that are made manifest, that he brings out those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
from the shadows to the light.
And whoever believes in God and does as one in accord with
morality, He will cause him to enter into Gardens beneath which
rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.
Surely, God did good with provision for him. (65:11)
It is God Who created the seven heavens and of the earth, a similar
number like them. The command comes forth between them so that
perhaps you would know that God is Powerful over everything and
that God, truly, enclosed everything in His Knowledge. (65:12)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter's concluding note refers to the great universe, thus linking the theme of the chapter, its legislation and directives to God's will, power and knowledge that encompass the entire universe.

We do not know to what the term seven heavens really refers, nor are we aware of their sizes and dimensions. Likewise, we do not know what the seven earths are. This earth of ours may be one of them and the others are known to God alone.

This reference to the creation of the vast universe, seven heavens and likewise of the earthy is awe inspiring. It presents us with a great image of the Creator's limitless power, the vastness of His kingdom. When compared to the universe, the entire earth seems a tiny little place. How do we see those living on it, and how do we estimate an event that takes place on it? What value should we give to a little sum of money a person gives his divorced wife in maintenance, or that a woman forgoes?

God's command descends in between, or through, these seven heavens and the earth or the seven earths. A part of His command is the sum of these rulings concerning the subject matter of this chapter, i.e. divorce. It is, then, a great issue, even by human standards and our concept of time and place. To defy it is to be in defiance of a command that resounds throughout the heavens and the earths. It is a command that those on high hear of, as do other creatures in the

heavens and the earths. Defying it, then, becomes a ghastly offense that no wise believer would even contemplate, and particularly when God's messenger has recited to him God's precise revelations, enlightening him on this matter so as to take him from darkness into light.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

When arguing opposing views, students should be encouraged to find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

What do the different translations of 4:34 and 2:231 say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other when darab is interpreted as "beat," spank," or any other similar synonym?
What does each sign (4:34 and 2:231) say?
Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agree?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

LESSON 100(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases. They hesitate before they accept this or that analogy or comparison between 4:34 and 2:231 as the previous lesson showed. They recognize the purposes of the comparisons they make. They recognize that purposes govern noting significant similarities and differences.

QURANIC CHAPTER 98: THE CLEAR PORTENT (AL-BAYYINAH) SIGNS 98:1-98:8

Madinah: *Not would those who were ungrateful*
from among the People of the Book,
nor the ones who are idol worshippers to be
ones who set aside their beliefs
until the clear portent approaches them: (98:1)
A Messenger from God, who recounts to them
purified scrolls (98:2)
wherein are truth-loving Books. (98:3)
Split up not among themselves those to whom the Book was given
until after the clear portent drew near them. (98:4)
They were commanded but to worship God as ones who are sincere
and devoted in the way of life to Him, as monotheists
and they perform the formal prayer
and they give the purifying alms.
That is the truth-loving way of life. (98:5)
Truly, those who were ungrateful among the People of the Book
and the ones who are idol worshippers will be in the fire of hell,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
Those are the worst of creatures. (98:6)
But those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
those are the best of creatures. (98:7)
Their recompense is with their Lord—Gardens of Eden, beneath
which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.

God was well-pleased with them and they were well-pleased with Him. That is for him who dreaded his Lord. (98:8)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter deals in a positive manner with a number of facts relating to history and faith. The first fact is that the sending of God's Messenger, Muhammad, was essential to the transformation of people of earlier revelations and idolaters, who had found their way into disbelief. They could not leave their erring ways behind without the Prophet's mission: **(98:1-98:3)**

Secondly, religious discord and conflict among the people of earlier revelations did not arise out of ignorance of their own religion, or from any obscurity or ambiguity in it. On the contrary, they ran into discord after they had received true knowledge and clear proof: **(98:4)**

Thirdly, with regard to its origin, divine faith is one. Its fundamentals are simple and clear and do not, by themselves and by their plain and easy nature, make for division or conflict: **(98:5)**

Fourthly, those who disbelieved after receiving clear proof are the worst creatures of all, while those who believe and do good deeds are the best. Therefore, the two receive totally different rewards: **(98:6-98:8)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabular** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What similarities and differences do the Quranic verses point out between the practice of the early Quraysh and the Quranic message?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

Lesson 101(1). Critical Thinking Strategy Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Vocabulary

What is a concept?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

Quranic Chapter 59: The Banishment (al-Hashir) Signs 59:1-59:10

Madinah: *Whatever is in the heavens glorified God*
and whatever is in and on the earth.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (59:1)
It is He Who drove out those who were ungrateful
—among the People of the Book—
from their abodes at the first assembling.
You thought that they would not go forth.
And they thought that they are ones who are secure in their fortresses from God.
But God approached them from where they anticipate not.
And He hurled alarm into their hearts.
They devastate their own houses with their own hands
and the hands of the ones who believe.
Then, take warning, O those imbued with insight! (59:2)
If God prescribed not banishment for them,
He would have punished them in the present.
And for them in the world to come
would be the punishment of the fire. (59:3)
That is because they make a breach with God and His Messenger.
And whoever made a breach with God,
then, truly, God is Severe in repayment. (59:4
Whatever palm trees you severed or left them as ones that arise from their roots, it was with the permission of God and so that He might cover with shame the ones who disobey. (59:5)
And what God gave as spoils of war to His Messenger from them,

you spurred not an animal for an expedition, neither any horse nor riding camel, but God gives authority to His Messengers over whomever He wills. And God is Powerful over everything. (59:6)
What God gave to His Messenger as spoils of war from the people of the towns is for God and His Messenger and the possessors of kinship and the orphans and the needy and the traveler of the way so that it be changing not hands between the rich among you.
And whatever the Messenger gave you, take it.
And refrain yourselves from what he prohibited you.
And be God-conscious. Truly, God is Severe in repayment. (59:7)
For the poor who were of the ones who emigrate, those who were driven out from their abodes and their property, looking for grace from God and His contentment
and they help God and His Messenger,
there is also a share.
Those, they are the ones who are sincere. (59:8)
And those who took their abodes as dwellings and had belief before them, love them who emigrated to them and they find not in their breasts any need for what the emigrants were given and hold them in greater favor over themselves even though they themselves had been in destitution.
And whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then, those, they are the ones who prosper. (59:9)
And those who drew near after them, they say: Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers/sisters who preceded us in belief and make not in our hearts any grudge against those who believed
Our Lord! Truly, Thou art Gentle, Compassionate. (59:10

COMMENTARY°

This chapter was revealed shortly after the Muslims' encounter with the Jewish tribe of al-Nadir in Madinah. It describes how the event occurred and why, and what regulations were put in place in the Muslim community once it was over. All this is reported in the unique style of the Quran. Comments are added so as to educate the Muslim community and refine its attitudes, and the events themselves are used to highlight certain aspects and to give directives.

The chapter begins and ends with glorification of God, to whom the heavens and the earth belong, the Almighty, the Wise. Thus, the beginning and end are in perfect harmony with the subject matter of the chapter and the call to the believers to remain God-conscious and to reflect on Gods planning.

Here the chapter adds the first comment: **(59:2)** This instruction

comes at the right moment, when minds are ready to receive a lesson and learn from it. The next sign establishes that since God willed to take them to task for their treachery, they could not escape some form of punishment in this life, in addition to what awaits them in the life to come: **(59:3)** That they would be made to suffer in this life, in some form or another, was a foregone conclusion. Had God not chosen their evacuation, He would have punished them in some other way, and whatever punishment they would have suffered in this life was in addition to what they will receive in the hereafter.

They merited both: **(59:4)** The Arabic word translated here as defied, means to take a side other than God's. As He explains why they merited such punishment, God made His Messenger's side His own. Therefore, in the second half of the sign He mentions their being in defiance of Him only, as this automatically includes defying the Prophet. When defiant people take a side opposite to God's, they behave insolently. Rather stupidly, such small, powerless creatures expose themselves to God's anger and incur His severe retribution.

The chapter then reassures the believers that all that they did to those who defied God and His Messenger, such as cutting and burning their palm trees, was right. It thus gives God's verdict on it, particularly because some Muslims were rather unsure about their actions: **(59:5)**

> Whatever gains were taken from them God has turned over to His Messenger; you did not have to spur horse or riding-camel for its sake. Whatever gains God turns over to His Messenger from the people of the townships belong to God the Messenger, kinsfolk, orphans, the needy and the traveller in need. Thus, they would not just circulate among those of you who are rich. Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. Remain God-fearing; for God is severe in retribution. [Such gains are for] the poor migrants who have been driven out of their homes and possessions, seeking God's favor and His goodly acceptance, and who help God and His Messenger. These are the ones who are true. And to those who were already firmly established in the Home and in faith, those who love the ones that seek refuge with them and harbour no desire in their hearts for whatever the others may have been given. They give them preference over themselves, even though they are in want. Those who are saved from their own greed are truly successful. Those who come after them pray. **(59:6-59:10)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, ev-

idence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

CONCEPT MAPPING:

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

PRE-QUESTIONS:

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.

You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

DEFINITION:

What is....?

Where does ... fit?

What group does ... belong to?

CHARACTERISTICS:

How would I describe...?

What does ... look like?

What are its parts?

VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

EXAMPLES

What is a good example of ...?

What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

EXPERIENCE

What experience have I had with ....?

What can I imagine about ...?

Lesson 101(2). Critical Thinking Strategy Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the

pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[1]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

Quranic Chapter 59: The Banishment (al-Hashir) Signs 59:11-59:17

Madinah: *Have you not considered*
those who are ones who are hypocrites?
They say to their brothers—those who were ungrateful—
among the People of the Book:
If you were driven out, we, certainly, will go forth with you
and we will never obey anyone against you ever.
And if you were fought against, we will, certainly, help you.
And God bears witness that they, truly, are ones who lie. (59:11)
Certainly, if they were driven out,
they would not go forth with them.
And if they were fought against they would not help them.
And if they had helped them, they would turn their backs.
Again, they would not be helped by them. (59:12)
Truly, you are a more severe fright in their breasts than God.
That is because they are a folk who understand not. (59:13)
They fight not against you altogether,
but in fortified towns or from behind walls.

Their might among themselves is very severe.
You would assume them united, but their hearts are diverse.
That is because they are a folk who are not reasonable. (59:14)
As the likeness of those who were before them,
they experienced the immediate mischief of their affair
and for them is a painful punishment. (59:15)
As the likeness of Satan when he said to the human being:
Be Ungrateful! Then, when he was ungrateful,
Satan said: I am free of you.
I fear God, the Lord of the worlds. (59:16)
The Ultimate End of both of them will be that they be in the fire,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
And that is the recompense of the ones who are unjust. (59:17)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter now turns back to discuss the event itself, painting a picture of another group that played a role in it, the hypocrites: **(59:11-59:17)** The chapter reports on what the hypocrites said to the al-Nadir tribe, promising them support, but then letting them down and showing that they cared nothing for their own promises. Every sentence in these verses states a fact, touches hearts, stirs up feelings and establishes a principle of education, knowledge and unshakeable faith.

The first of these establishes a bond of kinship between the hypocrites and the ungrateful pagans from among the people of earlier revelations: **(59:11)** The ones to whom the chapter refers as people of earlier revelations are the ungrateful, and the hypocrites are their brethren, despite the fact that they claim to be Muslims. Then the chapter gives a full and vivid picture of the hypocrites' promises and assurances to their brothers: **(59:11)** God, who knows what they truly are, states and confirms otherwise: **(59:11-59:12)** Events confirmed that what God stated was true and what they promised their brothers was false.

The chapter then states a fact explaining what those people, hypocrites and ungrateful from among the people of earlier religions, truly felt: **(59:13)** They feared the believers more than they feared God. Had they truly feared God, they would not have feared anyone else. Thus the chapter exposes the truth about those people, and adds another general truth. Now, the chapter goes on to describe a condition particular to the two parties, the hypocrites and the ungrateful among the people of earlier religions. This condition arises from the fact that they fear the believers more than they fear God: **(59:14)**

Those who believe in God must know the truth about themselves

and their enemies. This is half the battle. The Quran puts this truth to them in the context of an event that has already taken place, enlightening them about the true factors that were at play and explaining what it signified and the facts to which it pointed. This explanation was useful to those who witnessed that event as it unfolded. It should provide great enlightenment to future generations who should reflect on it and learn the truth from the One who knows all truth.

This evacuation of the al-Nadir from Madinah was not the first of its kind. It was preceded by the evacuation of the Qaynuqa tribe, to which the following verse most probably refers: **(59:15)**

The encounter with the Jewish tribe of Qaynuqa took place after the Battle of Badr, but before the Battle of Uhud. The Qaynuqa were bound by a treaty with the Prophet and the Muslims. When the Muslims won a great victory against the ungrateful in Badr, the Jews were upset and harbored a grudge against the Muslims. They feared that their position in Madinah would be weakened while the position of the Muslims would be strengthened. The Prophet got wind of what they were whispering to one another and learnt of their ill intentions. He reminded them of the treaty he had signed with them and warned them that their attitude might augur ill. They replied rudely to him, saying: Muhammad! Do not think too highly of your power. You have only encountered a group who knew little about fighting a war and you managed to score a victory against them. Should you engage us in battle, you will certainly know that we are true fighters.

Satan's role **(59:16-59:17)** with any human being who responds to his promptings, as described in these verses, is in line with his nature and the aim he defined for himself. It is most singular for any human being to listen to him when he is out to trick them and lead them to their ruin. Yet this is the permanent truth which the chapter states as its discussion of the event progresses further. It thus links the individual event with this permanent truth, setting it in real context.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height

Lesson 101(3). Critical Thinking Strategy
Thinking Precisely About Thinking

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

Quranic Examples of Thinking Precisely About Thinking

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (meta-cognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present*

and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 59: THE BANISHMENT (AL-HASHR)

SIGNS 59:18-59:34

Madinah: *O those who believed! Be God-conscious*
and let every soul look on what is put forward for tomorrow.
And be God-conscious.
Truly, God is Aware of what you do. (59:18)
And be not like those who forgot God
and He caused them to forget themselves.
Those, they are the ones who disobey. (59:19)
The Companions of the Fire are not equal
to the Companions of the Garden.
The Companions of the Garden,
they are the ones who are victorious. (59:20)
If We had caused this, the Quran, to descend on a mountain,
you would have seen it as that which is humbled,
one that is split open from dreading God.
And there are the parables that We propound for humanity
so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)
He is God; there is no god but He,
One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible.
He is The Merciful, The Compassionate. (59:22)
He is God besides whom there is no god but He, The King, The
Holy, The Peaceable, One Who is The Bestower, Preserver, The
Almighty, The Compeller, The One Who is The Supreme.
Glory be to God above partners they ascribe. (59:23)
He is God, the One Who is Creator, The One Who Fashions, The
One Who is The Giver of Form. To Him belongs the Fairer Names.
Whatever is in the heavens glorifies Him
and whatever is in and on the earth
and He is The Almighty, The Wise. (59:24)

COMMENTARY°

Believers are conscious of God. **(59:18-59:20)** This God-consciousness is a mental state that words cannot fully describe. It is a condition that makes the human heart alert, feeling God's presence at every moment. It keeps man always on the watch, fearing that God may see him in a condition that displeases Him. A believer knows that God's eye watches everyone and every heart at every moment. How and when can the human being be in a situation that God does not see?

Again, this is a statement **(59:18)** that means far more than the total sum of its words. The mere thought of it places before a person's heart the record of all actions he did throughout his life. He looks carefully at every line, adding up his total sum after looking at every detail. When he has done so, he knows what he has sent ahead of him for his future life. This alerts him to his weaknesses and shortcomings, even though he has done much good. How would he feel if his net balance shows little in the way of good actions? This is bound to keep the human heart always awake, looking always for ways and means to improve its record of good deeds.

The next sign warns them against a totally different situation: **(59:19)** This is a very strange situation, but a true one. Anyone who forgets God will remain in this present life without a bond that pulls him towards a higher horizon. He lives without a goal that gives his life a meaning higher than that of grazing cattle. In such a situation man becomes oblivious of his own humanity. This fact leads to another whereby such a person forgets his own soul. He makes no preparation for his next life, which is long-lasting, permanent. He does not take account of it when he looks at the balance of his deeds.

The following sign states that such people are the dwellers of the fire. It advises the believers to take a route different from theirs. After all, the believers are the ones going to heaven and their route is bound to be different: **(59:20)**

The two groups are different in nature, condition, way of life, direction and destiny. They are set on two different courses, which cannot meet in line, feature, plan, strategy or method of action. They cannot be in the same camp, neither in this present life nor in the future one. **(59:20)** Thus their fate is clearly stated, but that of the ones destined for the fire of hell is not even mentioned. It is too well known to deserve mention.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE QURAN

The chapter now adds a powerful note that shakes hearts to the core. It portrays what effect the Quran would have had on solid rocks had it been so sent down: **(59:21)** The moments when a person is fully receptive of some truth contained in the Quran will see him shake and shudder. He will experience such changes that are best represented in the physical world by the effects of magnetism and electricity or even stronger. God, the Creator of the mountains who bestowed the Quran from on high, says: **(59:21)** Anyone who has had some experience of the Quran touching their inner souls will appreciate this truth in a way that cannot be otherwise expressed. **(59:21)** Such an image should keep hearts thinking and reflecting.

It is an expansive glorification that puts together a number of God's glorious attributes. **(59:22-59:24)** It consists of three parts, with each beginning with God;s Oneness in the form of either, He is God—there is no deity other than Him, or, He is God, on its own. Each one of these most gracious names or attributes has its clear bearing on the universe and a felt influence on human life. Thus they bring home to the human heart their effect on life and the living. They are not negative attributes. Nor are they isolated from the universe, its situations, phenomena and events.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Quranic Challenges

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
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59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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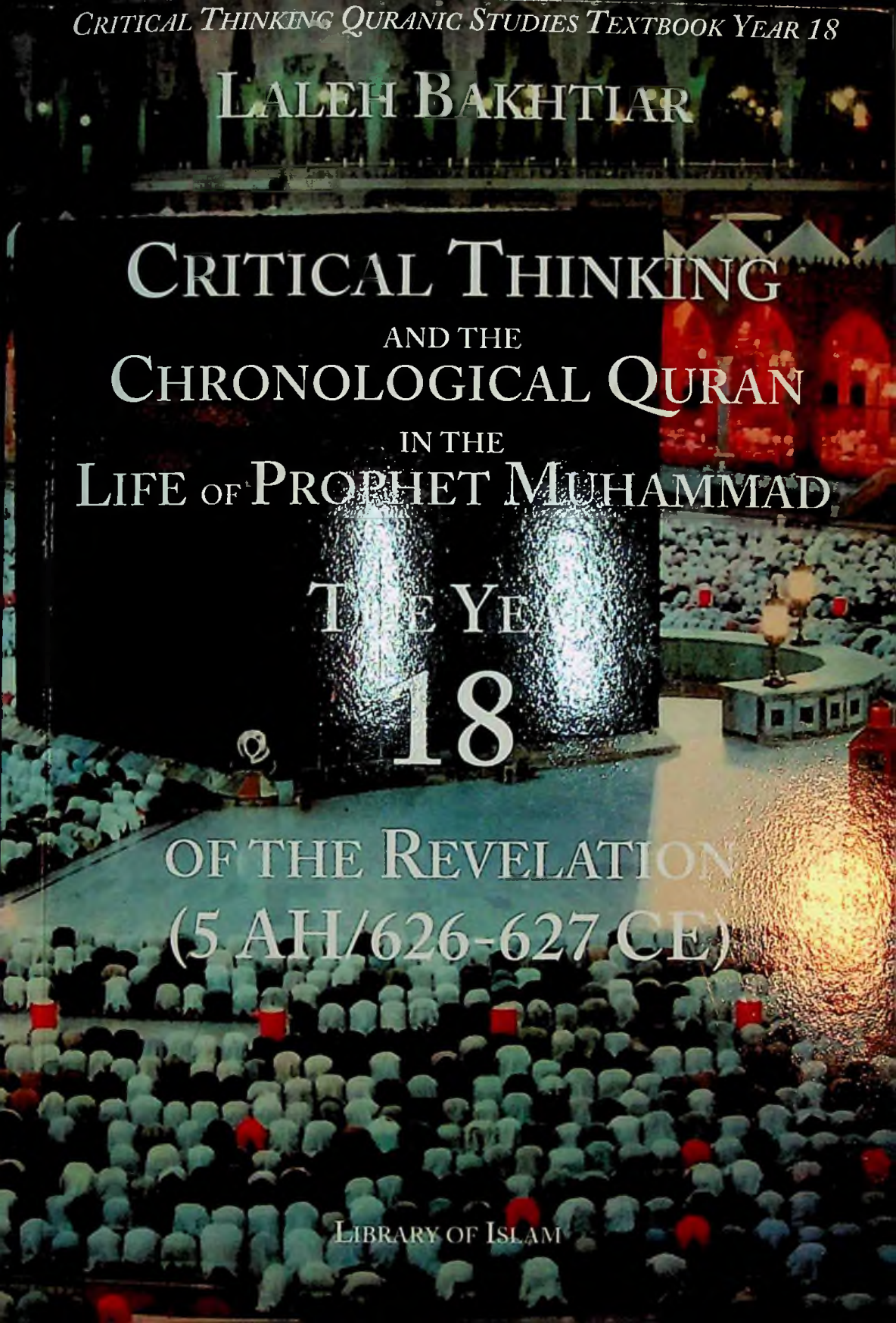
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YEAR 18 OF THE REVELATION: MADINAH
MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 30, 5 AH
CA. JUNE 2, 626 CE-MAY 22, 627 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 18, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 5 AH/ca. June 2, 626 CE-May 22, 627 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: ʿAQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

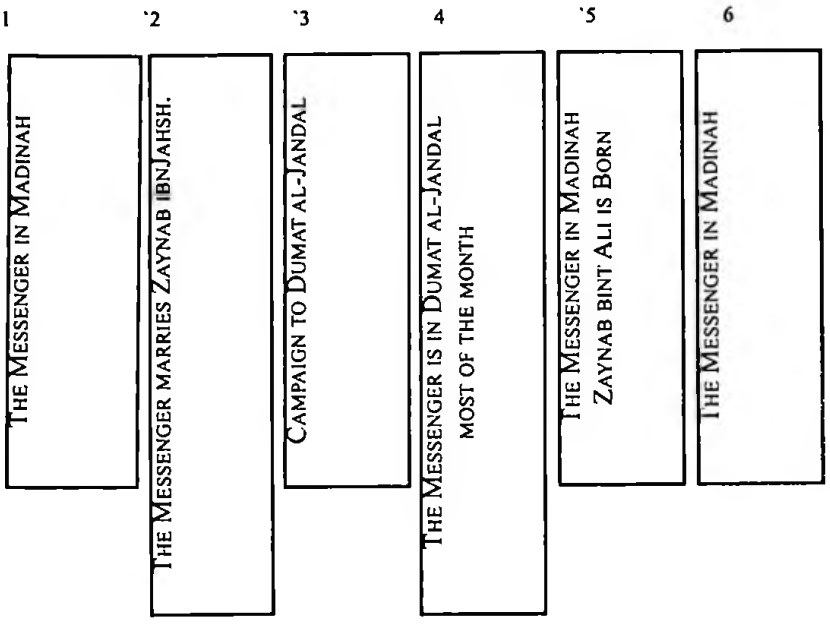
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

Preview *Book Year 18*

Timeline

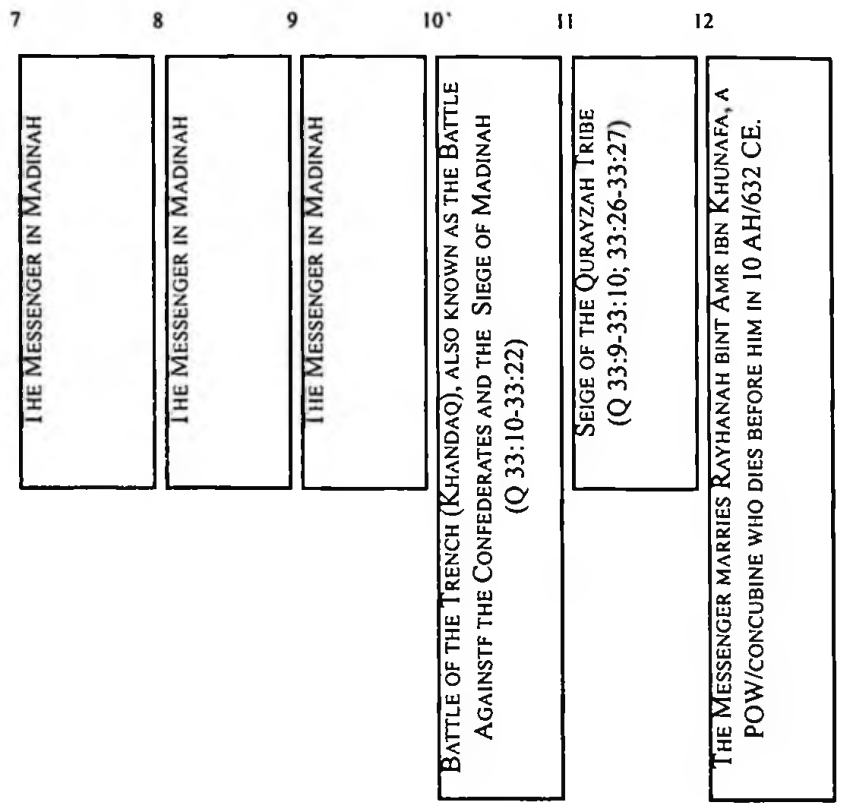


Key
1 = Muharram
2 = Safar
3 = Rabi I
4 = Rabi II
5 = Jamada I
6 = Jamada II

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 18*

TIMELINE



Key

7 = RAJAB
8 = SHABAN
9 = RAMADAN
10 = SHAWWAL
11 = DHU AL-QADA
12 = DHU AL-HIJJA

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 18 presented includes Quranic Chapter 24 as the 102nd chapter revealed so the lessons are Lesson 102.

LESSON 102(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, **economics.**[2]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and in-

sights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, **economics.**[3]

Quranic Chapter 24: The Light (al-Nur)
Signs 24:1-24:10

Madinah: *This is a chapter of the Quran*
that We caused to descend
and We imposed laws in it. We caused to descend signs,
clear portents, so that perhaps you will recollect. (24:1)
The one who is an adulteress and the one who is an adulterer,
scourge each one of them one hundred strokes.
And let not tenderness for them take you
from the judgment of God,
if you had been believing in God and the Last Day.
And let them bear witness to their punishment
by a section of the ones who believe. (24:2)
The one who is an adulterer will not marry
but one who is an adulteress,
or one who is a female idolater.
And the one who is an adulteress will not marry
but one who is an adulterer,
or one who is a male idolater.
All that was forbidden to the ones who believe. (24:3)
And those who accuse the ones who are free, chaste (f)
and, again, bring not four witnesses,
then, scourge them eighty strokes
and never accept their testimony.
And those, they are the ones who disobey. (24:4)
But those who repented after that
and made things right,
so, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (24:5)
And those who accuse their spouses
—and there be no witnesses but themselves—
let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies
sworn to God that he is among the ones who are sincere (24:6)
and a fifth that the curse of God be on him,
if he had been among the ones who lie. (24:7)
And it will drive off the punishment from her
if she bears witness with four testimonies

sworn to God that he is among the ones who lie (24:8)
and the fifth, that the anger of God be on her
if he had been among the ones who are sincere. (24:9)
And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy
and that God is Accepter of Repentance, Wise— (24:10)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter is named *al-Nur*, meaning The Light, and light is identified as an essential attribute of God: *God is the light of the heavens and the earth.* **(24:35)** It is also mentioned in respect of its effects on people's hearts and souls. Such effects are reflected in human morality and the manners of individuals, families and communities. They impart a brightness to human life that enlightens hearts and makes consciences transparent.

The chapter begins with an emphatic declaration of the fact that it is bestowed from on high, and that it is decreed with all that it contains of directives, commandments and morality: *This is a chapter of the Quran that We caused to descend and We imposed laws in it. We caused to descend signs, clear portents, so that perhaps you will recollect.* **(24:1)** This opening reflects the importance the Quran attaches to the moral aspect of human life, and to its central position in the Islamic faith.

The central theme of the entire chapter is the education of the Muslim community. At times, the methods employed by the chapter increase in their stiffness so as to culminate in prescribing mandatory punishments. At other times the chapter is softer and more gentle, filling our hearts with God's light and inviting us to reflect on the numerous signs He has placed throughout the entire universe. The aim of such contrasting approaches is one and the same: to cultivate people's consciences, enhance their sensitivity and refine their moral standards to the highest degree. The good manners of the individual, the family, the community and society's leadership are all intertwined as they all stem from the same source, which is belief in God, and shine with the same light received from Him. In essence, these manners combine light, transparency and brightness. Thus the education the chapter aims to achieve derives all its aspects from the basic source of light in the heavens and earth; that is, God's light that dispels all darkness in the universe, as well as that in people's hearts and souls.

The chapter may be divided into five parts, all tackling its basic theme. At the outset, the first delivers a decisive declaration outlining the status of this chapter, followed by the details of the mandatory punishment for adultery. It denounces this crime in clear terms, mak-

ing it clear that adulterers have no place in the Muslim community. It also explains the punishment for any false accusation of adultery, and the reasons for the severity of this mandatory punishment. Couples are exempted from this punishment when they take the prescribed oaths that end with their permanent separation. It then comments on the falsehood story. At the end it shows how men and women flock like with like: the good with the good and the evil with the evil.

The second part concerns itself with crime prevention, and the methods to reduce the temptation to sin. It begins with an outline of good manners when approaching others' homes and the need to seek permission before entry. It commands Muslims to lower their gaze and not to reveal women's adornments to anyone other than their very close relatives whom they are not legally entitled to marry. There is also in this part a clear encouragement to facilitate the marriage of young women, and a stern warning against forcing POW/slave girls into prostitution. All these are preventive measures that aim to promote purity and chastity in general. They aim to prevent what stirs up physical desire and to help people to maintain their chastity.

In the middle of this list of good manners as outlined in the chapter, the third part provides a link between all such manners and God's light. Here the chapter speaks of the people whose hearts are brightened with God's light and who always frequent mosques. By contrast, the ungrateful and their deeds are shown as though they are a mirage, or like layers of darkness. In this part we see different aspects of God's light throughout the universe: how all creatures glorify Him; how clouds are sent through the atmosphere; the succession of day and night; the creation of every walking creature out of water and how they acquire their different shapes, forms, types and roles. All these are there for people to look at and contemplate.

In the fourth part the hypocrites are seen to neglect the proper manners people should show when dealing with the Prophet. The most important of these are obedience to the Prophet and the implementation of any judgment he makes in disputes put to him for arbitration. By contrast, the believers are seen to maintain the appropriate standards in speaking to the Prophet and obeying him. In return, they are promised power, that they will establish and implement their faith and attain victory over the ungrateful.

The final part of the chapter again examines the good manners of the Muslim community, highlighting the need to seek admission when visiting relatives and friends, of hospitality to guests, and the fine manners that make the whole Muslim community a single fam-

ily, led by God's Messenger.

The chapter concludes with a declaration of God's ownership of all that is in the heavens and earth, His knowledge of people and what they harbor in their breasts, and their ultimate return to Him. They will have to face His reckoning on the basis of His knowledge of their deeds. Needless to say, His knowledge encompasses everything.

AN UNUSUAL BEGINNING

This chapter has a unique opening that is not repeated anywhere else in the Quran. What is special is the use of the clause: *We have imposed* .... We take this to imply an emphatic assertion that people must take everything that the chapter includes in the same way. Social manners and morality are ordained in the same way as mandatory punishments. We need to remember here that such manners and morality are deeply rooted in human nature, but people tend to overlook them because of deviant social pressures and easy temptations. Hence, the divine revelations God has bestowed from on high place them back before people's eyes, explaining the clear logic of undistorted human nature.

This emphatic and clear opening is immediately followed with an explanation of the mandatory punishment for adultery, a ghastly crime that severs the ties between its perpetrator and the Muslim community. *The one who is an adulteress and the one who is an adulterer, scourge each one of them one hundred strokes. And let not tenderness for them take you from the judgment of God, if you had been believing in God and the Last Day. And let them bear witness to their punishment by a section of the ones who believe. The one who is an adulterer will not marry but one who is an adulteress, or one who is a female idol worshipper. And the one who is an adulteress will not marry but one who is an adulterer, or one who is a male idol worshipper. All that was forbidden to the ones who believe.* **(24:2-24:3)**

The punishment prescribed for adulterers was that outlined in Chapter 4, Women, which says: *And those who approach indecency among your wives, then call to bear witness against them (f) four among you. Then if they bore witness to the affair, hold them (f) back in their houses until death gathers them (f) to itself or God makes a way for them (f).* **(4:15)** Thus the punishment for the guilty adulteress was confinement at home and verbal reprimand, while the adulterer was punished by verbal reprimand only. Sometime later, God revealed the new mandatory punishment specified in this chapter. This is then the 'way' opened by God to which Chapter 4 alluded.

Flogging is the punishment of male and female adulterers who have not been empowered through marriage. This punishment is en-

forced on any Muslim who is sane, of age and a free person whose guilt is established. As for a person who has had sexual relations within a proper marriage and then commits adultery even though he is sane, of age and free, his punishment is stoning.

Such stoning is not confirmed in the Quran, while flogging is established clearly in the Quran.

The first point to note is the difference in the punishment incurred by adulterers, depending on their marital status. A Muslim who is of age, free and sane and who has already experienced sex within marriage is fully aware of the clean and proper way to satisfy sexual desires. To abandon this and resort to adultery betrays a deviant and corrupt nature. Hence, punishment is increased in this case. A virgin on the other hand may feel the temptation so strongly when he is inexperienced. There is also a difference in the nature of the act itself. A married person is able to enjoy sex in a much better and more refined way than a virgin. Hence, he deserves increased punishment.

As has already been mentioned, the chapter speaks here of the mandatory punishment for the married adulterer only. It emphasizes the requirement to put it into effect, with no compassion shown to the perpetrator: *The one who is an adulteress and the one who is an adulterer, scourge each one of them one hundred strokes. And let not tenderness for them take you from the judgment of God, if you had been believing in God and the Last Day. And let them bear witness to their punishment by a section of the ones who believe.* **(24:2)** The Muslim community is required to implement this punishment showing no sympathy for the offenders. The punishment should be administered in public with a number of believers present. This makes it harder for the offenders and increases the deterrent effect for the beholders.

The crime is shown to be increasingly heinous. Hence, all ties between the perpetrators and the Muslim community are cut off: *The one who is an adulterer will not marry but one who is an adulteress, or one who is a female polytheist. And the one who is an adulteress will not marry but one who is an adulterer, or one who is a male polytheist. All that was forbidden to the ones who believe.* **(24:3)**

MEASURES AGAINST FALSE ACCUSATION

Prescribing a very hard punishment for adultery is not sufficient, on its own, to protect the Muslim community and ensure the purity of its atmosphere. Therefore, a supplementary order is given to isolate the adulterers from the rest of the Muslim community. Furthermore, heavy punishment is prescribed for those who accuse chaste women of adultery without providing firm evidence in support of

their accusation:

And those who accuse the ones who are free, chaste (f) and, again, bring not four witnesses, then, scourge them eighty strokes and never accept their testimony. And those, they are the ones who disobey. But those who repented after that and made things right, so, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. **(24:4-24:5)**

Allowing people to accuse chaste women, whether married or not, without clear proof would mean that people could make such accusations without fear of repercussion. This in turn would stain the Muslim community's reputation. Every individual would feel threatened with false accusations. Every husband would suspect his wife, and every wife her husband, and people would begin to doubt their legitimacy. In such an intolerable state of doubt and suspicion, every family would be undermined. Moreover, when such accusations are frequently made, those who steer themselves away from adultery might begin to think that such crime was common in society. They might then begin to see it in a different light, as less ghastly, as a result of such frequent mention. Furthermore, those who would not even have contemplated it at all might even begin to think of doing so, feeling that since many others do it, there is no harm in it.

Thus, in order to protect people's honor, and to prevent their suffering from suspicion as a result of uncorroborated accusations, the Quran prescribes for false accusation a punishment that almost equals that of adultery. False accusers are to be flogged with 80 stripes each, and their future testimony in any case or situation rejected. Plus they are to be labelled as transgressors. The first part of this punishment is physical, while the second is moral. It is sufficient that the accuser is deprived of the right to testify, and considered an unreliable and unacceptable witness no matter what the case or situation. The third part is religious. The one guilty of false accusation follows a line that deviates from the straight path of faith. The only way out is that the accuser should provide four witnesses who have seen the offense being committed, or three alongside him if he himself has seen it. If the four give such testimony, the accusation is proved and the punishment for adultery is enforced on the perpetrator.

The point at issue here is that the Muslim community does not lose much by suppressing an accusation that cannot be proven. Conversely it loses much more by condoning accusations that cannot be proven. Indeed when such accusations become the subject of casual conversation, they serve to encourage people to do the same, while stopping any discussion of such matters, unless clearly proven, delivers a clear message that adultery, an abominable offense, is rare or even non-existent in society. Moreover, the false accusation of

chaste women causes the latter much pain and mental suffering, in addition to its being a means of destroying families and relations.

The punishment meted out to the false accuser continues to hang over his head, even after its administration, unless he genuinely repents: *But those who repented after that and made things right, so, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:5)**

WHEN A HUSBAND ACCUSES HIS WIFE

All the foregoing applies to accusing women of adultery. An exception is made, however, in the case of a husband accusing his wife. To require him to produce four witnesses is unreasonable. In normal situations, a man does not accuse his wife falsely, because the very accusation carries a negative reflection on his own honor and against his own children. Hence, this type of accusation carries a totally different ruling: **(24:6-24:10)**

This ruling lightens the burden for married people in a way that takes their special circumstances into consideration. A man may find his wife in a compromising position but there be no one else as witness to the deed. In this case, he swears by God four times that he is telling the truth, and adds a fifth incurring God's curse on himself if he is telling a lie. These oaths are called testimonies, because he is the only witness. When he has done so, he pays her any portion of her dowry that may be outstanding, and she is immediately and finally divorced. She is also liable to the punishment for adultery. However, she can avert this punishment by swearing by God four times that her husband is telling lies, and adds a fifth incurring God's curse on herself if he is telling the truth. If she does, then no punishment is administered in this case, but the marriage is irrevocably terminated. If she is pregnant, the child is named after her, not after her husband. No one can attach any blame to the child. If anyone does make an accusation against the child, they are liable to punishment.

The chapter comments on this delicate ruling by saying: *And had it not been for the grace of God on you and His mercy and that God is Accepter of Repentance, Wise.* **(24:10)** It does not tell us what would have happened, had God not bestowed His favors and grace on us in this way, and extended His manifest grace by accepting our repentance. Instead, the statement leaves us with an impression that it is something very serious, and that people are much better off, avoiding it through God's grace.

LEGISLATION IS GIVEN WHEN NEEDED

As this case provides for a special situation which is exempted from the general rules of false accusation, it may be asked why God

did not reveal this exception to the general rules in the first place? Why did God wait until a situation occurred, one which caused embarrassment and hardship?

God certainly knows all this, but in His infinite wisdom He bestowed from on high the revelation outlining the rules when the need for it was keenly felt. Thus, the rules were received with eagerness, and people immediately recognized the wisdom behind the legislation and the divine grace it ensured. Hence, the verses outlining the procedure conclude with the statement: *And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy and that God is Accepter of Repentance, Wise*— **(24:10)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that

practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

LESSON 102(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*umma* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
SIGNS 24:11-24:20

Madinah: *truly, those who drew near*
with the calumny are many among you.
Assume it not worse for you.
Nay! It is good for you.
To every man of them is what he deserved of sin.
And as for those who turned away
towards the greater part from among them, there will be
a tremendous punishment for him. (24:11)
Why not when you heard about it,
thought not the ones who are male believers
and the ones who are female believers
the better of themselves and have said:
This is a clear calumny? (24:12)
Why brought they not about four witnesses for it?
As they bring not about witnesses, then, with God,
those, they are the ones who lie. (24:13)
If it not were for the grace of God on you and His mercy
in the present and in the world to come,
certainly, would have afflicted you a tremendous punishment
for what you muttered. (24:14)
When you received it on your tongues and said with your mouths
of what there is no knowledge,
you assume it insignificant
while it is serious with God. (24:15)
And why, when you heard it, said you not:
It will not be for us to assert this.
*Glory be to **You**! This is a serious false charge*
to harm the reputation of another. (24:16)
God admonishes you
that you shall never revert to the like of it,
if you had been ones who believe. (24:17)
And He makes manifest for you the signs.

And God is Knowing, Wise. (24:18)
Truly, those who love that indecency
be spread about those who believed,
they will have a painful punishment in the present
and in the world to come.
And God knows and you know not. (24:19)
And if it were not for the grace of God on you
and His mercy,
you would be ruined,
and that God is Gentle, Compassionate. (24:20)

Commentary°

A False Accusation Against the Prophet's Wife

Having outlined the rules applicable in cases of accusing women of adultery, the chapter mentions a case of false accusation that reflects the repugnance of this crime. This involved the Prophet's own household with its noble and chaste inhabitants. It reflected on the honor of the Prophet, the most beloved person by God, and the honor of his friend, Abu Bakr, the Prophet's closest Companion. It also involved the honor of a man, Safwan ibn al-Muattal, who enjoyed the Prophet's own testimony that he never saw anything but good from him. It was a case that preoccupied the entire Muslim community in Madinah for a whole month.

The Quran refers to this whole episode, calling it The Falsehood: **(24:11-24:20)** It was not merely one or a few individuals that circulated the story: *truly, those who drew near with the calumny are many among you. Assume it not worse for you.* **(24:11)** On the contrary, they were a 'band' or a group working for a particular objective. Abd Allah ibn Ubayy was not the only one who fabricated the story. Rather, he was the one who took the lead and played the larger part in the affair. He simply represented the band of Jews or hypocrites who felt unable to fight the Quranic message in open engagement. Therefore, they sought to hide behind the pretense that they were Muslims. They felt that this would enable them to scheme in secret against the Quranic message. This false story was one of their worst schemes which was so successful that some Muslims were deceived and a few repeated the story. The real culprits, however, were the band headed by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, a canny schemer who operated behind the scene, saying nothing in public that might have incriminated him. He simply whispered into the ears of those whom he trusted never to testify against him. The plan was so subtle that the false rumors continued to circulate for a whole month in Madinah, the purest society on earth at that time.

The Quranic passage opens with stating this fact so as to make clear the enormity of the event and the fact that it was perpetrated by a group of people intent on wicked scheming against the Quranic message. The chapter, however, quickly reassures the Muslim community that the eventual outcome of the event will not harm them: *Nay! It is good for you. To every man of them is what he deserved of sin.* **(24:11)**

It was indeed good because it exposed those who schemed against the Quranic message, targeting the Prophet and his family. It also showed the Muslim community the importance of prohibiting the accusation of adultery, and prescribing a severe punishment for such false accusations. The event also clearly showed the dangers that threatened the Muslim community if people were to casually accuse chaste female believers who might behave unwittingly. For once this begins, it never stops. Indeed, it can increase at such a scale that it eventually touches the most noble of leadership. The result is that the Muslim community loses all values that provide protection against such a state of affairs. Moreover, it is good for the Muslim community that God outlines how best to deal with such an affair.

As for the pain suffered by the Prophet, his household and the Muslim community in general, it is all part of the test they had to go through in order to learn through experience.

Those who were involved in circulating and repeating the false story will bear their fair share of sin, according to what they did or said: *And as for those who turned away towards the greater part from among them, there will be a tremendous punishment for him.* **(24:11)** Each will be taken to account by God for what they perpetrated. This is indeed vile because it is a sin that incurs punishment both in this world and in the life to come. Furthermore, "awesome suffering awaits the one who took on himself the lead among them," to suite his role in this ghastly business.

Two Steps for Proof

How could all this have happened in that particular community? Even today, we are surprised that such a flimsy fabrication could have circulated in that Muslim community, producing far-reaching effects and causing much pain to the noblest people on earth.

The whole episode was a battle fought by God's Messenger, the Muslim community and the Quranic message. It perhaps was the greatest battle fought by the Prophet. He emerged from it victorious, having controlled his great anguish, maintained his dignity and endured it all patiently. Not a word did he utter to indicate weakness or impatience. Yet he was experiencing the worst pain he ever endured

in his life. He further recognized that the risks to which the Quranic message was exposed as a result of this falsehood were among the worst it had to face at any time.

Yet had the Muslims then searched in their own hearts, they would have found the right answer. Had they applied simple natural logic, they would have been rightly guided. The Quran directs all Muslims to follow this proper approach when they face such difficulties. It is the first step in arriving at the right conclusion: *Why not when you heard about it, thought not the ones who are male believers and the ones who are female believers the better of themselves and have said: This is a clear calumny?* **(24:12)**

Both reports suggest that some Muslims at least searched their own hearts and ruled out the possibility that the false story suggested. They dismissed any notion that Ayisha or the Prophet's Companion could have committed such a grave sin and been unfaithful to the Prophet, and recognized how utterly flimsy the basis of the whole accusation was. This is the first step in the approach the Quran outlines for dealing with such matters; it seeks evidence from within people's consciences. The second step is to produce material evidence: *Why brought they not about four witnesses for it? As they bring not about witnesses, then, with God, those, they are the ones who lie.* **(24:13)**

This blatant fabrication targeted the highest position in the Muslim community and the purest people. Hence, it should not have been allowed to circulate casually without supporting evidence. Hence the requirement: *As they bring not about witnesses, then, with God, those, they are the ones who lie* **(24:13)** They certainly did not produce any witnesses. Hence, they were, in God's judgement, liars. God never alters His verdict or modifies His decision. Thus, this description of those people as liars remains always true of them, and they cannot escape it in any situation.

Thus we have two steps in the approach of the Quranic message: searching in our own hearts and basing our decision on firm and clear evidence. But the Muslim community at the time overlooked both steps, allowing the liars to speak ill of the Prophet and his honor. This was serious indeed and it could have landed the Muslim community in serious trouble, had it not been for God's grace. Therefore, God warns the Muslims never to fall into such a trap again: *If it not were for the grace of God on you and His mercy in the present and in the world to come, certainly, would have afflicted you a tremendous punishment for what you muttered.* **(24:14)**

WHEN FALSEHOOD CIRCULATES

God wanted this to be a very hard lesson for the fledgling Muslim community, but in His compassion He did not inflict any punishment on them. The offense itself merited stiff punishment because of the pain it caused the Prophet, his wife, close friend and his other Companions of whom he knew nothing but good. It also merited a punishment equal to the evil that circulated within the Muslim community, violating all its sacred values, and equal to the hypocrites' wickedness whose scheme aimed to undermine the Quranic message by raising doubts about God, the Prophet and the Muslim community itself. This continued for a whole month which was a time of doubt, worry and confusion. But God's grace was forthcoming, and He bestowed His mercy on those who were in error after having learnt their bitter lesson.

The chapter gives us a picture of the period, when standards and values were placed on the wrong footing, and the community lost sight of its principles: *When you received it on your tongues and said with your mouths of what there is no knowledge, you assume it insignificant while it is serious with God.* **(24:15)** The picture painted here is one of recklessness and irresponsibility, showing little care for even the most serious of matters.

When you received it on your tongues. **(24:15)** One tongue picks it up from another paying little heed to what is being said. There was an utter lack of proper examination of the report, as though people repeated it without ever thinking of its significance. You *and said with your mouths of what there is no knowledge.* **(24:15)** It is just like that: a mouth utterance without thought or consideration. Mere idle talk uttered and circulated even before it is understood. They thought it a light matter, although it was an accusation against God's Messenger's personal honor, causing him, his wife and household great pain. It was an accusation against Abu Bakr's family which suffered no similar trouble even in pre-Islamic days when moral values were of little importance. This false story also accused another Companion of the Prophet who laid his life down for the defense of the Quranic message. It further had negative implications concerning the care God took of His Messenger. Yet, still they circulated the false rumor *you assume it insignificant while it is serious with God.* **(24:15)** Nothing could be described as grave in God's sight unless it is so serious that it shakes firm mountains and disturbs the heavens and earth.

A matter of such seriousness should have made people shudder just on hearing it. They should have been reluctant even to refer to it, and certainly been unwilling to accept it as a subject of conversa-

tion. They should have looked to God to protect His Messenger. Such falsehood should have been cast aside immediately: *And why, when you heard it, said you not: It will not be for us to assert this. Glory be to Thee! This is a serious false charge to harm the reputation of another.* **(24:16)**

When the matter has thus been clarified, and those early Muslims were taken aback by the enormity of the affair and their role in it, they were given a very stern warning for the future: *God admonishes you that you shall never revert to the like of it, if you had been ones who believe.* **(24:17)**

The warning comes in the form of an admonition so as to be educative, choosing the time when the Muslim community is at its most receptive. But the admonition carries at the same time an implicit warning, and attaches their being believers to the heeding of this warning. Believers cannot retain their faith if they revert to the same type of action after they have been shown its enormity and after they have been given such a warning. *And He makes manifest for you the signs.* **(24:18)** He has certainly shown the story to be plainly false, exposing the scheming behind it. He has also made plain the errors involved in this matter. *And God is Knowing, Wise.* He knows motives, intentions, objectives, thoughts and feelings. His method of bringing out the best in people and providing proper restrictions and controls to set the community's life right testifies to His wisdom.

FURTHER WARNINGS, MORE GRACE

The chapter further elaborates its comments on this falsehood and its effects, repeating its warning against anything that may be of a similar nature. It reminds the Muslims of God's grace and mercy, warning those who falsely accuse chaste women of committing indecency that they expose themselves to God's punishment in the life to come. It also purges people's hearts of the remaining effects of this confrontation, frees them of earthly restrictions and restores their purity.

Truly, those who love that indecency be spread about those who believed, they will have a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. **(24:19)** The ones who accused chaste women of adultery, particularly those who made their accusations against the Prophet's own family, really aimed to undermine the values of goodness, chastity and fidelity, so as to make it easier for people to commit adultery by implying that it was common practice. When people begin to think of it in this light, it will be practised more frequently.

This is the reason for describing the false accusers of chaste women as people who love to spread indecency among the believers.

Hence they are warned against a very severe suffering both in this life and in the life to come.

It is an aspect of the Quranic method of educating the Muslim community and a measure of prevention based on perfect knowledge of how people react and formulate their attitudes, feelings and lines of action. Therefore, the comment at the end of the sign asserts: *And God knows and you know not.* Who knows the human heart better than the One who created it? Who can provide humanity with a better code of living than the One who originated it? Who sees what is concealed as well as what is left in the open, and whose knowledge encompasses all things and situations?

Once again the chapter reminds the believers of the grace God bestows on them: *And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, you would be ruined, and that God is Gentle, Compassionate.* **(24:20)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it,

elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.

Lesson 102(3). Critical Thinking Strategy

Thinking Precisely About Thinking

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

Quranic Examples of Thinking Precisely About Thinking

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (meta-cognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not cre-*

ated this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

Quranic Chapter 24: The Light (al-Nur)
Signs 24:12-24:26

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Follow not in the steps of Satan.
And whoever follows in the steps of Satan,
then, truly, he commands depravity,
and that which is unlawful.
And if it were not for the grace of God on you
and His mercy,
none of you would ever be pure in heart,
but God makes pure whom He wills.
And God is Hearing, Knowing. (24:21)
Let those imbued with grace not forswear
—and those with plenty among you—
to give to those imbued with kinship
and to the needy and the ones who emigrate in the way of God.
And let them pardon and let them overlook.
Love you not that God should forgive you?
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (24:22)
Truly, those who accuse
the ones who are free, unwary, chaste female believers
were cursed in the present and the world to come
and for them will be a serious punishment (24:23)
on a Day when their tongues bear witness
against them and their hands
and their feet as to what they had been doing. (24:24)
On that Day God will pay them their account in full,
what is their just due.
And they will know that God,
He is The Clear Truth. (24:25)
The bad females are for the bad males and the bad males
are for the bad females.
And who are good females are for who are good males
and who are good males are for who are good females.
Those are ones declared innocent of what others say.
For them is forgiveness and generous provision. (24:26)

Commentary°

The mistake committed was grave indeed, and its evil was about to engulf the whole Muslim community, but God's grace, mercy and care prevented this evil. Hence, God reminds them of this, time after time, as He aims this to be an edifying lesson. When they realized the extent of the matter that could have engulfed them all, had it not

been for God's grace and mercy, they were told that what they did was indeed following in Satan's footsteps. They must not fall into this trap, since Satan is their avowed enemy, ever since the beginning of human life. Again they are warned against what this may entail in their life: *O those who believed! Follow not in the steps of Satan. And whoever follows in the steps of Satan, then, truly, he commands depravity, and that which is unlawful. And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, none of you would ever be pure in heart, but God makes pure whom He wills. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(24:21)**

Nothing but a terrible fate awaits the believers if they take just one step with Satan. They should steer away from him altogether and follow a different way. The very thought of following Satan is repugnant to believers. Hence, drawing it in this way and holding it in front of them should make them always alert. *And whoever follows in the steps of Satan, then, truly, he commands depravity, and that which is unlawful..* **(24:21)** This false story is a stark and gruesome example of how Satan leads believers to something evil.

The human being is weak, susceptible to desires and whims which may leave him stained, unless he benefits by God's grace when he turns to Him and follows His guidance: *And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, none of you would ever be pure in heart, but God makes pure whom He wills. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(24:21)** When God's light shines in a believer's heart, it purifies it. It is only through God's favors and grace that people grow in purity. Since God knows all and hears all, He certainly knows the ones who deserve to be purified and who are genuinely good. It is these that He helps to grow in purity.

ATTAINING THE SUBLIME

Within the context of purity, the chapter calls on believers to forgive one another as they love to be forgiven their sins: *Let those imbued with grace not forswear—and those with plenty among you—to give to those imbued with kinship and to the needy and the ones who emigrate in the way of God. And let them pardon and let them overlook.* **(24:22)**

Now we see how one of the souls touched by God's light grows in purity attaining a truly sublime standard. Ab Bakr, who was so deeply hurt by the false rumors targeting his daughter and attempting to disgrace his family, responded to the Quranic call on the believers to forgive those who hurt them. He reflected on the inspiring question, *Love you not that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:22)** And he rose above the pain and injury,

and also above the logic that prevailed in his environment. He felt there could only be one answer to that question, and with certainty and contentment he said: "Yes, indeed. I love that God should forgive me." He reinstated the allowance he had been giving Mistah, and vowed anew that he would never stop it in future. His vow replaced his earlier one that he would not give him anything.

The forgiveness of which God reminds the believers is granted only to those who repent of their errors, accusing chaste women of adultery and spreading corruption in the Muslim community. On the other hand, those who, like Ibn Ubayy, deliberately, and out of malice, make such accusations, will have no pardon or forgiveness. Even though they may escape punishment in this world, because no witnesses will testify against them, they will inevitably endure the punishment in the hereafter when no witnesses will be required.

Truly, those who accuse the ones who are free, unwary, chaste female believers were cursed in the present and the world to come and for them will be a serious punishment on a Day when their tongues bear witness against them and their hands and their feet as to what they had been doing. On that Day God will pay them their account in full, what is their just due. And they will know that God, He is The Clear Truth. **(24:23-24:25)**

The chapter paints their crime in stark colors so as to expose its odious nature. It is an accusation against chaste women believers who go about their lives, totally oblivious to any possibility of accusation. They behave naturally, not thinking that they will be accused of something, simply because they have done nothing wrong. To accuse them of immorality is thus seen to be very serious, betraying the contemptible and mean nature of their accusers. Hence, they are cursed now by God, and expelled from among those who receive His grace in this present life and in the life to come. The chapter then shows us a fascinating scene: *on a Day when their tongues bear witness against them and their hands and their feet as to what they had been doing.* **(24:24)** Thus we see them accusing one another, just as they used to accuse chaste believing women. The contrast is very clear, as is always the case in the Quran.

On that Day God will pay them their account in full, what is their just due. **(24:25)** Their deeds will be accurately reckoned and they will be given all that they really deserve. At that time they will he certain of what they used to be in doubt about. *And they will know that God, He is The Clear Truth.* **(24:25)**

The chapter concludes its comments on this whole story of falsehood by highlighting God's justice in the way He has given man his nature so as to manifest itself in practice. This is why the corrupt will

unite with their like and the good will associate with others of their type. This is how relations are consolidated between husband and wife. Hence, it is absolutely impossible that Ayisha could be like what her accusers said of her, because she was destined to be the wife of the best person that ever lived.

The bad females are for the bad males and the bad males are for the bad females. And who are good females are for who are good males and who are good males are for who are good females. Those are ones declared innocent of what others say. For them is forgiveness and generous provision. **(24:26)**

Good men and women are, by their very nature: *Those are ones declared innocent of what others say.* **(24:26)** False accusations cannot stick to them. *For them is forgiveness and generous provision.* **(24:26)** They will be forgiven any mistake they may commit, and they have their reward with God, clearly indicating their high position with Him.

Thus the chapter concludes its comments on this serious trial for the Muslim community because it aimed at undermining their trust that the Prophet's household was absolutely pure and that God would not allow anyone but the most pure to be a member of that household. God wanted this episode to be an edifying lesson for the Muslim community, elevating it to an even more sublime standard.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 102(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
SIGNS 24:27-24:34

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Enter not houses other than your houses
until you announced your presence
and greeted the people within.
That is better for you
so that perhaps you will recollect. (24:27)
And if you find not in it anyone,
then, enter them not until permission be given to you.
And if it was said to you: Return, then, return.

It is purer for you.
And God is Knowing of what you do. (24:28)
There is no blame on you in entering houses
without ones who are inhabitants wherein you have enjoyment.
And God knows what you show and what you keep back. (24:29)
Say to the males, ones who believe, to lower their sight
and keep their private parts safe.
That is purer for them.
Truly God is Aware of what they craft. (24:30)
And say to the females, ones who believe
to lower their (f) sight and keep their (f) private parts safe
and show not their (f) adornment
but what is manifest of it.
And let them (f) draw their head coverings over their (f) bosoms;
and not show their (f) adornment
but to their (f) husbands or their (f) fathers
or the fathers of their (f) husbands or their sons
or the sons of their (f) husbands or their (f) brothers
or the sons of their (f) brothers
or the sons of their (f) sisters or their (f) women,
or what their (f) right hands possessed,
or the ones who heed,
imbued with no sexual desire among the men
or small male children to whom was not manifest
nakedness of women.
And let them (f) not stomp their feet
so as to be known what they (f) conceal of their adornment.
And turn to God altogether for forgiveness.
O the ones who believe, so that perhaps you will prosper. (24:31)
And wed the single among you
to the ones in accord with morality
of your male bond servants
and your female bond servants.
If they be poor, God will enrich them of His grace.
And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. (24:32)
Let those who find not the means for marriage
have restraint until God enriches them of His grace.
And for those who are looking for emancipation
from among what your right hands possessed,
contract with them if you knew good in them.
And give them of the wealth of God which He gave you.
Compel not your spiritual warriors (f) against their will
to prostitution when they (f) wanted chastity,

that you be looking for the advantage of this present life.
And whoever compels them (f) to it against their (f) will,
yet after their (f) compulsion,
God will be of them (f), the female,
Forgiving, Compassionate. (24:33)
And, certainly, We caused to descend to you
manifest signs and a parable
of those who passed away before you
and an admonishment
for ones who are God-conscious. (24:34)

COMMENTARY°

We mentioned previously that in the clean and healthy society it establishes, the Quranic message does not rely on punishment; rather its main line of defense is prevention. It does not suppress natural desires. It regulates them within a clean atmosphere that is free of deliberate stimulation. The main element in the Quranic method of educating its followers is to reduce the chances of error, eliminate temptation, and remove all impediments that prevent the satisfaction of natural desires in a perfectly natural and clean way.

It is in this light that we should look at the way the Quranic message accords a certain sanctity for homes. When they are at home, people should not be surprised by strangers coming in without first asking leave to enter. Otherwise, people's privacy would be invaded when they least expect it. In addition, the Quranic message requires both men and women to lower their gaze and not expose what may arouse sexual desire.

From the same perspective, the Quranic message facilitates marriage for poor men and women, because marriage is the best guarantee against adultery. It prohibits sending slaves into prostitution, because prostitution encourages people to indulge in prohibited sex. Let us now consider these points in more detail.

BEFORE ENTERING A HOUSE

O those who believed! Enter not houses other than your houses until you announced your presence and greeted the people within. That is better for you so that perhaps you will recollect. And if you find not in it anyone, then, enter them not until permission be given to you. And if it was said to you: Return, then, return. It is purer for you. And God is Knowing of what you do. There is no blame on you in entering houses without ones who are inhabitants wherein you have enjoyment. And God knows what you show and what you keep back. **(24:27-24:29)**

God has made homes places of comfort where people may relax and enjoy privacy and reassurance. At home, they do not feel the need to be cautious or on the alert. Thus, they may relax and take things easy. But homes cannot be so unless their privacy is strictly respected. No one may enter a home without its occupier's knowledge and permission, at the time they choose, and in the manner they prefer.

Should we be able to go into other people's homes without first seeking permission, we may see them in situations they want to keep private, or we may see what arouses desire and opens the way to error. This could come about through a chance meeting, or a casual glance. When these are repeated, they become deliberate, motivated by the desires aroused by the casual glance in the first place. It may even develop into a sinful relation or cause a suppressed desire leading to a psychological problem.

In pre-Quranic days in Arabia, visitors used to enter a home and then announce themselves. It could be that inside a man may be with his wife in a position they did not want anyone to see; or that the man or woman were undressed. All this used to hurt people, and deprived them of a sense of security at home. Furthermore, when visitors saw charm and beauty, temptation might be strong or even irresistible.

For all such reasons, God laid down the requirement to observe fine manners, making it necessary for a Muslim to announce himself and greet the people inside before entering. This establishes a friendly atmosphere right from the first moment.

O those who believed! Enter not houses other than your houses until you announced your presence and greeted the people within. That is better for you so that perhaps you will recollect. **(24:27)** Seeking permission is expressed in the Arabic original in an unusual way which implies friendliness. Thus we may say that we should not enter other people's houses until we have obtained friendly and cordial permission. This implies that the visitor should be gentle in his approach so as to be welcomed by the people inside. Such refinement is characteristic of Quranic manners.

When permission is sought, it follows that the house is either empty or people are inside. If there is no one in, then the caller cannot enter, because entry follows permission. *If you find not in it anyone, then enter them not until permission is given to you.* **(24:28)** But if there is someone in, seeking permission is not enough for entry. It is merely a request, and if the request is not granted, entry is prohibited. It is better to leave without delay: *And if it was said to you: Return, then, return. It is purer for you.* **(24:28)** The person who is told to go

back should do so without feeling upset or offended. People have their secrets and they may have good reason for not receiving a visitor at a particular time. It is up to them to determine their own situation. *And God is Knowing of what you do.* **(24:28)** He knows people's secrets and motives.

VISITING PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE NOT READY

Places that are more or less public, like hotels, guest houses and reception halls which are separate from the main house are treated differently. We may enter such places without first seeking permission, because the very reason for seeking permission before entry does not apply to them. Requiring permission first may be inconvenient in such places.

There is no blame on you in entering houses without ones who are inhabitants wherein you have enjoyment. And God knows what you show and what you keep back. **(24:29)** The point here is that of God's knowledge of all our situations and what we do in public or private. The feeling that God watches us in all situations should make people more obedient and willing to observe the refined manners which He has outlined in His book that lays down a code of living for all humanity.

As a complete code for human life, the Quran emphasizes this point of detail in social life because it aims to regulate life in all its aspects, bringing its details in line with its fundamental issues. Thus, seeking permission before entering other people's homes respects the sanctity which makes the home a place of relaxation. It spares its people the embarrassment of being taken by surprise, or being seen in a situation that they prefer not to be seen in. We are not talking here only about the parts of the human body which should be covered. At home people may be in a situation which they simply do not like others to see. It could relate to their personal appearance, the way they dress or lay their furniture, or anything else. It could also relate to feelings and emotions. Who of us would like to be seen in a situation of weakness, crying or angry or in pain or distress?

The Quranic code of manners attends to all these details through the requirement of seeking permission before entering someone else's home. It also seeks to reduce chances of casual meetings or sightings that could arouse desire and develop into unacceptable relations that Satan may stealthily encourage. The first Muslim community to be addressed by the Quran clearly understood such directives and their purpose. The Prophet himself was the first to implement them.

GOOD MANNERS AND HIGH MORALS

Such refined manners were characteristic of the Prophet and his Companions after God had taught them the Quranic way. Today, however, we find that such fine considerations are largely meaningless despite our being Muslims. A man may just turn up at his brother's door at any time of the day or night, knocking hard and caring little for disturbing the people inside, until the door is opened. The people may have a telephone which provides an excellent way of seeking permission to visit before starting out. He could thus easily find out a time suitable to his hosts. Nevertheless, people simply do not take such steps. A man may arrive at someone's home without a prior appointment or permission. What is worse, our social tradition makes it imperative that a visitor who has come unannounced be received, even though his visit might be extremely inconvenient.

We are certainly Muslims, but we surprise our friends at any moment, even at meal times. If we are not invited to a meal, we may feel aggrieved. We may even surprise them late at night, and if they do not invite us to stay the night, we are offended. We allow our hosts no excuses either way.

All this takes place simply because we neglect Islamic manners. We do not bring our own preferences in line with what has been taught by God's Messenger. We insist on following a mistaken social tradition that has no divine authority.

We look at other, non-Muslim communities and find that their social traditions are closer to the values and manners Islam wants us to adopt. Sometimes we admire these, but at other times we may even ridicule them, without even trying to look into what Islam wants us to do.

PROPER CONTROL OF A NATURAL DESIRE

Having dealt with the proper manners of entering homes after taking permission, the chapter moves on to prevent desire from running loose. It simply prevents looking at what is bound to excite desire, and it prohibits action that encourages sin.

Say to the males, ones who believe, to lower their sight and keep their private parts safe. That is purer for them. Truly God is Aware of what they craft. And say to the females, ones who believe to lower their (f) sight and keep their (f) private parts safe and show not their (f) adornment but what is manifest of it. And let them (f) draw their head coverings over their (f) bosoms; and not show their (f) adornment but to their (f) husbands or their (f) fathers or the fathers of their (f) husbands or their sons or the sons of their (f) husbands or their (f) brothers or the sons of their (f) brothers or the sons of their

(f) sisters or their (f) women, or what their (f) right hands possessed, or the ones who heed, imbued with no sexual desire among the men or small male children to whom was not manifest nakedness of women. And let them (f) not stomp their feet so as to be known what they (f) conceal of their adornment. And turn to God altogether for forgiveness. O the ones who believe, so that perhaps you will prosper. **(24:30-24:31)**

Islam wants to establish a clean society where desire is not aroused at every moment, and erotic scenes are not displayed everywhere. Continual excitement of the sexual urge leads to an insatiable desire that may become unstoppable. A stealthy look, a seductive move, flagrant make-up and thinly-dressed bodies are meant only to add to such insatiable and uncontrolled excitement. Thus, prudence and self control are heavily taxed. Therefore, there remains one of two alternatives: either total permissiveness that disregards all checks and values, or psychological problems and disorders that result from having to suppress a desire that has been strongly aroused. This borders on unmitigated torture.

One way the Quranic message uses for achieving its goal of establishing a clean human society is to prevent such uncontrollable excitement of the sexual urge. It wants the natural sexual urge, of both men and women, to remain healthy, maintaining its natural strength and to satisfy it in the proper, clean manner.

At some point in time, the idea was promoted that easy mixing between the two sexes, playful conversation and revealing physical attractions help to provide a relaxed social atmosphere, with no rigid inhibitions. It was said that this is necessary as a preventive measure against arbitrary suppression of natural desires and psychological complexes and disorders. It reduces the pressure of the sexual urge and prevents an uncontrollable explosion, etc.

Attraction to the other sex is both natural and profound, because God has made it the means by which human life continues and by which man can fulfil his task on earth. It is a permanent attraction that subsides for a while and then regains strength. To stir it at all times will undoubtedly keep it on the boil. Thus, it requires physical satisfaction. If this does not take place, tension will rise and man finds himself in a sort of permanent torture. Excitement takes place through a look, a move, a smile, a joke and even the tone in one's speech. The best safeguard is to reduce such excitement so that the mutual attraction between man and woman remains within its natural limits, and finds its satisfaction in the proper and natural way. This is the line the Quranic message prefers.

The two signs we are now discussing give us some examples of

how Islam helps to reduce the chances of excitement and sin: *Say to the males, ones who believe, to lower their sight and keep their private parts safe.* **(24:30)**

Lowering their gaze is an act of refining men's manners. It represents an attempt to rise above the desire to look at women's physical charms. As such, it is a practical step to ensure that the first window of temptation is shut. Minding their chastity is the natural result of lowering their gaze. It is indeed the second step that comes after strengthening one's will and rising above the natural urge right at the beginning. Therefore, the two are stated in the same sign as a cause and effect, or as two consecutive steps both in personal conscience and in reality.

That is purer for them. **(24:30)** It ensures that their feelings remain pure, unaffected by licentious desire and promiscuous action. Thus, feelings retain their noble human standards, and do not sink to animal levels. This protects honor, integrity and sanctities within the community. Besides, it is God who lays down such preventive measures, fully aware as He certainly is of people's psychology, natural instincts thoughts and motives: *Truly God is Aware of what they craft.*

And say to the females, ones who believe to lower their (f) sight. **(24:31)** They must not cast hungry or seductive looks at men to arouse their desire. Nor are they permitted any sexual behavior other than what is lawful and clean. Thus, children that are born as a result will have nothing to be ashamed of when they have to face society and play their roles in it.

And keep their (f) private parts safe and show not their (f) adornment but what is manifest of it. **(24:31)** The Arabic term *zinah*, translated here as 'adornment', has wider connotations than natural beauty. It includes adornments women add to look more attractive. Such adornments are lawful for women to use, because they satisfy a natural female tendency that makes women always want to look beautiful and attractive. Such adornments differ from one time to another, but whatever form they take, they are meant to satisfy the same natural motive of appearing more beautiful and displaying charms before men.

PROMPT COMPLIANCE WITH DIVINE ORDERS

A further instruction is given to women with regard to their public appearance: *And let them (f) draw their head coverings over their (f) bosoms.* **(24:31)** We have a translation problem here because the Quranic signs uses the term *jayb*, which does not mean 'bosom'. *Jayb* instead means the top opening of a dress which is bound to reveal a part of a woman's bosom. Therefore, women are ordered to

bring their head coverings down so as to cover this opening, thus covering their heads, necks and chests. In this way, they cover their charms so as not to be displayed before hungry eyes, not even in a sudden encounter between man and woman. A God-conscious person will always try not to make such a look last long, or repeat it. Yet, it may have a lasting effect if charms and adornments are seen suddenly. Hence, the instruction to keep them covered. What is important to realize here is that God wants to spare people this type of test.

The Quranic message has refined the tastes of a society that follows the Quranic message and its sense of beauty for it no longer seeks the lewd and licentious. Exposing bodily charms attracts a man's physical instinct. Modesty, on the other hand, shows a clean type of beauty that refines man's sense. It is the type of beauty worthy of man, because it imparts a sense of purity and chastity.

Today, the Quranic message produces the same effect among women believers, despite the fact that the general taste in society has sunk so low as to encourage the revealing of physical charms and the exposure of other parts of the human body. Nevertheless, women believers voluntarily cover themselves as God requires them to do, while other women around them try to attract men by their physical presence.

Another exception applies to POW/slaves/concubines: *or what their (f) right hands possessed.* Some scholars say that this applies to women POW/slaves only, while others include male slaves too because a slave does not look up to his mistress in a carnal way. But the first view is more logical because a POW/slave is a man with all the desire any other man has, even though he is placed in a special or unfavorable situation. Also excepted are *or the ones who heed, imbued with no sexual desire among the men* who may not be attracted to women for one reason or another, such as being impotent or feeble minded. In this case, a woman's physical beauty causes no temptation. Similarly excepted are: *or small male children to whom was not manifest nakedness of women.* These are children who do not yet feel any sexual desire because they are too young. When they are older and become sexually aware and attracted to women, even though they might not have attained their puberty, nonetheless the original rules apply to them.

All these–with the exception of husbands–may see a woman uncovered, except for the area between her waistline and knees, because the cause that prevents such looks does not apply in their case. A husband, on the other hand, may see his wife without restriction.

Since this is a preventive measure, the Quranic sign goes on to prohibit the movements a woman may make in order to attract atten-

tion to her adornments or charms that are not readily visible. Such movements may be exciting even though the adornments themselves may remain invisible.

And let them (f) not stomp their feet so as to be known what they (f) conceal of their adornment. **(24:31)** This order results from profound knowledge of human psychology. Sometimes, the human imagination may be a more powerful trigger for desire. Many are the men who, on seeing a woman's shoes, dress or jewellery, are more excited than by seeing her body. Many are the ones that are sexually excited by the mental image they draw of a woman than by seeing her in person. Psychiatrists have identified such cases which may need treatment. The tinkle of jewellery or the smell of perfume may excite some people and kindle their sexual desire. With some, this could become irresistible. The Quran takes effective and appropriate action against all this, because its message is sent by God the Creator who knows His creation and who is kind to, and fully aware of, them all.

The sign concludes with turning people's hearts to God, opening the door of repentance and forgiveness for all that was done before its revelation. *And turn to God altogether for forgiveness. O the ones who believe, so that perhaps you will prosper.* **(24:31)** Thus, it enhances their feelings that God watches over them, and that He is kind to them, taking care of them. He helps them overcome their weakness in respect of sexual desire. Yet nothing can bring this under proper control more effectively than faith and conscious of God.

PROMOTING EASY MARRIAGE

Up to this point, the measures the Quran speaks about are preventive. Yet sexual attraction is very real and needs practical steps to ensure its proper control. The most important solution is marriage and the taking of positive steps to encourage it, together with making other ways of sexual response far more difficult or even totally unavailable.

And wed the single among you to the ones in accord with morality of your male bond servants and your female bond servants. If they be poor, God will enrich them of His grace. And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. Let those who find not the means for marriage have restraint until God enriches them of His grace. And for those who are looking for emancipation from among what your right hands possessed, contract with them if you knew good in them. And give them of the wealth of God which He gave you. Compel not your spiritual warriors (f) against their will to prostitution when they (f) wanted chastity, that you be looking for the advantage of this present

life. And whoever compels them (f) to it against their (f) will, yet after their (f) compulsion, God will be of them (f), the female, Forgiving, Compassionate. **(24:32-24:33)**

Marriage is the proper way to satisfy natural sexual desires. Hence, all impediments that make marriage difficult should be removed so that human life can progress in this natural and simple way. Money is the primary impediment facing those who wish to establish families and protect themselves against sin. Hence, Islam puts in place an integrated system that does not make a requirement without providing its tools or the conditions that are conducive to its fulfilment. As it requires people to maintain their chastity, it makes marriage easy for all people. Hence only the one who deliberately turns away from the clean and pure way indulges in sin. Therefore, Islam requires the Muslim community to provide financial assistance for those who lack the wherewithal to get married: *And wed the single among you to the ones in accord with morality of your male bond servants and your female bond servants.* **(24:32)**

The order includes all those who are single, men and women, although only free people are meant here initially. Those who are in bondage are specifically mentioned later:: a*s well as such of your male and female POW/slaves as are virtuous.* They all need money for this purpose, as it is clearly understood from the rest of the sign: *If they be poor, God will enrich them of His grace.* **(24:32)**

This order is given to the Muslim community to enable single people to marry. The majority of scholars are of the view that this order is meant as a recommendation because there were single people during the time of the Prophet and they were not made to marry. Had this order been meant as an obligation, the Prophet would have ensured they all married. In our view, this order states an obligation, but it does not mean that a Muslim ruler is required to compel those who are single to get married.

What it means instead is that the Muslim community must help single people who wish to get married, thus enabling them to guard their chastity. The Quranic message considers this to be a practical measure of protection so that the Muslim community remains free of adultery, as it is duty bound to remain so. Providing the means to fulfil an obligation is also obligatory.

We should remember though that the Quranic message is a fully integrated system. Hence, it provides adequate measures to set the economy of the Muslim community on the right footing. Thus, it provides good job opportunities for those who are able to work, so that they do not need assistance from the treasury. However, in exceptional situations, the public treasury is required to provide such as-

sistance. This means that in the economic system of the Quranic message, everyone has an income to meet their needs. The provision of jobs giving adequate income is a duty of the Muslim state and a right owing to individual citizens. Giving financial assistance by the public treasury is the exception, not the rule.

FINANCIAL HELP FOR MARRIAGE

When, despite all this, there remain in the community single men and women who are poor, unable to meet the expenses of marriage, the Muslim community must help them marry. The same applies to POW/slaves, of both sexes. However, this duty applies in the first place to their masters, if they can meet such expenses. Poverty should never be an impediment preventing marriage when single men or women are suitable for marriage and are willing. It is God who provides for all. He has made it clear that He will give them enough when they choose the clean and healthy way, guarding their chastity through marriage. *If they be poor, God will enrich them of His grace.* **(24:32)**

Until the Muslim community provides the necessary help to enable them to get married, single people are instructed to guard their chastity. *Let those who find not the means for marriage have restraint until God enriches them of His grace.* **(24:33)** This He certainly does, because *God will be of them (f), the female, Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:33)** He does not stint the means of a person who wants to stick to the way of purity and chastity as He is fully aware of people's intentions.

We see how the Quranic message provides a practical solution to a real problem. Every individual who is fit to marry should be able to do so, even though he or she may lack the necessary financial ability. In most cases, money, or the lack of it, is the most difficult barrier that prevents people from getting married.

It is recognized that the presence of POW/slaves within the community allows moral standards to fall, encouraging loose moral attitudes because, generally speaking, slaves have a weaker sense of human dignity. At the same time slavery was inevitable at the advent of the Quranic message, considering the need to apply the same rules to captives of war taken by Muslims as Muslim captives received at the hands of their non-Muslim captors. Yet the Quranic message took a unilateral initiative to free POW/slaves whenever possible, until a new world order allowed for the total abolition of slavery. It is in this vein that the Quranic message required that a POW/slave who wished to buy his own freedom should be freed in return for an agreed sum of money which he paid to his master. *And for those who*

are looking for emancipation from among what your right hands possessed, contract with them if you knew good in them. **(24:33)**

When a POW/slave signs a deed of freedom, the money he earns through his own work belongs to him so that he can fulfil his commitment under the deed of freedom. What is more is that he can rightfully claim to be helped from *zakat* funds: *And give them of the wealth of God which He gave you.* **(24:33)** The only condition that applies in such situations is that the master should be aware that the POW/slave is a good person. The goodness that the sign refers to is that the POW/slave should be a Muslim in the first place, and that he or she should be able to earn their living through their work. A freed POW/slave should not become a liability to society, or forced to resort to degrading practices in order to survive. The Quranic message lays down a system of social security which is very practical. It does not raise empty slogans nor does it try to meet them without looking at the realities that follow. It does not merely seek to free POW/slaves without giving that freedom real meaning. POW/slaves will not achieve a real standard of freedom unless they are able to earn their living so that they neither beg nor resort to some dirty practices to survive. Some such practices are far worse than being a POW/slave.

The Quranic message frees POW/slaves in order to cleanse society, and so avoid it becoming more contaminated with vice. By the grace of God, POW/slavery has been abolished after the signing of international treaties and conventions that prohibit the enslavement of captives of war. Under the Quranic message, slavery was allowed only provisionally, on the basis of measure-for-measure in the treatment of enemy captives of war.

FAIR TREATMENT FOR THE LEAST PRIVILEGED

What is worse than the presence of POW/slaves in the community is that some POW/slaves might be put to prostitution. In pre-Quranic days, a master might make his female POW/slaves prostitutes, taking some or all of their wages. This form of prostitution continues to be practised today. As the Quranic message wants the social environment to be pure, it forbids all adultery, particularly this form of prostitution. *Compel not your spiritual warriors (f) against their will to prostitution when they (f) wanted chastity, that you be looking for the advantage of this present life. And whoever compels them (f) to it against their (f) will, yet after their (f) compulsion, God will be of them (f), the female, Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:33)** This sign warns those who force their maids into prostitution, and rebukes them for seeking to enrich themselves in this highly im-

moral way. It also promises those who are forced to it forgiveness and mercy.

The prohibition of compelling girls, who wish to maintain their chastity, into prostitution for financial gain was part of the Quranic method of cleansing the social environment and of blocking all dirty methods of satisfying sexual desires. When prostitution is condoned in society, it tempts many people because it is so easy. When such avenues are not available, people have to seek the clean way of marriage to satisfy their natural desires.

There is no validity in the argument that prostitution works as a safety device to protect families, or that it is the only way to satisfy a natural need when marriage is difficult, or that unless such an easy way is found, people assault honorable women. This is indeed a twisted argument that confuses causes and results. Sexual desire must remain clean, pure and directed to serve the purpose of procreation, so that new generations can grow up in a clean environment. Communities must reform their economic systems so that everyone can have a reasonable standard of living which enables him or her to marry. Should there remain exceptional cases, these would be properly considered and appropriate treatment found for them. This leaves no need for prostitution, or filthy brothels where those who want to ease the pressure of their natural sexual desire can throw aside their burden, in the same way as garbage is publicly thrown over a dunghill. It is the economic system that should be reformed so as to prevent such filth from existing. The inadequacy of economic systems should never be the basis of an argument for brothels where humanity is exceedingly humiliated.

This is exactly the method the Quranic message adopts, providing an integrated system that maintains purity and helps people preserve their chastity. It is a system that provides a bridge linking this world with heaven, and elevates humanity to a sublime level that is enlightened with God's guidance.

The whole passage concludes with a sign that provides suitable comments on its subject matter: *And, certainly, We caused to descend to you manifest signs and a parable of those who passed away before you and an admonishment for ones who are God-conscious.* **(24:34)** Its signs are clear. They show the truth, leaving no room for ambiguity or distortion. It portrays the fate of earlier communities that deviated from the divine method and the punishment meted out to them. The Quran also provides an admonition for the God-conscious who realize that God watches all that we do. Thus, they stand in awe of God and they follow the right path. All the rules and the rulings outlined in this passage fit well with this comment which emphasizes

the bond between people's hearts with God Almighty who bestowed this Quran from on high.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions.** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

How are assumptions used in the Quran?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again ac-

cording to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms

LESSON 102(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Consequences follow from our actions.

REASONING WELL

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

IMPLICATIONS IN REASONING

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
SIGNS 24:35-24:40

Madinah: *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.*
The parable of His Light is as a niche
in which there is a lamp.
The lamp is in a glass.
The glass is as if it had been a glittering star,
kindled from a blessed olive tree,
neither eastern nor western,
whose oil of the olive is about to illuminate
although no fire touches it.
Light on light,
God guides to His Light whom He wills!
And God propounds parables for humanity,
and God is Knowing of everything. (24:35)
The Light is lit in houses God gave permission
to be lifted up and that His Name be remembered in it.

Glorifying Him at the first part of the day and the eventide (24:36)
are men whom neither trade nor trading
diverts from the remembrance of God
and the performing the formal prayer
and the giving of purifying alms
for they fear a Day when the hearts will go to and fro
and their sight, (24:37)
that God gives recompense to them according to the fairer
of what they did
and increases even more for them from His grace.
And God provides to whom He wills without reckoning. (24:38)
As for those who were ungrateful,
their actions are like a mirage in a spacious plain.
The thirsty one assumes it to be water until he drew near it.
He finds it to be nothing.
Instead, he found God with him
Who paid his account in full,
reckoning and God is Swift at reckoning. (24:39)
Or they are like the shadows in an obscure sea,
overcome by a wave, above which is a wave,
above which are clouds, shadows, some above some others.
When he brought out his hand he almost sees it not.
And whomever God assigns no light for him,
there is no light for him. (24:40)

COMMENTARY°

So far the chapter has dealt with the most crude aspects of the human constitution in order to purify and refine them. It has dealt with sexual desire, including its different appeals, as well as the inclination to spread rumors and level accusations at people causing anger and distress. It has also dealt with indecency fermenting within people's hearts, finding verbal expression and then spreading into actual life itself. In all these it laid down very stern punishments for adultery and for false accusation of committing it. It portrayed a horrid example of false accusations levelled at chaste women who are unaware of what is being said about them. It also provided preventive measures, such as seeking permission before entering other people's homes, lowering one's gaze when meeting others, and covering personal charms and adornments. It further warned against unnecessary sexual excitement, encouraged marriage and the freedom of slaves and prohibited prostitution. All these measures, varied as they are, help to control the physical impulse and strengthen the motives to maintain one's chastity and aspire to higher standards of purity.

At the conclusion of its comments on the false story about Ayisha the chapter dealt with the lingering effects of that incident: in particular the distress, anger, distortion of values and anxiety.

With such directives, education and refinement the chapter now deals with the human soul, how it suddenly lights up, aspiring to the great light that fills the heavens and earth. Muslims are now ready to receive the enlightenment that they need in a world full of light.

GOD'S RADIANT LIGHT

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. **(24:35)** No sooner does this remarkable statement impart its meaning than a bright light spreads over the whole universe and lightens up feelings and emotions, filling hearts and minds. The entire universe swims in a radiant light. Screens and curtains are removed, hearts radiate, spirits fly high, and everything is purified in a sea of light. All shed their burdens and join together in an atmosphere of pure happiness and delight. Indeed, the universe and all it contains break their fetters so as to let the heavens and earth meet, the distant and the near come together, as do the animate and the inanimate. What is hidden joins with what is apparent, as do people's hearts and senses.

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. He is the light from which they derive their essence as well as their perfect system. He is the One who gives them their existence and the law that governs such existence. The human being has recently been able to discover, through scientific achievements, a part of this great truth when what they used to call 'matter' was transformed, through nuclear fusion, into radiation that has no form or substance other than light. Thus, the human being discovered that an atom contains electrons that produce radiation. By contrast, the human heart was able to comprehend this great truth many centuries before science made its discoveries. Every time the human heart attained a high level of purity, aspiring to the sublime light, it was able to understand this truth. It was fully comprehended by Muhammad, God's Messenger, as he started his journey back from Taif, when he gave up on people and sought refuge with his Lord. Appealing to God Almighty, he said: I seek refuge in the light of Your face by which all darkness is dispelled and both this life and the life to come are put on their right courses. His heart shined with this sublime light on his night journey which took him from Makkah to Jerusalem and then to heaven. When later Ayisha, his wife, asked him whether he saw his Lord, he answered: It is all light. How could I see Him?

AN EXAMPLE PORTRAYING GOD'S LIGHT

The human heart cannot take such abundant light for long; nor can it aspire to that great horizon for long. Therefore, after this statement that opens up this endless scope, the chapter begins to bring it closer so as to make it better understood. The example is at once tangible and practical:

The parable of His Light is as a niche in which there is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as if it had been a glittering star, kindled from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil of the olive is about to illuminate although no fire touches it. Light on light. **(24:35)**

This comparison seeks to put the infinite right before a mind that has finite ability. It simply portrays a miniscule picture to present it to the human being who cannot contemplate its great reality. It seeks to show the nature of light when the human imagination cannot entertain its endless spread.

The sign begins by stating the fact that *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth* but then it brings us fast from this great expanse to a niche, a small artificial wall recess in which a lamp is placed so as to focus its light and make it shine. *The parable of His Light is as a niche in which there is a lamp.* It adds one element of strength and concentration after another: *The lamp is in a glass* which protects it from the wind and purifies its light to make it stronger and more radiant: *The glass is as if it had been a glittering star.* We see the glass painted here as bright, transparent, almost shining. At this point the sign links the example and the reality, the likeness and the original, the small glass and the radiant star. Thus we do not concentrate our reflection on the miniscule picture which is presented only to help us understand the great reality.

The chapter immediately reverts to the small example of the lamp, which is *kindled from a blessed olive tree.* The purest light known to the first people addressed by the Quran was that of olive oil. But this is not the only reason for choosing this example. It is an example that has connotations of sacredness associated with the blessed tree. These connotations recall the image of the sacred valley, the nearest place to Arabia in which olive trees grow in abundance. The Quran refers to this tree and gives it special significance: *And a tree that goes forth from Mount Sinai that bears oil and it is a seasoning for the ones who eat it.* **(23:19-23:20)** It is a tree that lives for ages, and it brings endless benefits to the human being through its oil, wood, leaves and fruit. Once again the text turns from the little example to remind us of the great reality. This tree is not a particular one, and it does not belong to a particular place or direction. It is

merely an example given to make the reality easier to understand. Hence, it is described as *neither of the east nor of the west.* Moreover, its oil is not the one we see and know. It is different and far more remarkable: *Its very oil would almost give light even though no fire had touched it.* It is so transparent and bright that it almost gives light without burning. The example concludes with another remarkable statement: *Light upon light.* Thus, we are back with the original light that bears no comparison. It is God's light that dispels all darkness in the heavens and the earth. It is a light whose nature and scope are beyond our comprehension. The aim here is to make our hearts aspire to see this light: *God guides to His Light whom He wills!* **(24:35)** Those who open their hearts to the light will see it because it spreads far and wide in the heavens and the earth. It is permanent, unending, unscreened, and it never fades. Whenever the human heart looks for it, it is sure to find it. In the midst of his confusion, man can always find it providing guidance and establishing a bond between him and his Lord.

This comparison is given by God so as to make our minds able to comprehend the nature of His light. He alone knows the full extent of our ability:*And God propounds parables for humanity, and God is Knowing of everything.* **(24:35)**

This light which spreads in abundance in the heavens and earth is best seen in perfect clarity in the houses of God where people's hearts look up to Him, remember Him, stand in awe of Him and dedicate themselves to Him in preference to all else:

In houses which God has sanctioned to be raised so that His name be remembered in them, there are such as extol His limitless glory, morning and evening–people whom neither commerce nor profit can divert from the remembrance of God, and from attending regularly to formal prayer, and from charity; who are filled with fear of the day when all hearts and eyes will be convulsed; who only hope that God may reward them in accordance with the best that they ever did, and lavish His grace upon them. God gives to whom He wills beyond all reckoning. **(24:36-24:38)**

There is a close affinity between the scene of the niche in the first sign and the following scene of God's houses. This is perfectly in line with the Quranic method of putting together images that have close parallels. Likewise, there is close affinity between the lamp shining with light in the niche and hearts shining with the light of glorifying God in His houses.

When God sanctions something, it takes place just as He has approved. Since He has sanctioned the raising of these houses, they are there, functioning, purified and respected. The view showing them

standing tall is in harmony with God's light that radiates throughout the heavens and the earth. These houses are naturally noble which again fits perfectly with the brilliant light described earlier. Their special, venerated position makes them fit for the remembrance of God's name: *The Light is lit in houses God gave permission to be lifted up and that His Name be remembered in it.* **(24:36)** They are also in harmony with the radiant hearts of the believers who stand up in formal prayer, glorify God and extol His praises. They are *men whom neither trade nor trading diverts from the remembrance of God and the performing the formal prayer and the giving of purifying alms.* **(24:37)** Needless to say, trade and commerce aim to make a profit. Yet although these believers are engaged in such enterprises, they are not diverted from their obligation towards God or their fellow human beings. Therefore, they attend regularly and properly to their formal prayers and pay their *zakat* and charity. These people *for they fear a Day when the hearts will go to and fro and their sight.* **(24:37)** On that day, people's hearts and eyes will be in turmoil, unsteady. It is a day of utter fear and distress. Therefore, they fear what may happen to them then. In order to spare themselves, they are never diverted by their immediate concerns of business and profit from attending to their duties towards their Lord.

Yet despite their fear, they have high hopes *that God gives recompense to them according to the fairer of what they did and increases even more for them from His grace.* **(24:38)** Their hopes will never be frustrated; for: *God provides to whom He wills without reckoning.* **(24:38)** There are no limits to God's favors and no restrictions on what He may wish to bestow on His devoted servants.

DEEDS THAT COME TO NOTHING

In contrast to this radiant light that shines throughout the heavens and the earth, focusing on the houses dedicated to God and enlightening the hearts of the faithful, the chapter shows a different situation where no light can penetrate and no one is safe; a situation devoid of all goodness. That is the situation in which the unbelievers find themselves:

As for the ungrateful, their deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty traveller supposes to be water, but when he comes near to it, he finds that it is nothing. *As for those who were ungrateful, their actions are like a mirage in a spacious plain. The thirsty one assumes it to be water until he drew near it. He finds it to be nothing. Instead, he found God with him Who paid his account in full, reckoning and God is Swift at reckoning.* **(24:39)**

This is the first of two remarkable scenes the chapter paints of

the ungrateful and their destiny. Both are full of life and movement. In this scene their actions are shown like a mirage in an open space. It gives a false shine which attracts the thirsty traveller who moves towards it. He is totally unaware of what he might find there, other than the prospect of quenching his thirst. Suddenly, the whole scene moves swiftly, and we see the thirsty traveller arriving at this place but finding no water to drink. Instead, he is in for a great surprise, one which he could never have imagined. It is awesome, striking fear into his heart and leaving him utterly bewildered. What he finds is the realization that God has always been present with him. He had denied God's existence, turned his back on Him and adopted a hostile attitude to faith. In his state of total oblivion to anything other than the water he needs, should he find there a human adversary, he would be startled and confused. But he finds no human opponent. He finds God Almighty who takes him to account.

And then what happens? *He found God with him Who paid his account in full* All this occurs very quickly, in line with the initial and sudden shock. The final comment on this scene is *reckoning and God is Swift at reckoning.* Again the comment perfectly suits the rapidity of the scene.

In the second scene layers of darkness gather on top of each other, to contrast with the false brightness of the mirage. Great fear is transmitted by the bottomless ocean engulfed in darkness, and waves upon waves moving in a never-ending motion. Above all this, dark clouds gather. Thus, layers of darkness amass, to the extent that if someone were to hold out their hand, they would fail to see it in the engulfing darkness. Hence it is a darkness that spreads an air of fear and panic.

This is all a description of unbelief, which is shown as darkness totally isolated from the divine light that radiates throughout the universe. It is a deep error which prevents people from seeing even the nearest sign of guidance, a fear that leaves no trace of security. For, *indeed the one from whom God withholds light shall find no light at all.* **(24:40)** God's light is guidance planted in people's hearts, giving them an informed insight, and a bond between human nature and the laws that operate in the universe at large. It is the only true enlightenment. A person who is cut off from this light remains in a darkness that cannot be removed, in a fear without security, and in error without return. At the end he finds all his actions to be a mirage leading him to ruin. No action is valid unless it is based on faith. There is no guidance without faith, and no light unless it is God's light.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

INTERLUDE: THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH

The Nadir tribe is bent on getting its property back. The leaders learn that the Quraysh are planning a final attack against the Muslims so they secretly send leaders from Khaybar to the pagans. The pagans ask them: You are People of the Book and you are aware of our differences with Muhammad. Is our creed of idolatry better than the creed of Muhammad? The Nadir tribal leader says: Your creed is better and you are much more worthy. The Jews are monotheists and for monotheists to hypocritically accept idolatry is infidelity (*kufr*) to the One God.

The Nadir join forces with the pagans along with the Kinanah and Asad, people of the coastlands (Tihamah), the Ghatafan of Najd, the Hawazin and the Sulayman. This will be the last attempt of the idolaters to destroy the Messenger and his Community. News that the Quraysh army of 10,000 men and 300 horses have left Makkah for Madinah takes four days to reach him. He only has one week to prepare his defenses.

The Messenger then sends out word to all of the surrounding area that an attack is imminent, that they should have patience, fear God, and obey orders. He then calls for a counsel of the Companions to seek their opinions as to the best method of defense. After several suggestions, Salman, one of the recent Companions, offers a suggestion.

Salman is a Persian slave who had been purchased by a Jew of the Qurayzah tribe. From the time the Messenger had arrived in Madinah and Salman had met him, he had wanted to join the Muslim Companions but the price for his freedom had been set by the Jewish Qurayzah leader at the planting of 300 palm trees and gold. While Abu Sufyan had been preparing his army in Makkah, joining forces with the Jewish Nadir tribe and others, Salman in Madinah had been in contact with the Messenger to seek his help in buying his freedom. The Messenger had asked the Companions to help Salman plant the date palms. The Companions dig out the ground and the Messenger himself placed the saplings in the earth. When this had been completed, the Messenger had given Salman a piece of gold. His price complete, Salman had been set free.

Now he is a Companion of the Messenger of God and offers a suggestion in the council meeting in regard to defending Madinah. He says: Oh Messenger of God, in Persia whenever we had feared an attack of horses, we would surround ourselves with a trench. Let's dig a trench as a defense. Everyone agrees that this is the best approach to take.

Each group in the Community is made responsible for a section of the trench. The Messenger himself works with them. It takes six days to complete. Abu Sufyan arrives at the head of the pagan forces. He and his army are surprised when they see the Muslim archers on the other side of a wide trench which had not been there before. After they receive a barrage of arrows, they withdraw to a safe distance and consult with one another. A member of the Nadir tribe's forces suggests Abu Sufyan speak to the Qurayzah tribe whose

fortress blocks the approach to Madinah from the south-east. They seek their agreement in order to be able to attack Madinah from two directions.

The Messenger prepares the 3000 strong Muslim army for the attack. He hears that the Qurayzah tribe have broken their treaty with him. He fears for the Muslim women and children and sends Zayd and 300 men, needed for the trench, to patrol the streets at night. They do so with cries of: *Allahu akbar*, God is Greater throughout the night.

The attack continues night and day. They remember Uhud and do not want to be caught negligent. With little to eat, a scarce water supply, and long hours vigil behind the trench, shooting arrows at the enemy as he tries to cross the trench, the Messenger feels perhaps he can break the ranks of the enemy by offering the Ghatafan tribe one-third of the dates of Madinah for one year if they withdraw. The Ghatafan tribe had been promised half the date harvest of Khaybar by Abu Sufyan to join against the Muslims. When the Messenger tells the Helpers of his plan to have the Bani Ghatafan break their ranks, Saad ibn Muadth says,: Oh Messenger of God, is this a command of God or do you do this for our sake? The Messenger answers: It is something I do for your sake and by God I do not want to do it but I see the Arabs have shot at you from all sides. Through this I would hope to break their assault against you.

Saad, who had been wounded in the attack, says: O Messenger of God, we and these pagan people had believed in gods along with God. We had been idol-worshippers, not truly worshipping God nor knowing Him. At that time the Jews had no hope of eating one date of ours unless they were our guest or we traded them for something from them. And now that God has endowed us with the Quranic message and guided us and strengthened us with you and with it, should we give them our goods? By God we will give them nothing but the sword until He decides between us. The Messenger then says: Let it be as you say.

That night, when the possibility to break the enemies' ranks through a treaty with one of them is overridden, the Muslims receive a convert to the Quranic message during the night. Nuaym, who had been hired by Abu Sufyan to go to Madinah and try to prevent the Muslims from preparing to meet him at the Second Badr, a mission at which he failed subsequently, losing his fee of ten sheep, once again is in the ranks of Abu Sufyan. But something had happened to him during those days in Madinah. There had been a certain spirit among the people which had attracted him to them. Now, watching them stand unified in defense of their city against such overwhelming odds, he is drawn even more to them. He seeks out the Messenger and converts to Islam.

He then presents the Messenger with a plan which he knows he will be able to carry out because none of his people know of his conversion to the Quranic message. He asks permission of the Messenger to lie and the Messenger says: Say whatever you have to in order to draw them away from us because war is deceit.

Nuaym goes to the Bani Qurayzah who welcome him as an old friend.

He tells them that if the Quraysh and Ghatafan fail to defeat the Muslims, they will return to their homes and leave the Jews at the mercy of the Muslims. They should refuse to fight until they are given some of the leading men of the pagans as hostage. This will guarantee the pagans will not leave the area until the Muslims had been defeated. The Qurayzah accept his advice because they themselves had often considered this possibility. They agree not to tell anyone who so counseled them.

Nuaym then goes to Abu Sufyan's friends and says he has some important news to tell them on condition that they not say who gave them the information. They agree and he tells them that the Jews have informed the Messenger that they regret that they had gotten involved in this war. They want to offer Muhammad some of the Quraysh and Ghatafan leaders in return for their own safety. They also agree to join the Muslims. He adds that the Messenger has sent them his agreement. Therefore, if the Qurayzah ask for Quraysh leaders as hostages, the Quraysh and Ghatafan should not accept. He then tells his own tribe and the Ghatafan what he had told the Quraysh.

The next day the pagans send someone to test the Qurayzah tribe. He is told by the Qurayzah leaders that they will not fight because the next day is the Sabbath and after that, they will fight only on condition that they get pagans and Ghatafan leaders as hostages. The pagans and Ghatafan realize Nuaym had been correct. They again send a man to the Qurayzah who says: We will not leave one of our leaders among you. If you are prepared to fight, come and do so.

When the Qurayzah hear this, they look at each other and recall the words of Nuaym. They feel confirmed in their belief that the pagans and the Ghafatan want to trap them into battle. If they win, fine, but if they lose, they will leave this area and return to their homes. They send a message to both groups: we will not fight until we have one of your leaders at our disposal. This breaks the morale of the confederacy. Their unity has been broken by a newly converted Muslim. Following that, the divine help came in the form of a cold wind which blew away their tents and turned over their pots of food.

When the Messenger hears of the confused position of the Quraysh, he commands one of his followers, Hudhayfah, to go to the enemy's camp and find out what is going on. Hudhayfah says: I went to the leaders camp. I saw the tornado had been so strong that there is no food on the fire nor fire nor tents. He hears Abu Sufyan speak to his forces saying: This is not our home. Our animals are dying. The storm has left us no tents. The Qurayzah tribe will not assist us. If it best if we leave this area and return to Makkah. Hudhayfah then goes to the Ghatafan camp and finds it empty.

The Messenger had been praying for three days: *Oh God, Revealer of the Book, Swift Caller to account, turn the confederates to flight, turn them to flight and cause them to quake* (33:9) is revealed when the battle is over. Hudhayfah returns with the news for the Messenger who is offering his formal prayer. He finishes and Hudhayfah tells him of their victory.

Lesson 102(6). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating or Assessing Solutions

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

Quranic Chapter 24: The Light (al-Nur) Signs 24:1-24:10

Madinah: *Have **you** not considered that glorifies God*
whatever is in the heavens and the earth
and the birds, ones standing in ranks?
Each knew its formal prayer and its glorification.
And God is Knowing of what they accomplish. (24:41)
And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
And to God is the Homecoming. (24:42)
*Have **you** not considered how God propels clouds*
and, again, brings what is between them together?
Again, He lays them into a heap.
***You** have seen the rain drops go forth in the midst.*
And He sends down from the heaven
mountains of rain in which there is hail.
And He lights it on whom He wills
and turns away from it whom He wills.
The gleams of His lightning almost take away the sight. (24:43)
God turns around and around the nighttime and the daytime.
Truly, in this is a lesson for those imbued with insight. (24:44)
God created every moving creature from water. Among them there
is what walks on its belly and of them there is what walks on two

feet and of them there is what walks on four. God creates what He wills. Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (24:45)
Certainly, We caused manifest signs to descend. And God guides whom He wills to a straight path. (24:46)
And they say: We believed in God and the Messenger, and we obeyed. Again, a group of people among them turn away after this. And those are not of the ones who believe. (24:47)
And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside. (24:48)
But if they would be in the right, they would approach him as ones who are yielding. (24:49)
Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or were they in doubt? Or be they fearful that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust. (24:50)

COMMENTARY°

ALL GLORIFY GOD

This is an extraordinary scene of unbelief, error and darkness in human life. Yet it is followed by one of faith, guidance and light in the great universe. This is a scene showing the entire universe with all that lives in it, human and jinn, planets and stars, and all beings, whether animate or inanimate, sharing in God's glorification. We feel how awesome the scene is as we hear the glorification echoed everywhere in the heavens and the earth:

Have you not considered that glorifies God whatever is in the heavens and the earth and the birds, ones standing in ranks? Each knew its formal prayer and its glorification. And God is Knowing of what they accomplish. **(24:41)**

The human being does not live alone in this universe. All around him, to his right and to his left, above him and beneath him, and in the expanse beyond, whether reached by his imagination or not, there are beings God has created with different natures, forms and shapes. All share in their belief in God, turn to Him and extol His praises. *And God is Knowing of what they accomplish.*

The Quran directs the human being to look around him: all is of God's making and all living things everywhere in the heavens and the earth are His creatures, glorifying Him and singing His praises. The Quran also directs our full attention to something we see every day without stirring any feeling in us because of its familiarity: it is the scene of birds lifting up their legs and spreading out their wings as they fly. They also glorify God. *Each knew its formal prayer and its glorification.* **(24:41)** Only the human being neglects to glorify

his Lord when he is the one who should be most aware of the importance of believing in God and glorifying Him.

In this scene, the whole universe appears full of humility as it turns to its Creator, singing His praises, addressing its formal prayers to Him. This it does by nature. Its obedience to God is represented in its laws which operate by God's will. When the human being refines his senses, he sees this scene as reality, as though he hears the rhythm of God's glorification echoed throughout the universe. He shares with all creatures their formal prayers and appeals to God. Such was Muhammad, God's Messenger. When he walked, he heard the gravel under his feet singing God's praises. Such was David too for when he chanted his Psalms, the mountains and birds chanted with him.

And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. And to God is the Homecoming. **(24:42)** No one should turn anywhere other than to Him, and no refuge is to be sought except with Him. Meeting Him is inevitable. His punishment, if deserved, cannot be averted except through His grace. To Him all shall return.

SNATCHING EYESIGHT

Next the chapter portrays yet another scene which people pass by paying little attention to it. It is very pleasant to the eye, carrying a message to the heart and inviting the mind to reflect on God's creation as well as the pointers to faith available everywhere in the universe. It provides an area to contemplate the only source of real light, right guidance and true faith.

Have you not considered how God propels clouds and, again, brings what is between them together? Again, He lays them into a heap. You have seen the rain drops go forth in the midst. And He sends down from the heaven mountains of rain in which there is hail. And He lights it on whom He wills and turns away from it whom He wills. The gleams of His lightning almost take away the sight. **(24:43)**

The scene is portrayed at leisure, slowly, with its component parts being raised up for reflection before they combine panoramically. All this is done deliberately, so that the very sight of these details touches people's hearts and awakens their minds to reflection on God's perfect design.

It is God's design that drives the clouds from one place to another, before allowing these clouds to come together and pile up into a great mass. When this becomes heavy, it bears water that begins to ooze out and then pour down in heavy rain. When piled up, the clouds look like great mountains, producing small pieces of hail. No one sees the clouds look like mountains better than a passenger in a

plane that flies higher than the clouds, or moves through them. The scene at this elevation shows the clouds just like mountains, their huge sizes, steep cliffs, as well as high and low peaks. It is a scene that shows a reality people could not have seen before they were able to fly.

These mountains are subservient to God's orders, functioning in accordance with His law that governs the universe. It is in accordance with this law that God lets rain drop over any community He wants and diverts it from others as He wills. The scene is completed with this final statement: *The gleams of His lightning almost take away the sight.* **(24:43)** It thus provides an element of harmony with the great light that fills the whole universe.

And yet there is another universal scene, showing the night and day: *God turns around and around the nighttime and the daytime. Truly, in this is a lesson for those imbued with insight.* **(24:44)**

When we reflect on the alternation of the night and day, in a perfect system that never fails or slackens, our senses are sharpened and we can better appreciate the perfection of God's work and His law that governs the universe. The Quran alerts our hearts to such scenes which we normally overlook because of their familiarity. Yet they contain a clear message. Therefore, the Quran helps our hearts to always face the universe with sharpened sensitivity and fresh reaction. Many a heart has wondered at the alternation of night and day. Yet it is always the same, losing nothing of its striking beauty. It is only our hearts that have lost their interaction with this great phenomenon. Much indeed do we lose of the beauty of this universe when we look at such phenomena paying little attention to them only because they have become familiar.

The Quran reinvigorates our blunted sensitivity, touches our cold hearts and awakens our tired minds so that we can look at the universe as though we see it for the first time. We thus stop at every phenomenon reflecting on how it works and enquiring about its secrets. We see God's hand doing its work in everything around us, and we reflect on His wisdom and the signs pointing to Him.

Limitless is God in His glory. He wants to give us more of His favors. He wants to gift us the whole universe every time we contemplate one of its phenomena in a way that we appreciate it as though we are seeing it for the first time. Thus, we are alert to the universe and its message a countless number of times. We then enjoy it anew every time we look at it.

This universe is beautiful, awesome and has a nature that is harmonious with our own nature. Both are derived from the same source, subject to the same law. Thus when we relate to the universe

we feel greater reassurance, and we experience the sort of happiness that we feel when we meet someone dear who has been absent for a long time. Besides, in the universe we see God's light, for: *God is the light of the heavens and the earth.* **(24:35)** We experience this light in the great expanse of the universe, as well as within ourselves, at the same moment at which we look at the universe with an open heart that wants to understand the secret of God's elaborate planning.

Therefore, the Quran reawakens us time and again, drawing our hearts and souls to a variety of great universal scenes, so that we do not pass by them with closed eyes and sealed hearts. If we do, we end our life journey with very little gain to show for our efforts.

The chapter continues to portray scenes of the universe arousing our interest in them. It shows how all life, with its rich variety, originates from the same source, and has the same nature: *God created every moving creature from water. Among them there is what walks on its belly and of them there is what walks on two feet and of them there is what walks on four.* **(24:45)**

Here the Quran states in a very simple way a great fact that confirms that the origin of all creatures is water. This could mean that water is the basic component of all living species. It could also mean what contemporary scientists have been trying to prove, namely that life started in the sea, making water its first origin. Later, numerous species came into existence.

We, however, do not like to link any fact stated in the Quran with scientific theory, because such theories admit change, modification, or abrogation. Therefore, we take this statement at its face value, confirming its truth which makes clear that God has created all living things from water. This means that having the same origin, they present, as we clearly see with our eyes, a wide and rich variety: crawlers creep on their bellies, while man and birds walk on two legs, but most animals use all four limbs when they walk. All this takes place in accordance with the laws of nature God has set in operation. Nothing occurs by chance or coincidence: *God creates what He wills. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* **(24:45)**

With the great variety that we see in all creatures, an almost endless range of shapes, sizes, colors and characteristics is set before us. Yet they all originate from the same source. This suggests that it is all intended as such, reflecting the elaborate planning in the universe at large. It portrays as false the notion that life started by mere coincidence. What coincidence could give birth to such planning or such great variety? It is all the work of God who, in His wisdom, has given every living soul its shape and form and guided it to what suits it best in this life.

Having thus taken us on a broad round of inspiring universal scenes, the chapter brings us back to its main theme, namely good manners and moral values the Quran aims to establish in the Muslim community. Once more we see that the Quran wants hearts to be purified so as to be bright, reflecting the great light God has placed in the heavens and the earth.

Earlier in the chapter mention was made of people who are not distracted by their business or commercial dealings from their duties of remembering God, attending regularly to prayers and paying their *zakat*. It also highlighted the situation of the ungrateful, their deeds, the layers of darkness in which they live and their eventual destiny.

Now the chapter speaks of the hypocrites who benefit nothing by the clear signs God has placed all around them, or by His revelations that set all things most clearly. These turn their backs on divine guidance. Even though they profess to be believers, their attitude is markedly different from that of believers who obey God's Messenger and are happy with his judgement in their affairs and disputes. In marked contrast to their arrogance, the believers' behavior confirms what they profess. And it is the believers that God has promised to establish in the land where they will be able to practise their faith and conduct their lives in line with His teachings. This is their reward for adopting the right attitude towards God and His Messenger, obeying them in all situations, despite the fact that the unbelievers stand in opposition to them for so doing. The chapter confirms once again that the unbelievers cannot defy God. They will receive their fair punishment in hell, the worst abode for anyone.

CONTRASTING ATTITUDES

Certainly, We caused manifest signs to descend. And God guides whom He wills to a straight path. **(24:46)** God's revelations provide clarity, allowing God's resplendent light to be seen. They point to the sources of His guidance, making clear what is good and what is evil. They set out the Islamic way of life without ambiguity or equivocation. They define the divine rules which must be implemented in human life on earth. When people implement them in their lives and resort to them for judgement in their disputes, they implement a code that is clearly set out, providing all guarantees that ensure equity and justice for all, and which allow no confusion between true and false or permissible and forbidden.

And God guides whom He wills to a straight path. **(24:46)** This is indeed the translation adopted by most translators. If we read it in this way then the statement makes clear that God's will is free from all restriction. However, God has established a way to ensure guid-

ance. Any human being who moves towards that way will definitely receive God's light and guidance. By God's will, their path will be made smooth until they reach their destination. Those who turn away from it will lose their guiding light and become hardened in error. Such is God's will with regard to providing guidance to humanity.

The chapter points out that despite the revelations and the signs God had placed in the universe, there is a special type of people who are hypocrites, claiming to be Muslims, but showing no respect for Islamic values:

And they say: We believed in God and the Messenger, and we obeyed. Again, a group of people among them turn away after this. And those are not of the ones who believe. And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside. But if they would be in the right, they would approach him as ones who are yielding. Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or were they in doubt? Or be they fearful that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust. **(24:47-24:50)**

When faith is genuinely established in a person's heart, it is reflected in that person's behavior. Islam is a proactive faith that cannot remain idle. When it is genuinely accepted as a personal belief, it moves on to show its influence in practice. It must be translated into action. The Islamic method of educating its followers always seeks to transform the mental acceptance of faith into a practical approach that soon becomes a habit or a rule. At the same time, it seeks to provide the mental motivation to make belief and action mutually complementary.

The hypocrites used to claim that they believed in God and His Messenger and that they were keen to obey them, but theirs was a hollow, verbal claim that lacked practical credence. They simply turned away, making their actions belie their claims. "Surely these are not believers," because believers confirm with their actions what they claim to be their faith. Faith is not a toy which a person uses for amusement before discarding it. It is something that settles in a person's heart, reshaping his feelings and influencing his actions. Moreover, when it is firmly established in someone's mind and heart, there is no going back on it.

Those who claimed to be believers did not hesitate to contradict that claim when they were summoned to put their disputes to God's Messenger for judgement on the basis of His law: *And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside. But if they would be in the right, they would approach him as ones who are*

yielding. **(24:48-24:49)** They were well aware that a judgement made by God and His Messenger could only seek to establish what is right and ensure justice. It would never be influenced by personal likings. But such hypocrites did not care for justice and right. Hence, they were not prepared to seek the Prophet's judgement. Indeed, they refused to put their disputes to him, except when they were sure that justice was on their side. In such a situation, they did not hesitate to go to him, declaring their prior acceptance of his judgement, because they were certain that it would be in their favor. It would be a judgement on the basis of God's law that gave everyone their due.

Such people provide a typical example of hypocrites at all times: they dare not declare their disbelief; so they pretend to be Muslim. Yet they do not submit to God's law. When they are called upon to put their cases to God and His Messenger for judgement they refuse, seeking any excuse. They are described as unbelievers, because a genuine believer will never reject God's judgement. To accept such judgement is the practical evidence of belief. It is the attitude that confirms strong belief and due respect to God and His Messenger. Only a person whose heart has not been enlightened by faith and who has not adopted Islamic manners rejects God's Messenger's judgement.

Therefore, their attitude is the subject of questions that confirm the fact that their hearts are diseased and wonders at their doubts: *Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or were they in doubt? Or be they fearful that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(24:50)**

The first question requires no confirmation, for heart disease is sure to bring about such an effect. No one with a sound human nature could deviate so badly from the truth. It is heart disease, a disease that makes someone imbalanced, unable to appreciate true faith and its moral code.

The second question wonders at them doubting God's judgement when they claim to believe in Him. Do they doubt that it comes from God, or that it is the judgement that administers justice? Whatever the case, their attitude differs from that of believers.

The third question combines wonder with denunciation. Do they fear that God and His Messenger might be unfair to them? It is most singular for anyone to entertain such a fear. God is the Creator of all people: it is inconceivable that He would favor some of His creatures at the expense of others. *Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(24:50)**

God's judgement is the only judgement that is free of all prejudice, because God is fair to all and does not deal unjustly with any-

one. All of His creation are to Him in the same position. Hence, He does not favor any of them at the expense of another. Any judgement other than God's may be susceptible to unfairness. When people legislate, they cannot entirely free themselves of leaning towards what serves their interests. This applies to all human beings; be they individuals, a class or government.

When an individual legislates, he is bound to look for what ensures his own protection and serves his own interests. The same applies when a class, country or a block of countries legislates for another. But when God legislates, no personal security, protection or interest comes into play. His legislation aims to ensure absolute justice which cannot be achieved under any law other than divine law. Hence, those who reject God's judgment, and that of His Messenger, are indeed unjust and wrongdoers. They do not want justice to be administered or right to be supreme. In fact, deep at heart they know that they do not doubt that God's judgement only seeks to ensure justice. The point is that: *Those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(24:50)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** base on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concep** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities

ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

LESSON 102(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR) SIGNS 24:51-24:57

Madinah: *The only saying of the ones who believe had been—*
when they were called to God and His Messenger
that He give judgment between them—to say:
We heard and obeyed.
And those, they are the ones who prosper. (24:51)
And whoever obeys God and His Messenger
and dreads God and is God-conscious,
those, they are the ones who are victorious. (24:52)
And they swore by God their most earnest oaths that if thou
wouldst command them, they would go forth.
Say: Swear not; honorable obedience is better.
Truly God is Aware of what you do. (24:53)
Say: Obey God and obey the Messenger.
But if you turn away,
then, on him was only what was loaded on him,
and on you was only what was loaded on you.
And if you obey him, you will be truly guided.
And there is not a duty on the Messenger
but the delivering of the clear message. (24:54)
God promised those who have believed among you
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
that He will make them successors in the earth,
even as He made of those before them successors
and He will establish for them their way of life firmly
by which He was content with them
and He will substitute a place of sanctuary
in place of their fear:
They shall worship Me—ascribe nothing as partners with Me.
And whoever was ungrateful after that,
then, those, they are the ones who disobey. (24:55)
And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms

and obey the Messenger
so that perhaps you will find mercy. (24:56)
Assume not those who were ungrateful
that they are ones who will frustrate Him in the region.
Their place of shelter will be the fire
and how miserable the Homecoming! (24:57)

COMMENTARY°

THE ROAD TO TRUE SUCCESS

True believers have a different attitude that reflects their complete respect for God's judgement. When they are summoned so that God's Messenger can arbitrate in their disputes, their reaction reflects the profound enlightenment of their hearts: *The only saying of the ones who believe had been—when they were called to God and His Messenger that He give judgment between them—to say: We heard and obeyed. And those, they are the ones who prosper.* **(24:51)**

This is an attitude of complete obedience. There is no hesitation, argument or dispute, because it is an obedience based on complete trust that God's judgement is right and just, and whatever differs with it is based on personal prejudice. Such obedience testifies to complete submission to God, who gives life and conducts it as He wills. It demonstrates full trust that what God chooses for people is infinitely better than what they choose for themselves. God, the Creator, knows His creation better than they know themselves.

And those, they are the ones who prosper. **(24:51)** Since God conducts their affairs, organizes their relations and judges between them on the basis of His knowledge and justice, they must be in a far better position than those who rely, in all such matters, on other human beings who are similarly short of knowledge. Besides, the believers are successful because they follow a single straight path that allows no deviation.

They are confident of the soundness of their code of living, follow it without hesitation, which means that their energy, talents and skills work in coherence. They suffer no internal division based on conflicting desires. They follow their own path, charted for them by God.

And whoever obeys God and His Messenger and dreads God and is God-conscious, those, they are the ones who are victorious. **(24:52)** The previous sign spoke of obedience and submission when judgment is made. This sign speaks of complete obedience in all matters, implementing every order or prohibition. Such obedience must be coupled with God consciousness and standing in awe of Him. The latter is more pervasive because it entails watching God and feeling

His presence at every turn. This makes a person very uneasy about committing anything that God has forbidden, for they are ashamed and fear His punishment.

And whoever obeys God and His Messenger and dreads God and is God-conscious, those, they are the ones who are victorious. **(24:52)** They save themselves in this life and in the life to come. This is what God has promised, and God is always true to His promise. They deserve to triumph, as they have practically taken the necessary measures to ensure such a triumph. Obedience to God and His Messenger requires diligent following of the right way God in His wisdom has defined for humanity. Following this way automatically ensures success in this life and in the life to come. Moreover, standing in awe of God and fearing Him ensure continuity in one's conduct, helping one to ignore all temptations that lure believers away from their straight path.

Obeying God and His Messenger, coupled with fearing God, provide a high standard of propriety that reflects a person's enlightenment and strong bond with God. It also reflects the dignity of believers. Obedience to anyone or any authority means humiliation unless it is based on obeying God and His Messenger. No honorable believer will accept such humiliation, for a true believer will never bow his head before anyone other than God Almighty.

Having so contrasted the attitudes of believers and hypocrites, the chapter now resumes its discussion of the latter's behavior, making it clear that only one sort of attitude can be adopted by believers. It then moves on to outline God's promise to the believers.

And they swore by God their most earnest oaths that if you would command them, they would go forth.
Say: Swear not; honorable obedience is better. Truly God is Aware of what you do. Say: Obey God and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away, then, on him was only what was loaded on him, and on you was only what was loaded on you. And if you obey him, you will be truly guided. And there is not a duty on the Messenger but the delivering of the clear message. **(24:53-24:54)**

The hypocrites used to solemnly swear in front of the Prophet that he needed only to give them his orders and they would readily join him on any expedition against his enemies. They would not hesitate to fight for Islam under his banner. But God was fully aware that they were lying. Hence, He decries their assertions and looks at their oaths with sarcasm: *Say: Swear not; honorable obedience is better.* **(24:53)** This means that there is no need for their oaths, because their obedience is too well known to need any assertion or oath. It is as if we say to a person whom we know to be a habitual liar that

he need not assert to us that he is saying the truth, because we know him to be always truthful.

This sarcastic reply is followed by the assertion: *Truly God is Aware of what you do.* **(24:53)** He is certainly in no need of their oaths. He knows that they would not obey any order to go to war, and that they would not join the Prophet when he went on such an expedition. Therefore, a fresh order is given to them to show true obedience to God and His Messenger, not the sort they are known to show, because that is false. *Say: Obey God and obey the Messenger.* **(24:54)**

But if you turn away, then, on him was only what was loaded on him, and on you was only what was loaded on you. **(24:54)** His only task for which he is answerable is to deliver God's message, as he has surely done: *And on you was only what was loaded on you.* **(24:54)** Your task is to obey him most sincerely. But so far, you have not done so. However: *if you obey him, you will be truly guided.* **(24:54)** You will be following the right path that leads you to success in both this life and the life to come. *And there is not a duty on the Messenger but the delivering of the clear message.* **(24:54)** He is not responsible for your acceptance or rejection of the faith. If you turn away, he will not be deemed to have fallen short of fulfilling his task. You are the ones who will have to account for that, and you are the ones who run the risk of being punished for your disobedience of the orders given to you by God and His Messenger.

GOD'S TRUE PROMISE

Once the attitude of the hypocrites has been discussed and settled, the chapter leaves them aside and speaks about obedient believers. It outlines the reward of sincere obedience and proactive faith. The first instalment of such reward is given in this life, before human beings are held to account on the Day of Resurrection.

God promised those who have believed among you and did as the ones in accord with morality, that He will make them successors in the earth, even as He made of those before them successors and He will establish for them their way of life firmly by which He was content with them and He will substitute a place of sanctuary in place of their fear: They shall worship Me—ascribe nothing as partners with Me. And whoever was ungrateful after that, then, those, they are the ones who disobey. **(24:55)**

Such is God's promise to the believers who do good deeds and follow the Prophet Muhammad's guidance. They will be given power and will be established on earth. Their state of fear will be replaced by a state of reassurance and security. God's promise will always

come true. It is, then, pertinent to ask about the nature of faith and the practical fulfilment of this promise by God.

True faith, which ensures that God's promise comes true, is great indeed. It influences all human activity and defines its direction. Once faith is well established in a person's heart, it begins to manifest itself in the form of positive and constructive action undertaken for God's sake and addressed to Him. It means full compliance with His orders in all matters, major and minor. It transforms a believer's desires and inclinations so as to make them all in line with the Prophet's guidance, because such guidance has been given to him by God.

It is the sort of faith that fills people's whole entity, their feelings, aspirations, natural inclinations, actions, movements, as well as their behavior at home, in society and with their Lord. All these must be addressed or dedicated to God alone. This is specifically mentioned in the chapter as justification for giving believers power and establishing them on earth: *They shall worship Me—ascribe nothing as partners with Me.* **(24:55)** Idolatry can take different shapes and forms, and can creep into a person's mind through a variety of ways and means. The chapter makes it clear however that to address any action or feeling to anyone other than God is a manifestation of idolatry.

Belief in God is a complete way of life. It incorporates all divine orders including the provision of all means, taking all precautions and ensuring all that is necessary to fulfil the great trust of being in charge of the earth and building human life on it. So what does this involve in reality?

It does not just entail being in power and forming a government. Rather it involves all this with the proviso that it is used for promoting sound human life and the implementation of the way of life God has chosen for humanity. It is only through such implementation that humanity can achieve the level of perfection that befits the species God has honored.

The trust given to man on earth is an ability to build and promote goodness, not to corrupt and destroy. It involves ensuring justice and happiness for all, not injustice or suppression. It leads to the elevation of humanity and human life, and not letting them sink to the level of animals.

It is such power and such trust that God has promised the believers who do good deeds. He promised to give them power on earth, just as He gave it to earlier communities of believers, so that they would put into practice the constitution He chose for humanity, establish justice and enable humanity to attain sublimity. People who spread corruption and injustice, and promote carnal desires are not

in the position of trustees. They are subjected to a test or are the means to test others. All this is done to fulfil God's purpose.

To further demonstrate this aspect of giving power to the believers is the fact that this promise is followed in the same sign by a further one: *He will establish for them their way of life firmly by which He was content with them.* **(24:55)** The firm establishment of His religion means that this will take a firm hold on people's hearts on the one hand, and form the basis on which all life affairs are conducted on the other. God has promised the believers who do righteous deeds to grant them power on earth and to make their faith govern human life. Their faith bids them to do well, establish justice, shun worldly desires, and build a happy human life making good use of all the resources God has placed on earth. It also bids the believers to dedicate all this to God alone.

Furthermore, God's promise to the believers stipulates *He will substitute a place of sanctuary in place of their fear.* The Prophet's Companions were for a long period of time in a state of fear. They could not put down their arms, even after the Prophet and his Companions had migrated to Madinah, the city that served as the first base for Islam in history.

NOT INCLUDED IN GOD'S PROMISE

And whoever was ungrateful after that, then, those, they are the ones who disobey. **(24:55)** They are the ones who do not meet God's conditions, and, therefore, God's promise does not apply to them.

God's promise was fulfilled once, and remained effective for as long as the Muslims continued to meet His conditions: *They shall worship Me—ascribe nothing as partners with Me.* **(24:55)** This includes any partners, whether in the form of deities to which worship is addressed or desires and ambitions. They must believe and do righteous deeds. God's promise applies to anyone who meets these conditions, and it remains in force till the end of human life. However, victory, power and security may be slow in coming, but this will only be the result of a failure by the believers to meet some aspects of the conditions outlined, or their failure to attend to a particular duty involved. But when the Muslim community has benefited by the trials they have to endure and passed the test God sets for them; when they have endured fear and sought security; when they yearn for dignity after having suffered humiliation; when they aspire to having power after being weak; God's promise will be fulfilled to them in spite of any opposing power. One proviso applies, however: in their perseverance through tests and trials, and in their aspiration to the fulfilment of God's promise, the believers must always resort

to the means God has outlined and fulfil the conditions He has made clear.

Therefore, the promise is followed with an order to attend to Islamic duties, such as prayer, *zakat* and obeying the Prophet. Moreover, the Prophet and his followers must never give any weight to the power of unbelievers who fight them on account of their faith.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

LESSON 102(8). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
SIGNS 24:58-24:61

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Let them ask permission
—those whom your right hands possessed (f)
and those who reach not puberty—three times:
Before the dawn formal prayer,
when you lay down your garments at the time of noon
and after the time of night formal prayer.
These are the three times of privacy for you.
There is not on you nor on them blame after these.
Other than these, go about some of you with some others.
Thus, God makes manifest to you the signs.
And God is Knowing, Wise. (24:58)
When infant children were fully grown among you,
then, let them ask permission as asked permission
those who were before them.
Thus, God makes manifest for you His signs.
And God is Knowing, Wise. (24:59)
And women who are past child-bearing,
those who hope not for marriage,
there is no blame on them (f)
if they lay down their (f) garments,
not as ones who flaunt themselves and their (f) adornment.
And that they have restraint is better for them (f),
and God is Hearing, Knowing. (24:60)
There is no fault on the blind nor fault on the lame
nor fault on the sick nor on yourselves
that you eat from your houses or the houses of your fathers
or the houses of your mothers or the houses of your brothers
or the houses of your sisters or the houses of your paternal uncles
or the houses of your paternal aunts
or the houses of your maternal uncles
or the houses of your maternal aunts
or of that for which you possess its keys
or your ardent friend.
There is no blame on you that you eat altogether or separately.
But when you entered houses, then, greet one another
with a greeting from God,
one that is blessed and what is good.
Thus, God makes manifest for you the signs
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (24:61)

COMMENTARY°

And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and obey the Messenger so that perhaps you will find mercy. Assume not those who were ungrateful that they are ones who will frustrate Him in the region. Their place of shelter will be the fire and how miserable the Homecoming! **(24:56-24:57)**

Believers must maintain their bond with God, keep their minds and hearts on the right path through prayer, resist stinginess, purify themselves as individuals and as a community through the payment of zakat, obey the Prophet and accept his judgement, implement God's law in all matters, great or small, so as to set human life on the path He has chosen. Believers must do all this: *so that perhaps you will find mercy.* **(24:56)** In this life, God's mercy removes corruption, fear, worry and error, and in the hereafter, it removes His punishment.

Addressing them directly, God says to the believers: if you remain steadfast following My path, then you need not worry about the might of the unbelievers. They cannot frustrate God's purpose on earth. The power they apparently wield will not stand in your way. You are far stronger when equipped with your faith, implement your system and raise whatever power you can muster. In material power, you may not be a match for them, but believers who strive for the truth can work miracles.

Islam is a great truth which must be carefully examined by anyone who wishes to see the fulfilment of God's promise outlined in the above verses. Such a person must also look at how it came true in human history, understand the true meaning of its conditions before entertaining any doubt about it or worry about the slowness of its fulfilment.

Never did the Muslim community follow God's way, implementing the constitution He has laid down, allowing it to operate in all spheres of life, without reaping the reward of God's promise to grant it power and security. Whenever it abandoned this course, it went to the end of the line, suffered humiliation, lived in fear and misery and saw its faith retreat from guiding human life.

Nevertheless, God's promise remains in force, and His conditions are well defined. Whoever wants to see the promise fulfilled, must do their task and fulfil its conditions. No one is ever more true to his promises than God.

OVERVIEW

The Quranic message gives a complete way of life, setting a code that organizes human life in all situations. It lays down values

that govern all human relations and social actions. The Quranic message establishes values that are relevant to points of detail in daily situations and behavior, in the same way as it lays down values and principles that govern serious and momentous matters. It ensures harmony between the two and makes acceptance by God and earning His pleasure the goal of all human activities.

The present chapter provides an example of such harmony. It specifies certain mandatory punishments for serious offenses, and it speaks of seeking permission before entering others' homes. Alongside the two it portrays spectacular scenes from the universe. The chapter then speaks of the Muslims' proper attitude as they submit to the rule of God and His Messenger, contrasting this with the hypocrites' insolence. Alongside this comes God's true promise to the believers that they will be established on earth and live in peace and security. In this last passage, the chapter again speaks of proper manners within the home, and when inmates need to seek permission before entering rooms, so as not to intrude on others' privacy. It also makes clear the requirement of seeking permission before leaving the Prophet. It also outlines the proper manner of visiting relatives and friends where one may partake of food. Alongside this, it outlines the proper way of addressing the Prophet. All these form part of the Islamic manners that every Muslim community should adopt, realizing that the Quran provides guidance in all life situations, even though they may not be of a serious nature.

GOOD MANNERS AT HOME

O those who believed! Let them ask permission—those whom your right hands possessed (f) and those who reach not puberty—three times: Before the dawn formal prayer, when you lay down your garments at the time of noon and after the time of night formal prayer. These are the three times of privacy for you. There is not on you nor on them blame after these. Other than these, go about some of you with some others. Thus, God makes manifest to you the signs. And God is Knowing, Wise. **(24:58)**

Earlier in the chapter the proper manner of seeking permission before entering a house is outlined. Now the chapter speaks of the need to seek permission within the home. Servants, who were slaves, and children who are not so young but have not yet attained puberty enter rooms without knocking to seek permission, except during three times of the day. These are periods of relaxation when adults may be undressed. These three occasions are: 1) shortly before the daybreak prayer, i.e. *fajr*, when people normally still wear their night garments, or they may be putting on their day clothes in readiness to

go out; 2) about midday when people take a nap after changing into more comfortable garments for relaxation; and 3) after they have offered their nightfall prayer, i.e. Ayisha. At this time, people put on their night clothes for more comfort.

During these three periods, servants and children below the age of puberty must knock before entering rooms in the house so that they do not see their relatives undressed. Many people do not observe such manners at home, thinking little of the psychological and moral effects of their laxity. Or they may think that servants do not stare at their masters' nakedness, or that children below the age of puberty do not take notice. With the progress achieved today in the field of human psychology, experts emphasize that people are often influenced for life by what they see or experience in childhood, and that such experience may cause them psychological problems that are not easy to cure. God, who knows everything, including the finest and most subtle feelings, outlines these manners which He wants the Muslim community to observe, so that it remains a community with sound hearts and minds, free from psychological problems.

These three occasions are specified because it is more likely that people will be undressed. Children and servants are not required to knock before entry all the time, because this would be difficult to observe, considering that these two groups frequently enter their elders' rooms: either because servants are going about their tasks or because children cannot stay away from their parents for long. Hence the description: "Beyond these occasions, neither you nor they will incur any sin if they move freely about you, attending to one another." We see how the divine instruction strikes a balance between the need to ensure that people do not show their nakedness in front of others, even though they may be young or servants, and the practical need for easy access. Hence, the instruction does not order seeking permission to enter on all occasions.

When children attain to puberty, the same rules of entry apply to them as to those who are not related to the family. This means that they must seek permission before entering a room at any time, in accordance with the general rules outlined earlier in the chapter: *When infant children were fully grown among you, then, let them ask permission as asked permission those who were before them. Thus, God makes manifest for you His signs. And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(24:59)**

We note that the final comment in these verses stresses God's knowledge and wisdom, because the instructions given are based on His knowledge of our inner feelings and the manners that are most likely to refine such feelings. In His wisdom, God lays down the teachings that set minds and hearts on the right course.

RULES RELAXED

Earlier in the chapter orders were given requiring women to cover their charms and adornments so that there is little room for temptation or exciting desire. An exception is made here in the case of older women who no longer have the desire to consort with men, and who no longer excite men's desires:

And women who are past child-bearing, those who hope not for marriage, there is no blame on them (f) if they lay down their (f) garments, not as ones who flaunt themselves and their (f) adornment. And that they have restraint is better for them (f), and God is Hearing, Knowing. **(24:60)**

Such elder women may, if they choose, put aside their cloaks and outer garments, provided that this does not expose their nakedness, and that they do not make a show, displaying their charms or adornments. It is better for them that they should not do so, continuing to wear their outer, loose garments. In describing such modesty the chapter uses the word *yasta'fitna*, which is derived from the Arabic root *'iffah*, meaning chastity. Thus, this attitude is described as aiming to maintain chastity because of the close link between chastity and covering women's charms, while exposing such charms is closely linked to temptation. This instruction is in line with the general Islamic view that the best method of guarding people's chastity is to reduce the chances for temptation.

God hears all and knows all. He is aware of all things, including what is uttered and what is entertained in one's thoughts. The question here is one of intention and conscience. The chapter then tackles another aspect of relations with friends and relatives:

There is no fault on the blind nor fault on the lame nor fault on the sick nor on yourselves that you eat from your houses or the houses of your fathers or the houses of your mothers or the houses of your brothers or the houses of your sisters or the houses of your paternal uncles or the houses of your paternal aunts or the houses of your maternal uncles or the houses of your maternal aunts or of that for which you possess its keys or your ardent friend. There is no blame on you that you eat altogether or separately. But when you entered houses, then, greet one another with a greeting from God, one that is blessed and what is good. Thus, God makes manifest for you the signs so that perhaps you will be reasonable. **(24:61)**

Reports suggest that in the early days of Islam, Muslims used to eat in such houses mentioned in this sign without asking the owners' permission. They also took with them poor people who were blind, lame or ill. Then when a sign was revealed stating: *And consume not your wealth among yourselves in falsehood,* **(2:188)** they felt very

uneasy about eating in relatives' homes. Furthermore, such poor people as were blind, lame or ill felt uneasy about joining them, unless they were specifically invited by the owner. This reflects the keen sensitivity of the early Muslims, and their desire to avoid anything that was even remotely connected with what God prohibited. Hence, this present sign was revealed, making it perfectly permissible for relatives to eat in the homes of such relatives mentioned in the verse, and to bring with them such needy people as the sign describes.

Since this sign lays down certain legislation we note how it is phrased, choosing its wording very carefully so as not to leave any room for doubt or confusion. We also note how relatives are mentioned in a specific order. It starts with a reference to the homes of one's own children and spouses without even mentioning these relatives. The sign includes these in the general reference to "your houses", because the house of one's son, daughter, wife or husband is like one's own. Then other homes are mentioned, starting with those belonging to a father, mother, paternal uncle and aunt, maternal uncle and aunt. Added to these is a person who is entrusted with looking after one's property, having the keys to it. Such a person may eat from that house in accordance with what is reasonable, not taking more than what he needs for his own food. Also added are friends' homes so as to make the relation with them similar to that with one's own relatives. Indeed, friends may be very happy for friends to eat at their homes without the need for any permission. But all this is conditional on causing no harm to the home owner.

Having mentioned the homes in which one may eat without seeking prior permission, the sign continues to explain the manner in which such eating may take place: "You will incur no sin by eating in company or separately." In pre-Islamic days some Arabs disliked eating alone. If such a person did not find someone to eat with, he would not touch the food. God lifted this restriction, because it causes unnatural complications. He left the matter simple to cater for all situations. Hence people may eat alone or in company.

The sign adds an instruction on manners to be observed when entering such homes where people are allowed to eat: *There is no blame on you that you eat altogether or separately. But when you entered houses, then, greet one another with a greeting from God, one that is blessed and what is good.* **(24:61)** The phraseology of this instruction in the Arabic original employs a fine touch as it says: 'greet yourselves' to express the meaning given in translation as 'greet one another'. This is an indication of the strength of the relationship between those mentioned in this verse. A person who greets his relative or friend is actually greeting himself, and the greeting of-

fered is enjoined by God, as though coming from Him. It is thus blessed, full of goodness. As such it establishes a bond between them that is never severed.

These instructions emphasize that the believers feel their bond with God in all matters and appreciate the wisdom behind divine legislation: *Thus, God makes manifest for you the signs so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* **(24:61)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others

LESSON 102(9). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
SIGNS 24:62-24:64

Madinah: *The ones who believe*
are only those who believe in God and His Messenger.
And when they had been with him on a collective matter,

they go not until they asked his permission.
Truly, those who ask thy permission,
those are those who believed in God and His Messenger.
So when they ask thy permission for some of their affairs,
give permission to whom you had willed of them,
and ask God for forgiveness for them.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (24:62)
The supplication of the Messenger among you
is not as the supplication of some of you on some other.
Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover.
And let those who go against his command
beware so that a test should not light on them
or a painful punishment not light on them. (24:63)
Surely, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.
Surely, He knows what you did.
And on the Day when they are returned to Him,
then, He will tell them what their hands did,
and God is Knowing of everything. (24:64)

COMMENTARY°

GOOD MANNERS WITH THE PROPHET

The chapter then moves on to organizing relations within the larger family of the Muslim community and its leader, the Prophet and how Muslims should behave in his presence:

The ones who believe are only those who believe in God and His Messenger. And when they had been with him on a collective matter, they go not until they asked his permission. Truly, those who ask your permission, those are those who believed in God and His Messenger. So when they ask your permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom you had willed of them, and ask God for forgiveness for them. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. The supplication of the Messenger among you is not as the supplication of some of you on some other. Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover. And let those who go against his command beware so that a test should not light on them or a painful punishment not light on them. Surely, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Surely, He knows what you did. And on the Day when they are returned to Him, then, He will tell them what their hands did, and God is Knowing of everything. **(24:62-24:64)**

Ibn Ishaq mentions the occasion when these verses were revealed. He says that when the Quraysh and the confederate tribes marched towards Madinah, pledging to annihilate the Muslims, the Prophet ordered the digging of a moat around the entrance to Madi-

nah. He himself took part in the digging work so as to encourage those who were also taking part. All Muslims were working hard, except. for a number of hypocrites. They tried to hide their lack of commitment by doing a little work before sneaking away, without the Prophet's knowledge or permission. On the other hand, the true Muslims continued to work hard. If any of them needed to leave for some important business, he mentioned this to the Prophet, requesting permission before so leaving. The Prophet granted him permission, and he returned as soon as he had attended to the business in hand. They all felt that taking part in this work would earn them reward from God. God described those true believers in the sign: *those are those who believed in God and His Messenger.* In reference to the hypocrites who sneaked away without permission, God says: *So when they ask **your** permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom **you** had willed of them, and ask God for forgiveness for them.*

Whatever was the background behind the revelation of these verses, they include important rules for the Muslim community which should be observed between the leader and the members of that community. These rules should be so ingrained as to become part of the traditions, feelings and regulations within the community. Otherwise, the community will fall into total chaos. Thus, *he ones who believe are only those who believe in God and His Messenger. And when they had been with him on a collective matter, they go not until they asked his permission. Truly, those who ask **your** permission, those are those who believed in God and His Messenger. So when they ask **your** permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom **you** had willed of them, and ask God for forgiveness for them. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:62)** This applies to serious matters that require collective action, such as a decision on going to war, or a matter that concerns the whole community. When such a grave matter is being considered or acted upon, believers do not absent themselves without first obtaining their leader's permission. Thus, no room is left for disorder.

People with faith do not seek permission to leave unless they are in real need to do so. Their faith and discipline ensure that they are not away when a serious collective matter is at hand. The Quran, however, gives the Prophet, who is the leader of the Muslim community, the right to grant or withhold such permission. **(24:62)** This means that there is no harm in withholding permission, should the situation require this. The leader of the Muslim community thus exercises his authority in determining whether or not to allow an individual to leave, depending on how he sees the interests of the

community being best served.

Nevertheless, the chapter makes clear that it is better for the individual to try to overcome personal needs, so as to stay with the Prophet. Receiving permission to depart for a while means falling short on fulfilling one's duty. Hence, it needs for the Prophet to pray to God to forgive those who needed to be absent for a time: "*So when they ask **your** permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom **you** had willed of them , and ask God for forgiveness for them. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:62)** This puts a check on the believer through his own conscience, ensuring that he does not seek a leave of absence in such situations unless he has very compelling reasons.

A STERN WARNING TO THE DISOBEDIENT

The chapter then alerts the Muslims to the need to address the Prophet with respect when they seek his permission, and indeed in all situations. They should not call him by his name or nickname, as they call each other. He is to be addressed as the man God has honored by making him His Messenger: *The supplication of the Messenger among you is not as the supplication of some of you on some other.* **(24:63)** Indeed people must be full of respect for him as God's Messenger, so that they pay due heed to every word he says and every directive he gives. Teachers and leaders should be held in high esteem and addressed with respect. The fact that the Prophet was very modest in his approach, and easy to deal with, did not mean that it was appropriate for his Companions to forget that he was their leader who educated them and refined their manners, addressing him as they would address one another. Deep in their hearts, those who are being educated should hold their educator in high regard so that they are ashamed if they happen to overstep the requirements of respect when dealing with him.

The hypocrites who sneaked away, covering for one another, are given a stern warning. If the Prophet could not see them, God was certainly watching them: *Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover.* **(24:63)** The Arabic wording practically shows their stealthy movements, as they left stealthily, like despicable cowards.

Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover. And let those who go against his command beware so that a test should not light on them or a painful punishment not light on them. **(24:63)** The warning here is very stern. Those who disobey the Prophet's orders, seeking a way different from his, sneaking away in pursuit of personal gain or to avoid potential risk, should beware. They may find themselves in the midst of a situation where values and standards are

blurred, where the true and false are not easily distinguished and the community finds itself in disarray. In such a situation no one is sure of his own safety, as people do not abide by the law and good may not be easily distinguished from evil. Such a situation is miserable for everyone: *so that a test should not light on them or a painful punishment not light on them.* Such grievous suffering could befall people in this life or in the life to come, in retribution for disobeying God's orders and rejecting the way of life He has laid down.

The chapter concludes with a sign that balances the warning with a statement making it clear to both believers and unbelievers that God sees them all, and knows their actions and the intentions behind each action: *Surely, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Surely, He knows what you did. And on the Day when they are returned to Him, then, He will tell them what their hands did, and God is Knowing of everything.* **(24:64)**

Thus, the conclusion aims to remind people to remain God-fearing. Being so provides the ultimate guarantee for the fulfilment of His orders, abiding by the rules He has set, observing the manners He has outlined. We have seen many of these clearly stated in this chapter, relating to different aspects of life, but all treated on an equal footing.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the

text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 19, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 6 AH/ca. May 23, 627 CE-May 10, 628 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

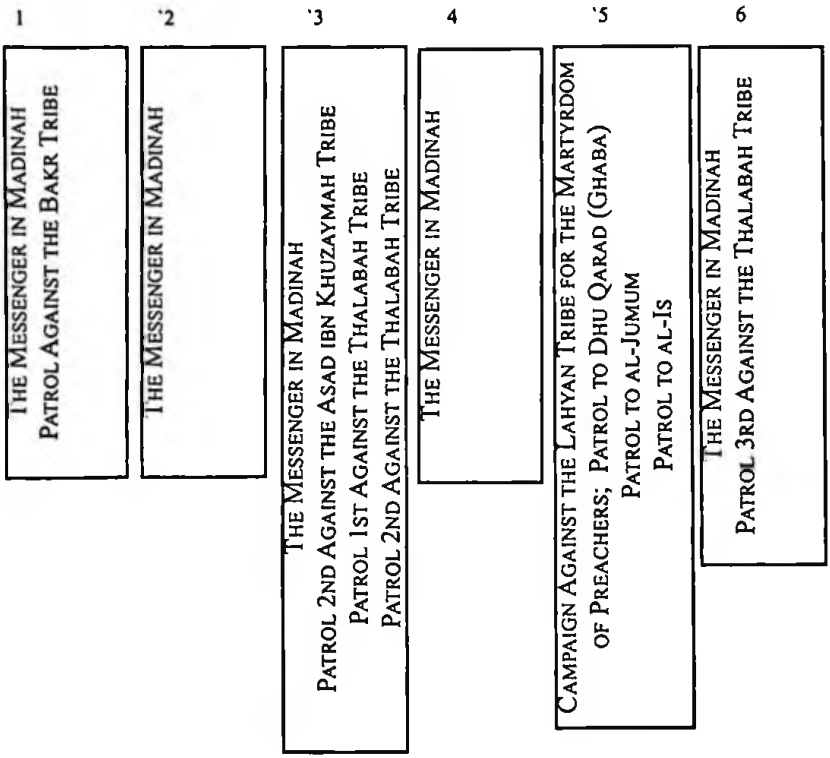
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 19*

TIMELINE

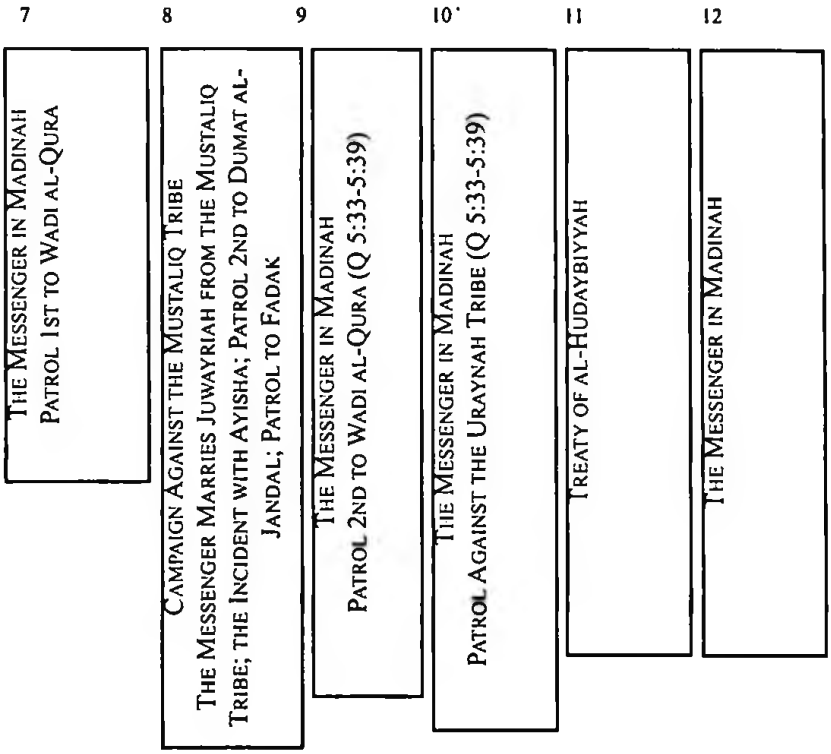


Key
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 19*

TIMELINE



Key
7 = RAJAB
8 = SHABAN
9 = RAMADAN
10 = SHAWWAL
11 = DHU AL-QADA
12 = DHU AL-HIJJA

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 19 presented here begins with Lesson 103 and Quranic Chapter 22, the 103rd chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 63, 58 and finally Lesson 106 and Quranic Chapter 49, the 106th chapter revealed.

LESSON 103(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 22: THE PILGRIMAGE (AL-HAJJ)
SIGNS 22:1-22:10

Madinah: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord.*
Truly, the earthquake of the Hour is a tremendous thing.
On a Day you will see it, (22:1)
everyone who is breast feeding will be negligent
of whoever she breast fed.
And every pregnant woman will bring forth a foetus
and ***you*** *will see humanity intoxicated*
yet they will not be intoxicated.
But the punishment of God will be severe. (22:2)
And among humanity is he who disputes about God
without knowledge and follows every rebel satan. (22:3)
It was written down about him that whoever turned away to him
as a friend, truly, he will cause him to go astray
and will guide him to the punishment of the blaze. (22:4)
O humanity! If you had been in doubt about the Upraising,
truly, We created you from earth dust
and, again, from seminal fluid and, again, from a clot
and, again, from tissue that was formed
and that was not formed so that we make it manifest to you.
We establish in the wombs whom We will for a term, that which is
determined. And, again, We bring you out as infant children and,
again, you may reach the coming of age.

And among you there is he whom death will call to itself.
And among you there is he who is returned to the most wretched
lifetime so that he knows not anything after some knowledge.
*And **you** have seen the earth as that which is lifeless.*
Yet when We caused water to descend on it, it quivered
and it swelled and put forth every lovely pair. (22:5)
That is because God, He is The Truth, and it is He Who gives life
to the dead and He is Powerful over everything. (22:6)
And, truly, the Hour is that which arrives.
There is no doubt about it
and that God will raise up whoever is in the graves. (22:7)
And among humanity is such a one who disputes about God
without knowledge nor guidance nor an illuminating Book, (22:8)
turning to his side as one who turns away to cause to go astray
from the way of God. For him in the present is degradation.
And We will cause him to experience
—on the Day of Resurrection—
the punishment of the burning. (22:9)
That is because of what thy two hands put forward!
And, truly, God is not unjust to His servants. (22:10)

COMMENTARY°

A STARTING JOLT

The impressions the chapter generates in its various scenes and cited examples are those of power, strength, toughness and awe. It delivers clear warnings and alerts our sense of God-consciousness, of fearing Him and submitting to His will. The scene of resurrection at the outset is one of power, striking fear in people's hearts: **(22:1-22:2)**

The same may be said of the scene describing punishment in the hereafter: *These two disputants strove against one another about their Lord. Then, for those who were ungrateful garments of fire will be cut out for them. Over their heads, scalding water will be unloosed whereby what is in their bellies will be dissolved and their skins. And for them are maces of iron. Whenever they wanted to go forth from there because of lament, they will be caused to return to it and experience the punishment of the burning.* **(22:19-22:22)**

A very vivid image is drawn showing the status of one who associates partners with God: *Turn to God as monotheists not with Him as ones who are polytheists. And whoever ascribes partners with God, it is as if he fell down from heaven and the birds snatch him or the wind hurled him to ruin in a place far away.* **(22:31)** Equally vivid is the description of the one who has lost hope of ever being

granted God's support: *Whoever had been thinking that God will never help him, in the present and in the world to come, let him stretch out a cord to heaven. Again, let him sever it. Then, let him look on whether his cunning causes to put away what enrages him.* **(22:15)**

The scene depicting the townships destroyed on account of their wrongdoing also emits power: *And how many a town We caused to perish while they are ones who are unjust so that it be one that had fallen down in ruins and how much well water ignored and a tall palace!* **(22:45)**

Such images of power and awe are coupled with serious orders and assigned tasks in addition to the justification given for the use of power to repel aggression and the firm promise to grant victory and power. This is re-emphasized in reference to God's might and the weakness of His alleged partners. Belonging to the first group is the following example: *Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. And, truly, Powerful is God to help them, those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty. Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth, they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms and they commanded to that which is honorable and they prohibited that which is unlawful. And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.* **(22:39-22:41)**

An example of the second type is: *O humanity! A parable was propounded, so listen to it. Truly, those whom you call to other than God will never create a fly, even if they were gathered together for it. And when the fly is to rob them of something, they would never seek to deliver it from the fly. Weak were the ones who are seekers and the ones who are sought. They duly measured not the measure of God. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* **(22:73-22:74)**

Beyond all this we discern the repeated call to remain God-conscious and to stand in awe of God. The chapter starts with this call in its first sign, and repeats it time and again: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord. Truly, the earthquake of the Hour is a tremendous thing.* **(22:1)** *That was commanded! Whoever holds the waymarks of God in honor, then, it is, truly, from hearts filled with God-consciousness.* **(22:32)** *And for every community We assigned devotional acts that they may remember the Name of God over what We provided them of flocks of animals. And your God is One God.*

Submit to Him, and give you good tidings to the ones who humble themselves, those who, when God was remembered, their hearts took notice and the ones who remain steadfast against whatever lit on them and the ones who perform the formal prayer and who spends out of what We provided them. (22:34-35) *Neither their flesh nor their blood attains to God, rather, God-consciousness from you attains Him. Thus, He caused them to be subservient to you that you magnify God in that He guided you. And give you good tidings to the ones who are doers of good.* (22:37)

The chapter is also replete with scenes of the universe, the Day of Judgment, the fate of earlier communities, cited cases, images, reflections and lessons drawn. All aim to alert our feelings of faith, piety, and surrender to God. This is what characterizes the entire chapter and gives it its distinctive mark. When we read the chapter in full, we find that it consists of four main parts. It begins with a general address to all humanity, calling on them to be God-conscious. They are warned against the violent convulsion which announces the arrival of the Day of Judgment. We also have a description of the horrific scenes accompanying it and a denunciation of disputing without knowledge about God and following every devil who inevitably leads his followers astray. It then highlights indications of the resurrection based on the stages of life a human embryo goes through, and the development of plant life, making a clear link between all types of life. These stages which follow well established and never failing laws God has set in operation are shown to be closely linked to a number of truisms: namely, that God is the truth; that He brings the dead to life; that He has power over all things; that the Last Hour will inevitably come, and that God will resurrect all those buried in their graves. All these are natural laws and facts closely related to the law that governs the life of the universe.

A second denunciation of ignorant disputes about God follows, since such disputes are devoid of guidance and follow no enlightening book or revelation. As this is made clear, a negative example is given showing the repugnant attitude of those who look at faith from a profit and loss point of view. When misfortune befalls such people, they are quick to seek help from sources other than God, in effect despairing of His help. This part of the chapter concludes with a definitive statement that guidance and error are achieved by God's will. He will certainly judge, on the Day of Reckoning, between the followers of different faiths. It finally paints a horrific scene of the punishment suffered by the ungrateful, contrasted with the perfect bliss enjoyed by believers.

The second part is clearly related to the first as it opens with a

comment on the ungrateful who turn people away from God's path and from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. Their action is strongly denounced since God has made the Sacred Mosque a place for all humanity, where those who live close by it and those who come from remote parts have the same rights and position. It then relates part of the history of building the Kabah, often referred to in the Quran as the House, and the task assigned by God to Abraham to build it on the basis of His Oneness, purifying it of all traces of idolatry. It goes on to mention some of the rituals of pilgrimage and how they strengthen people's piety, which is the aim of this great act of worship. This part of the chapter concludes with giving permission to believers to fight in order to protect places and rites of worship against any aggression that seeks to turn them away from their belief in God alone

The third part provides examples of past communities' denials of faith, the destruction of hardened ungrateful, and images of cities destroyed over the heads of wrongdoers. The purpose here is to explain God's law with regard to the messages He sends to humanity, to comfort the Prophet who was facing a determined campaign of rejection and opposition, and to reassure the believers as to their inevitable destiny. This part also includes certain aspects of Satan's scheming against Prophets and Messengers, and how God reasserts His message, setting His revelations on a solid basis. Thus, believers are reassured and the ungrateful, whether weaklings or the arrogant and powerful, turn away, having been misled by Satan. The final part of the chapter states God's promise of support to anyone who is oppressed as he tries to repel such aggression. This promise is followed by highlighting some aspects of God's infinite power. Next to it we have a miserable image of the helplessness of the deities worshipped by those who associate partners with God. The chapter concludes with an address to the believers to worship their Lord and strive for His cause, and to hold fast to His rope as they fulfil the duties required by their faith which goes back to the time of Abraham.

A Fear-Striking Opening

These signs **(22:1-22:2)** are how the chapter begins: an awesome opening that makes hearts tremble. It addresses all humanity, calling on them to fear their Lord and warning them against what may happen on the eventful and terrible Day of Judgment. There is a clear element of mystery about it, one that is frightening and cannot be expressed in words. Thus we are told of a 'violent convulsion' which is then described as 'awesome indeed', but we have no clear indication as to its nature or substance. When the details are given, we find

them even more frightening. We have a picture of every suckling mother completely unaware of the child she is nursing: she looks but does not see, moves but only aimlessly. Every pregnant female miscarries because of the great shock that engulfs her. All people look drunk, but they are not. They only seem to be as they look into a void and walk unsteadily in all directions. It is a very busy scene, with a huge moving crowd. We almost see it with our eyes as the signs are recited, and we paint it in our imagination. Yet we hardly get the full view, because of the horror it describes. It is a horror that cannot be measured by volume or extent, but rather by its effect on human beings. Its measure is the suckling mother oblivious of the child on her breast. No mother can be so oblivious unless the horror she is encountering commands all her senses and faculties. It is also measured by the miscarrying pregnant women, and by the people behaving as if they are drunk yet who have not had a drink. All this is because God's punishment is severe indeed.

THE WAY LEADING TO ERROR

Despite this horror, we are told that some people dispute about God, having no fear of Him: **(22:3-22:4)** Whether the dispute is about God's existence, Oneness, power, knowledge or any of His attributes, it sounds extremely singular. How can anyone realize the extent of the horror that awaits us all, and from which the only escape is through piety and earning God's pleasure, yet continue to dispute about God? How can anyone with a mind to think and a heart to feel indulge in anything other than trying to avoid this violent convulsion whose horror threatens us all?

Had it been a dispute based on true knowledge, something might be said for it, but it is a dispute without knowledge. It is immersed in arrogance that seeks no firm evidence, and error that is the result of following Satan's bidding. Such people dispute about God *and follows every rebel satan* who boasts about turning away from the truth. Therefore: *It was written down about him that whoever turned away to him as a friend, truly, he will cause him to go astray and will guide him to the punishment of the blaze.* **(22:4)** It is inevitable that such devils will lead their followers away from the truth in order to land them in hell. The chapter sarcastically calls this 'guidance', which can only be the guidance of one who leads to destruction and doom.

THE STAGES OF HUMAN CREATION

Resurrection **(22:5)** is a return to a life that has been in existence. Thus, by human standards, it is easier than the origination of life in

the first place, although, by God's standards, the notion of easier or more difficult does not arise. To Him, initiating something out of nothing and restoring a life that had ended are the same. Both are the result of His will: *Truly His command when He wanted a thing is but to say to it: Be!* (36:82) But the Quran addresses people according to their own standards, rational thinking and understanding. It directs their hearts to reflect on what they see happening at every moment in their lives. If only they would reflect on it carefully, they would realize that it is miraculous. But to appreciate it as such, they need to look at it with an open heart and a reflective mind. Alas! They rarely ever do so.

It is a great divide separating the first status and the last. It points to the power that can bring about the resurrection, having brought about the initial creation. **(22:5)** Again the gulf between the primitive, idle elements found in dust and the gamete, a single living cell, is great indeed. It enfolds the great secret of life about which human beings know only a very little, despite the passage of millions of years in which countless numbers of idle elements have been transformed into living cells in a continuous process that never stops. It is a secret that we can only observe and record, without ever being able to initiate, no matter how ambitious we may be. And then there are other secrets, like that of the transformation of the gamete into a clinging cell mass, and the transformation of this cell mass into an embryo which is then transformed into a human being.

Then this clinging cell mass is transformed into an embryo which at first is without shape or distinction. Subsequently a transformation overtakes it to give it a form that begins with a skeleton that is later fleshed up. Alternatively, the uterus may reject it if God wills not to let it complete its cycle. *So that we make it manifest to you.* **(22:5)** This clause indicates that there is a pause between the embryonic stage and the child. This clause refers to the numerous signs of God's limitless power, and the reference coincides with the appearance of organs in the embryo.

The sign moves on to refer to the next stage in the development of the foetus: *We establish in the wombs whom We will for a term, that which is determined.* **(22:5)** Whatever God wills to complete its cycle will rest in its mother's womb until its time of birth.*And, again, We bring you out as infant children.* **(22:5)** Again we say, what a wide gulf separating the first stage and this final one!

The chapter continues with a new cycle that starts with the newborn child, after it has left its hiding place where it went through a series of great miracles, away from all beholders. Then it is time for a new phase, so that: *And, again, you may reach the coming of age.*

(22:5) You will attain your full growth: physically, mentally and psychologically.

Some simply forget the beginning before they reach the end. It is like God says: *And among you there is he who is returned to the most wretched lifetime so that he knows not anything after some knowledge.* **(22:5)** They lose the knowledge that once was a source of pride to them, leading them even to argue about God, His existence and His attributes. Now all such knowledge disappears from their minds and consciousness.

The sign then moves on to portray other scenes of creation and living creatures on earth and in the world of plants. **(22:5)** The state of being dry and barren, which is expressed in the Arabic text with one word, *hamidah*, is a state in between life and death. This is how the earth is when it is starved of water, the basic ingredient for life and the living. Thus, when rain water is poured over it, it stirs and swells. This is a remarkable movement which the Quran recorded many centuries before human science. When soil is very dry and then rain falls over it, it makes a movement like shaking or stirring. It absorbs the water and swells. It is then full of life, bringing forth blooming vegetation that radiates pleasure. Is there anything more pleasing to the eye than seeing life bloom in an area that has long remained barren? Here we see how the Quran speaks of a bond between all living creatures, citing them all as one of God's numerous signs. This is a remarkable reference to the fact that the essence of life is one in all the living, and to the unity of the will that brings life into being on earth, as in plants, animals and the human being.

THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

That is because God alone is the Ultimate Truth; and He alone brings the dead to life; and He has the power to will anything. *That is because God, He is The Truth, and it is He Who gives life to the dead and He is Powerful over everything.* **(22:6-22:7)**

Bringing the dead to life: *That is because God, He is The Truth, and it is He Who gives life to the dead and He is Powerful over everything* **(22:6)** is to re-initiate life in what has been dead. The One who originated life in the first instance is the One who brings it back in the final stage. *And, truly, the Hour is that which arrives. There is no doubt about it and that God will raise up whoever is in the graves.* **(22:7)** They will then be given their reward for whatever they did in this first life. Such resurrection is dictated by the purpose of creation.

But despite all this evidence some people continue to dispute God's existence: **(22:8-22:10)**

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

Developing Criteria for Evaluation

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever

does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

Lesson 103(2). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Empowering Constancy, Courage

How do I develop courage (determination, constancy)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)

Signs 22:11-22:22

Madinah: *And among humanity is he who worships God*
on the fringes.
If good lit on him, he is at rest with it.
And if a test lit on him, he turned completely about.
He lost the present and the world to come.
That, it is the clear loss. (22:11)
He calls to other than God what neither hurts him nor profits him.
That it is a far wandering astray. (22:12)

He calls to him whose hurting is nearer than his profiting.
Miserable was the defender and miserable
was the acquaintance. (22:13
Truly, God will cause to enter those who have believed
and did as the ones accord with morality,
Gardens beneath which rivers run.
Truly, God accomplishes what He wants. (22:14)
Whoever had been thinking that God will never help him,
in the present and in the world to come,
let him stretch out a cord to heaven.
Again, let him sever it.
Then, let him look on whether his cunning causes
to put away what enrages him. (22:15)
And, thus, We caused signs to descend, clear portents.
And that God guides whom He wants. (22:16)
Truly, those who believed and those who became Jews and the
Sabeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians
and those who ascribed partners—
truly, God will distinguish between them
on the Day of Resurrection.
Truly, God over everything is a Witness. (22:17)
Have you not considered that to God prostrates to Him
whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in and on the earth
and the sun and the moon and the stars,
the mountains, the trees and the moving creatures,
and many of humanity while there are many
on whom the punishment will be realized.
And He whom God despises, then, there is no one who honors him.
Truly, God accomplishes whatever He wills. (22:18)
These two disputants strove against one another about their Lord.
Then, for those who were ungrateful
garments of fire will be cut out for them.
Over their heads, scalding water will be unloosed (22:19)
whereby what is in their bellies will be dissolved
and their skins. (22:20)
And for them are maces of iron. (22:21)
Whenever they wanted to go forth from there because of lament,
they will be caused to return to it
and experience the punishment of the burning. (22:22)

COMMENTARY°

A CONDITIONAL APPROACH TO FAITH

The chapter then paints a picture of another type of person. Al-

though this type was definitely present in the early days of the Quranic message, it is also present in every generation. It is the type that weighs up faith against what profit or loss he is likely to achieve as a result. Thus, his approach to faith is the same as any business transaction he conducts. Some people worship God on the borderline [of faith]. **(22:11-22:13)**

Contrasted with this is the person who looks at faith as a commercial endeavor: *If good lit on him, he is at rest with it.* He would say that faith is beneficial, bringing in material gains, allowing plants to grow, efforts to be fruitful, goods to sell well and transactions to be profitable. But if it turns out otherwise, then he takes a totally different stance: *And if a test lit on him, he turned completely about. He lost the present and the world to come.* **(22:11)** His loss in this life is reflected in the misfortune he cannot tolerate, and the calamity that did not bring him back to complete reliance on God. Therefore , he also loses the hereafter by turning away from faith, rejecting the guidance that was made available to him.

Undoubtedly, the person who turns away from faith once hardship befalls him exposes himself to utter loss: *That, it is the clear loss.* **(22:11)** He is deprived of trust, reassurance and contentedness, in addition to his loss of wealth, children, health or other losses with which God puts His servants to the test. For God requires His servants to demonstrate their trust in Him, to patiently persevere in the face of adversity, as well as to dedicate their lives to His cause and to His will. Moreover, he loses the life to come and all that it promises of bliss, happiness and being close to God. This is indeed a great loss.

So where does the person who worships God on the border line go when he strays from God? In simple terms: *He calls to other than God what neither hurts him nor profits him.* **(22:12)** He may invoke an idol or a statue in old fashioned ignorance, or jahiliyyah, or he may invoke a person, or some authority, or interest, like the different forms of *jahiliyyah* that exist at any time or place, whenever human beings abandon belief in God's Oneness and turn their backs on His guidance. But what does all this represent? It is all going astray from the only method in which invocation is of use: *That it is a far wandering astray.* **(22:12)** Indeed when anyone resorts to invoking such beings instead of God, he takes himself very far away from the truth and the right way leading to it.

He calls to him whose hurting is nearer than his profiting. Miserable was the defender and miserable was the acquaintance **(22:13)** be that an idol, Satan, or a human being providing support or protection. None of these can cause the invoker either harm or benefit; in-

deed, they are more likely to bring him harm than benefit. This harm results, in the spiritual world, from overburdening one's heart with myth and humiliation. As for the material world, its harm is self-evident. And above all, it brings about utter loss in the life to come. Therefore , the chapter states: *Miserable was the defender* which is powerless, able to cause neither harm nor benefit. *And miserable was the acquaintance.* who brings on such utter loss. All this applies equally to whether the patron and the friend are idols and statues, or human beings raised to the status of deities or semi-deities.

JUDGMENT BETWEEN ALL CREEDS

As for those who truly believe in God's Oneness, God prepares for them what is much better than all the material comforts and benefits this life may provide: *Truly, God will cause to enter those who have believed and did as the ones accord with morality, Gardens beneath which rivers run. Truly, God accomplishes what He wants.* **(22:14)** Therefore, anyone who endures adversity or a test should remain steadfast and persevere. He must also continue to place his trust in God and His mercy and support, believing that only He can relieve his adversity and reward him for his perseverance.

A person who loses his trust in God's help, both in this life and in the life to come, and despairs of God's grace when he finds himself under severe pressure or adversity, may do with himself whatever he is able to do. But nothing he does will ever change his lot or relieve him of his problems: *Whoever had been thinking that God will never help him, in the present and in the world to come, let him stretch out a cord to heaven. Again, let him sever it. Then, let him look on whether his cunning causes to put away what enrages him.* **(22:15)**

With such a clear exposition of examples of people who benefit by, and follow, divine guidance as well as those who go astray, God has sent this Quran from on high. Thus, people who open their hearts to it will benefit by it and receive God's guidance: *And, thus, We caused signs to descend, clear portents. And that God guides whom He wants.* **(22:16)**

God has willed that guidance and error are to be granted. Therefore, whoever seeks guidance will have it in fulfilment of God's will and according to His law. The same applies to one who wishes to follow error and to stray from the truth. The chapter here only mentions guidance because this is what fits with the context. As for the different sects and their divergent beliefs, it is God who judges them all on the Day of Judgment. He is perfectly aware of whatever each of them incorporates of the truth and what falsehood they contain: **(22:17)**

Human beings determine the way they follow according to their ideas, tendencies and desires. By nature, the rest of the universe submits to its Creator, prostrating itself before Him: **(22:18)**

When we reflect on this sign we find countless creatures, some of which we know and some we do not; and we glance at an infinite number of worlds, many of which we do not begin to know; as also an endless variety of mountains, trees and beasts that live on earth, man's abode. All these, without exception, join a single procession that prostrates itself in humble submission to God, addressing its worship, in perfect harmony, to Him alone. And out of all these creatures, the human being alone has a special case, as people diverge: *Have you not considered that to God prostrates to Him whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in and on the earth and the sun and the moon and the stars, the mountains, the trees and the moving creatures, and many of humanity* because of their rejection of the truth. Thus, the human being stands out on his own, unique in that great, harmonious procession.

The sign concludes with a statement making clear that whoever deserves punishment will inevitably be humbled and disgraced: *while there are many on whom the punishment will be realized.* **(22:18)** How could such a person be honored when all honor and respect are granted by God. In other words, anyone who submits to any being other than God Almighty, to whom the entire universe willingly submits, will be disgraced.

WIDELY DIVERGENT ENDS

The next passage draws a scene of the Day of Judgment when the honor bestowed by God on His faithful servants and the humiliation suffered by the others are shown as though they are happening here and now. These two adversaries have become engrossed in contention about their Lord: **(22:19-22:22)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others'

claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself

Lesson 103(3). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Persevering in Goodness

What is perseverance?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

What does persevering in goodness mean?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)

Signs 22:23-22:25

Madinah: *Truly, God will cause to enter those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality,*
Gardens beneath which rivers run.
They are adorned in them with bracelets of gold and pearls.

And their garments in it will be of silk. (22:23)
And they were guided to what is good of the saying
and they were guided to the Path of Him
Who is Worthy of Praise. (22:24)
Truly, those who were ungrateful and bar from the way of God
and from the Masjid al-Haram that We made for humanity
—equal for the ones who give themselves up
and the ones who are desert dwellers—
and whoever wants to violate it with injustice,
We will cause him to experience a painful punishment. (22:25)

COMMENTARY°

THE FIRST SANCTUARY

Such was the practice of the ungrateful **(22:25)**: they turned people away from the faith that God had established for humanity, providing a direct way to Him. They fought hard to prevent people from following the code He had chosen for human life. They also stopped Muslims from offering the pilgrimage and visitation, as was the case when the events that started with such prevention led to the signing of a peace agreement at al-Hudaybiyyah. God made this mosque an area of peace and safety for all people, where they have no fear of anyone. This applied to everyone living in Makkah, and to all those who travelled from distant areas to visit the mosque. Thus, the Kabah and the mosque around it form a House of God where all people are equal. None can claim any right of ownership or any distinction whatsoever: *And from the Masjid al-Haram that We made for humanity—equal for the ones who give themselves up and the ones who are desert dwellers* **(22:25)**

This law God established for His Sacred House preceded all attempts by human beings to establish a sanctuary where no arms are allowed, opponents are safe, bloodshed is ended and everyone enjoys peace and security. No one can claim any favor for observing these rules. They are a privilege equally extended to all people at all times.

We see how the Quranic message was far ahead of the rest of humanity, establishing an area of peace and security for all, as well as a home open to every human being. Indeed, the Quran threatens with painful suffering anyone who tries to cause any deviation from this well-defined system: *and whoever wants to violate it with injustice, We will cause him to experience a painful punishment.* **(22:25)** What is, then, the punishment meted out to a person who does not stop at seeking to profane the Sacred Mosque, but goes on to actually do it? The Quranic sign threatens with grievous suffering anyone who either seeks this, or has the intention of doing so. This makes

the warning much more powerful and far-reaching.

Another aspect of the fine style of the Quran is the omission of the predicate in the first sentence of the sign. Thus, the sentence states: *Truly, those who were ungrateful and bar from the way of God and from the Masjid al-Haram.* **(22:25)** It does not say what happens to them, or what punishment they will receive. Thus, the sign suggests that their mere mention and description is more than enough to determine their fate.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it

LESSON 103(4). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM

WHAT IS EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

QURANIC CHAPTER 22: THE PILGRIMAGE (AL-HAJJ)
SIGNS 22:26-22:33

Madinah: *And mention when We placed Abraham*
in the place of the House that:
You will ascribe nothing as partners with Me.
And You purify My House for the ones who circumambulate it
and the ones who are standing up, and the ones who bow down
and the ones who prostrate themselves. (22:26)
Announce to humanity the pilgrimage to Makkah.
They will approach you on foot and on every thin camel.
They will approach from every deep ravine (22:27)
that they bear witness to what profits them
and remember the Name of God on known days

over whatever He provided them from flocks of animals.
Then, eat of it and feed
the ones who are in misery and the poor. (22:28)
Again, let them finish their ritual cleanliness
and live up to their vows
and circumambulate the Ancient House. (22:29)
That was commanded! Whoever holds the sacred things of God in
honor, then, that is better for him with his Lord.
And permitted to you were the flocks,
but what will be recounted to you.
So avoid the disgrace of graven images
and avoid saying the untruth. (22:30)
Turn to God as monotheists not with Him
as ones who are polytheists.
And whoever ascribes partners with God,
it is as if he fell down from heaven and the birds snatch him
or the wind hurled him to ruin in a place far away. (22:31)
That was commanded! Whoever holds the waymarks of God
in honor, then, it is, truly, from hearts filled
with God-consciousness. (22:32)
For you in that is what profits for a term, that which is determined.
Again, their place of sacrifice is at the Ancient House. (22:33)

COMMENTARY°

ESTABLISHING THE SANCTUARY

The chapter now refers to the establishment of this Sacred Mosque which the idolaters had usurped. They worshipped idols there and prevented believers in God's Oneness, who had purged themselves from idolatry, from entering it. Yet it was built by Abraham on God's own instructions. The chapter also mentions the fundamental basis of God's Oneness which served as the basis of the foundation of the Sacred Mosque. It also adds the purpose of its building as a place to worship God alone, a place where the dedicated could walk around it, and stand before it in submission to God: **(22:26-22:29)**

It was for celebrating the glory of God alone that this House was built. God showed its place to Abraham, and gave him clear instructions so that he raised it on proper foundations: ***You** will ascribe nothing as partners with Me.* It belongs to God alone, without partners of any sort. Abraham was also required to purify the House for those who come to it to perform the pilgrimage and for those who stand up in prayer there. **(22:26)** It is for those who worship God alone that this House was built. It has nothing to do with others who associate

partners with Him or address their worship to anyone other than Him.

ANNOUNCING THE PILGRIMAGE

When Abraham completed building the Kabah as instructed, he was ordered to declare the duty of pilgrimage as binding on all people, and to call on them to fulfil this duty. God also promised him that people would respond to his call, and that they would come from all corners of the globe, either on foot, or using every kind of fast mount that becomes thin as a result of a long journey: *And You purify My House for the ones who circumambulate it and the ones who are standing up, and the ones who bow down and the ones who prostrate themselves.* **(22:27)**

The chapter then mentions some aspects and objectives of the pilgrimage: "so that they might experience much that shall be of benefit to them, and that they might extol the name of God on the days appointed [for sacrifice], over whatever heads of cattle He may have provided for them. Eat, then, of such [sacrificed cattle] and feed the unfortunate pool: **(22:28-22:29)**

It is at the same time a season of worship, when souls feel their purity as they sense that they are close to God in His Sacred House. People's spirits roam around the House, recalling memories that are associated with it, and see near and distant images. The memory of Abraham as he abandons his small child, Ishmael, born to him in old age, yet whom he left alone with his mother. As he turned away to leave, he addressed a prayer to God, one which clearly reflected an issuing from an apprehensive heart: *Our Lord! Truly I have lodged some of my offspring in an unsown valley by Your Holy House, O our Lord, that they may perform the formal prayer, Make the minds among humanity yearn for them and provide You them with fruits so that perhaps they will give thanks.* (14:37)

We remember Hagar as she tries to find water for herself and her young child in that exceedingly hot place where the Sacred House was yet to be built. We see her dashing to and fro between the two hills of al-Safa and al-Marwah, feel her exceeding thirst, and watch her fear for her child as she's weighed down with the strenuous effort involved. She returns after covering the distance seven times, feeling something approaching despair, only to find water springing up between the blessed child's hands. That water was the Well of Zamzam, a spring of mercy in the middle of a barren desert

THE PILGRIMAGE CONFERENCE

But the pilgrimage is also a conference at which all Muslims gather. In it they find the beginning of their community, going back

ages in time to none other than their first father, Abraham: *And struggle for God in a true struggling. He elected you and made not for you in your way of life any impediment. It is the creed of your father Abraham. He named you the ones who submit to God before and in this Recitation that the Messenger be a witness over you and you are witnesses over humanity. So perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and cleave firmly to God. He is your Defender. How excellent a Defender and how excellent a Helper!* **(22:78)** There at the pilgrimage, they find the force that brings them all together, their qiblah to which they all turn as they stand up in prayer. They also find the banner under which they unite, namely, the banner of faith under which all distinctions of race, color or nationality are non-existent. They sense their power, of which they may often be oblivious; that is the power of their unity which is capable of sweeping everything before it, when they are united by faith alone. The pilgrimage is a conference where Muslims have the opportunity to get to know one another, discuss their affairs, coordinate their plans, group their forces, exchange commodities, information, experiences and other benefits. They organize their single well-integrated Muslim world once every year, under God's banner, close to His House, in the light of devotion to Him alone and the memories outlined, in the best place, time and atmosphere.

It is to this blessing that the sign refers: *that they bear witness to what profits them* **(22:28)** This applies to every generation according to its prevailing circumstances, needs, experience, and requirements. This is part of what God wants the pilgrimage to be, ever since He made it a duty incumbent upon all Muslims, and ordered Abraham to proclaim this duty to humanity. The chapter refers to some of the rituals of the pilgrimage and their purpose: *and remember the Name of God on known days over whatever He provided them from flocks of animals.* **(22:28)** This is a reference to the animal sacrifice that pilgrims offer on the four days of Eid. The Quranic sign refers first to the practice of extolling God's name at the time of the slaughter, highlighting the fact that the whole atmosphere is one of worship, and the purpose of the sacrifice is to get closer to God. Therefore, the chapter stresses the mentioning of God's name at the point of sacrifice, as though such mention is the aim of the whole sacrificial ritual.

The sacrifice itself commemorates the sacrifice that was given as a ransom for Ishmael. Thus, it commemorates a sign given by God, and the act of obedience by His two noble servants, Abraham and Ishmael, in addition to the element of charity involved as most of its meat is given to the poor. The 'heads of cattle' mentioned in

the Quranic sign refer to camels, cows, sheep and goats that are normally sacrificed. *Then, eat of it and feed the ones who are in misery and the poor.* **(22:28)**

The order to eat of one's sacrifice is one of permissibility and recommendation, while the order to feed the poor is one of duty and obligation. Perhaps the order that one should eat of one's own sacrifice is meant to show the poor that it is wholesome and of a quality that the person offering it does not disdain to eat from. The sacrifice signals the end of the state of consecration, or ihram, which means that the pilgrim may now shave his head, or cut his hair. Other ihram restrictions, such as prohibiting the plucking of armpit hair and nail cutting, are also relaxed. All this is referred to in this Quranic sign: *Again, let them finish their ritual cleanliness and live up to their vows* . **(22:29)** These vows are concerned with whatever people might have pledged to God, other than the sacrifice that is part of the pilgrimage rituals. *And circumambulate the Ancient House.* **(22:29)** This is a reference to the tawaf of ifadah, which falls due after attendance at `Arafat. This tawaf is also different from the tawaf of farewell which is offered shortly before departing from Makkah.

The Ancient House refers to the Sacred Mosque which God made immune from the power of all tyrants, and against collapse through the passage of time. It continues to be visited, ever since the time of Abraham, and will continue to be so for as long as God wills.

FALL, SNATCH AND THE DEEP END

This is the story of how the Sacred House in Makkah was built and the basis on which it was founded. It was God who ordered His friend, Abraham, to raise this House making belief in God's Oneness its solid foundation. He further ordered Abraham to purify it of all idolatry, and to proclaim to humanity the duty of offering the pilgrimage to the House, where they mention God's name, not the names of false deities, over what they sacrifice of cattle He provides for them. They are to eat of it and to feed the needy and the poor in praise of God's name, not the name of anyone or anything else. This means that it is a sacred House where God's sanctities are respected. Paramount among these are the belief in God's Oneness, the opening of the House to worshippers who walk around it, stand before it in prayer, and bow and prostrate themselves to God, in addition to the prevention of bloodshed, the honoring of covenants and treaties, and the maintenance of peace. All this [is ordained by God]. Whoever honors God's sanctities, it will be better for him with his Lord. All kinds of cattle have been made lawful to you, except for what is specified to you [as forbidden]. **(22:30-22:31)** Honoring God's sanctities

instils a keen, watchful sense lest one should violate them. In God's measure, this is better for us. It is better in the realm of conscience and feeling, and better in this life generally. A watchful conscience is one which wants to remain pure, untainted. A community where God's sanctities are inviolable ensures a life of peace where people are secure, fearing no aggression or persecution, reassured of their comfort and safety.

The idolaters in Makkah used to consider as sacred certain animals, such as a slit-ear she-camel, a she-camel let loose for pasture, idol sacrifices for animal twin-births, and stallion-camel freed from work. They falsely attributed sanctity for such animals, while they violated God's clear sanctities. Therefore, the chapter makes clear at this juncture that all cattle are lawful to eat, except for those specified as forbidden, such as carrion, blood, the flesh of swine and any animal at the slaughter of which any name other than God's is invoked: *And permitted to you were the flocks, but what will be recounted to you.* **(22:30)** This has been made clear so that none other than God's sanctities are acknowledged, none enacts any legislation except God, and no one exercises judgement according to any law other than that of God.

While all cattle are made lawful, the chapter gives an order to steer away from the abomination of venerating idols. The idolaters used to slaughter their animals before idols that personified evil. Associating partners with God is also an evil that contaminates people's hearts and consciences in the same way as an impurity contaminates a garment or a place. Since the association of partners with God is an act of fabricating falsehood against Him, the chapter warns against saying anything untrue: *So avoid the disgrace of graven images and avoid saying the untruth.* **(22:30)**

The Quranic statement magnifies the offense of fabricating falsehood, putting it on a par with associating partners with God. A hadith related by Imam Ahmad states: "One day, the Prophet offered dawn prayers. When he stood up to leave, he said: 'Perjury is equal to associating partners with God.' He then recited this sign." What God wants of all people is that they should steer away from all types of associating partners with Him, as also steer away from saying anything untrue. They must maintain in absolute purity their belief in God's Oneness: *Turn to God as monotheists not with Him as ones who are polytheists.* **(22:31)** The chapter then paints a violent scene of a person who slips away from this pure concept of God's Oneness, and who falls into the depths of associating partners with Him. He is totally lost, as though he has never come to life. *And whoever ascribes partners with God, it is as if he fell down from heaven and the*

birds snatch him or the wind hurled him to ruin in a place far away. **(22:31)**

A Sacrifice of Distinction

Having mentioned those who honor God's sanctities and the need to preserve and protect such sanctities, the chapter now speaks of honoring the symbols set up by God, which, in this instance, refers to the animals sacrificed as part of the pilgrimage rituals. This honor is manifested by choosing the best and most valuable animals for sacrifice: This is [to be borne in mind]. **(22:32-22:33)**

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined

how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.

I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.

I was able to turn the negatives into positives.

I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.

I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.

I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.

I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 103(5). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS BEING FAIR AND JUST

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj) Signs 22:24-22:38

Madinah: *And for every community*
We assigned devotional acts that they may remember
the Name of God over what We provided them of flocks of animals.
And your God is One God.
Submit to Him, and give ***you*** *good tidings*
to the ones who humble themselves, (22:34)
those who, when God was remembered,
their hearts took notice and the ones who remain steadfast
against whatever lit on them
and the ones who perform the formal prayer
and who spends out of what We provided them. (22:35)
We made for you the beasts of sacrifice
among the waymarks of God.
You have in them much good so remember the Name of God
over them, ones who are standing in ranks.
Then, when they collapsed on their sides,
eat from them and feed the ones who are paupers
and the ones who are poor persons who beg not.
Thus, We caused them to be subservient to you
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (22:36)
Neither their flesh nor their blood attains to God,
rather, God-consciousness from you attains Him.
Thus, He caused them to be subservient to you
that you magnify God in that He guided you.
And give thou good tidings
to the ones who are doers of good. (22:37)
Truly, God defends those who believed.
Truly, God loves not any who is an ungrateful betrayer. (22:38)

Commentary°

The Quran mentions that such a sacrifice ritual was known in many communities: **(22:34-22:35)** The Quran message purifies feelings and intentions, setting them all for one goal. Thus, intentions, actions, worship and customs all serve a common purpose, setting life on the sound basis of pure faith. This is the underlying reason for prohibiting eating any meat at the slaughter of which any name other than God's is invoked. Indeed it is essential to invoke God's name at the sacrifice, giving prominence to such invocation, as if the sacrifice is done merely to invoke His name: *And for every community We assigned devotional acts that they may remember the Name*

of God over what We provided them of flocks of animals. **(22:34)** This is followed by a clear statement of God's Oneness: *And your God is One God. Submit to Him.* **(22:34)** An order of submission to Him is the logical conclusion: *Submit to Him.* **(22:34)** Such surrender should be an act of choice, done with complete reassurance and without any compulsion: *and give you good tidings to the ones who humble themselves.* **(22:34-22:35)** The mere mention of God's name stirs in them a feeling of awe that manifests itself in their actions. *And give you good tidings to the ones who humble themselves.* **(22:35)** They do not object to whatever happens to them by God's will. They also *and the ones who perform the formal prayer* showing thus that they worship God as He wishes to be worshipped. Moreover, they do not grudgingly hold on to what they have. Rather, they *spend out of what We provided them.* **(22:35)** Thus a close link is established between faith and worship rituals. The latter derive from faith and are manifestations of it. Therefore , they are described as symbols set up by God. What is important in all this is that life itself derives its color from faith, ensuring unity between beliefs and actions.

The chapter continues to emphasize the link between faith and worship rituals as it outlines some pilgrimage duties, speaking here of the sacrifice of cows and camels: *We made for you the beasts of sacrifice among the waymarks of God.* **(22:36)** Camels are mentioned here in particular because they are the largest and most valuable of sacrificial animals. *You have in them much good so remember the Name of God over them, ones who are standing in ranks.* **(22:36)** Camels are slaughtered standing on three legs, while the fourth is tied. *Then, when they collapsed on their sides, eat from them and feed the ones who are paupers and the ones who are poor persons who beg not. .* **(22:36)** The owners of the slaughtered sacrifice are recommended to partake of its meat, but they are required to give gifts to the poor who are contented and do not ask for charity, as well as those whose poverty makes them beg. It is because all these benefits are provided that people should give thanks to God:*Thus, We caused them to be subservient to you so that perhaps you will give thanks.* **(22:36)**

As people are commanded to slaughter their sacrifice invoking God's name, it is made clear to them that *Neither their flesh nor their blood attains to God, rather, God-consciousness from you attains Him.* **(22:37)** He has no need of them. What reaches Him, however, is people's piety and consciousness of Him. It is the intention behind any action that gives it its worth. Compare this with the practice of the ungrateful idolaters who used to splatter the blood of their sacri-

fices over their idols. How crude and ugly! *Thus, He caused them to be subservient to you that you magnify God in that He guided you.* **(22:37)** It is He who has guided you to the proper and true faith of submission to Him alone. Thus, you have become aware of the proper relation between the human being and God and the true meaning of action undertaken purely for God's sake. *And give you good tidings to the ones who are doers of good.* putting their beliefs, worship and life activities on a proper footing.

Thus Muslims turn to God with every move they make, at any time of the day or night, conscious of His majesty, seeking His pleasure. With this attitude, life becomes a series of acts of worship, fulfilling God's purpose of creation. Life on earth is set on its proper basis, with a solid link between this world and the next.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view

Lesson 103(6). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Logic (being reasonable)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their an-

swers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. The Quranic message, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[1]

Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)
Signs 22:39-22:48

Madinah: *Permission was given to those who are fought against*

because they, they were wronged.
And, truly, Powerful is God to help them, (22:39)
those who were driven out from their abodes without right
because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God
driving back humanity, some by some other,
cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues
and mosques in which is remembered in it
the Name of God frequently.
Truly, God will help whoever helps Him.
Truly, God is Strong, Almighty. (22:40)
Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth,
they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms
and they commanded to that which is honorable
and they prohibited that which is unlawful.
And with God is the Ultimate End of the command. (22:41)
And if they deny ***you****, surely, the folk of Noah denied before* ***you***
and Ad and Thamud (22:42)
and the folk of Abraham and the folk of Lot (22:43)
and the companions of Midian.
And Moses was denied, but I granted indulgence
to the ones who are ungrateful.
Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval! (22:44)
And how many a town We caused to perish
while they are ones who are unjust
so that it be one that had fallen down in ruins
and how much well water ignored and a tall palace! (22:45)
Journey they not through the earth?
Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable
or ears with which to hear?
Truly, it is not their sight that is in darkness,
but their hearts that are within their breasts
that are in darkness! (22:46)
And seek they that ***you*** *hasten the punishment?*
And God never breaks His Promise.
And, truly, a day with thy Lord
is as a thousand years of what you number. (22:47)
How many a town I granted indulgence
while it is one that is unjust.
Again, I took it and to Me was the Homecoming. (22:48)

COMMENTARY°

It has not been God's will to leave unarmed the advocates of faith, truth and goodness so that they face the forces of evil and false-

hood relying only on the power of their faith, or on the depth of goodness in their hearts. The material power of evil can be very strong, able to shake people and blind their eyes. Besides, people can only endure hardships and trials up to a certain point. God knows all this and the limits of people's ability. Therefore , He wanted the believers to endure the hardship only for a short period during which they would acquire the means to resist and to defend themselves. When they achieved this, they were given permission to fight aggression. Before stating this permission for self defense, God also tells them that it is He who will defend them: *Truly, God defends those who believed.* **(22:38)** He also tells them that He dislikes their enemies because of their treachery and ingratitude. *Truly, God loves not any who is an ungrateful betrayer.* **(22:38)** He has judged their position to be fully justified, because they are the ones who have endured injustice and persecution. They do not resort to aggression against others:*Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged.* **(22:39)** Because they are the ones at the receiving end of wrongful aggression, they are reassured that God will grant them His support and protection: *And, truly, Powerful is God to help them,* **(22:39)**

Furthermore, they have all the justification for going to war. They have been chosen to undertake a great humanitarian task, the benefits of which will not be theirs alone. Indeed these benefits will accrue to all believers. Their fight will ensure that people shall enjoy the freedom of belief and worship. Besides, they are the ones who have been wronged, the ones driven out of their homes without valid justification: *those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God!* **(22:40)**

It is the most truthful word any person can say, and the word everyone should say. Yet, it is because of their saying this that they have been driven out of their homes. Therefore why such injustice does not carry any semblance of right action. The Quranic statement makes it clear that these victims of aggression have no personal objective to fight for; instead, they fight only for their faith. They seek no worldly gain. Personal and national interests that give rise to conflicts, alliances and wars are of no appeal to them. Beyond that, we have the general rule that makes it clear that faith needs to be defended: **(22:40)**

We note here that the sign mentions monasteries where priests devote all their time to worship, as well as places of public worship for Christians, Jews and Muslims. They are all vulnerable and can be destroyed, despite their sanctity and dedication for worship. Evil will not respect the fact that these places are made for extolling God's

name. They are protected only through people's efforts, with the advocates of faith standing up to repel falsehood's aggression. Indeed, falsehood and evil will not stop their aggression unless they realize that the truth has enough power to counter their own. Truth may he valued by people, but such value is not enough to provide it with protection against aggression in man's world. It requires the appropriate means of self defense.

IN DEFENSE OF THE BELIEVERS

We need to reflect a little on these short statements that provide profound insight into human nature. The first thing to note is that the permission to fight back is granted by God to those against whom the idolaters had waged a wrongful aggression. This permission starts with a statement that God defends the believers and dislikes aggressors: *Truly, God defends those who believed. Truly, God loves not any who is an ungrateful betrayer.* **(22:38)**

These are the people who give succor to God, as they implement the way of life He has chosen for humanity. They rely on God alone, to the exclusion of any other power. It is such people that God promises victory, and His promise is most assured. It will never fail. Here we see again that the victory granted to the Muslim community relies on the fulfilment of its conditions and the discharge of certain responsibilities. All matters rest with God who determines what course events should take. He may change a defeat into victory or a victory into defeat when the foundation is not solid or responsibilities are ignored: **(22:41)**

The victory granted by God is one that leads to the establishment of His code in human life. It is a code that ensures that truth, justice and freedom are fulfilled so that they can bring goodness into human life. No individual self-aggrandizement is allowed; no personal greed or desire tolerated. Such a victory has well-defined conditions, duties and a price. It is not granted as a personal favor to anyone. Nor does it continue when its objectives and duties are not fulfilled.

PAST COMMUNITIES PUNISHED

If they accuse you of falsehood, before their time, the people of Noah, the Ad and Thamud similarly accused [their prophets] of falsehood, as did the people of Abraham and the people of Lot, and the dwellers of Madyan; and so too was Moses accused of falsehood. [In every case] *I granted indulgence to the ones who are ungrateful. Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval!* **(22:42-22:44)** It is the same pattern seen over and over again, in all past messages up to the final one. Messengers are given signs and revelations, and there will always be those who deny the truth. Thus, when the idol-

aters in Makkah denied the message of the Prophet Muhammad, it was by no means a new trend nor did the Prophet experience an unknown pattern of hostility.

Moses, however, is mentioned on his own as though the reference to him constitutes a special paragraph: *And Moses was denied, but I granted indulgence to the ones who are ungrateful.* **(22:44)** Unlike other messengers, Moses was not accused of falsehood by his own people. It was Pharaoh and his chiefs that opposed Moses, levelling all sorts of accusations on him. Moreover, Moses was given very clear and numerous signs. Nevertheless, in all these cases, God granted the ungrateful respite for a while, in the same way as He now gave the ungrateful, the Prophet's own people who fiercely opposed him, time to reflect. He then punished all those past communities very severely. This is followed by a rhetorical question that stresses the frightening effect of God's punishment: *Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval!* **(22:44)** The Arabic word, *nakir*, used here for 'rejection', carries added connotations of violent change. The question needs no answer, as it is well known: it was a rejection demonstrated through great floods, destruction, earthquakes, fearful hurricanes, and the like. Having made this very quick reference to the fate suffered by those communities, the chapter adds a general reference to past communities which suffered because of their attitude to the divine message: *And how many a town We caused to perish while they are ones who are unjust so that it be one that had fallen down in ruins and how much well water ignored and a tall palace!* **(22:45)** Numerous indeed were those towns and cities which suffered their inevitable doom as a result of their evildoing. Their fate is shown here most effectively: *fallen down in ruins.*

As the chapter portrays these scenes, it adds another rhetorical question about their effects on the ungrateful: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear? Truly, it is not their sight that is in darkness, but their hearts that are within their breasts that are in darkness!* **(22:46)** Emphasis is here placed on the location of hearts in people's bodies, which serves to amplify the blindness of those hearts in particular. Had those hearts been able to reflect on the scenes portrayed, they would have remembered and people's eyes would have been tearful. They would have moved towards faith, at least as a result of fearing an end like the ones that befell other communities.

But the ungrateful did not wish to reflect on such scenes demonstrating God's punishment. Instead they tried to hasten their own punishment which God had delayed until a particular point in time known only to Him: *And seek they that you hasten the punishment?* **(22:47)**

It is the same story with the ungrateful in all generations. They see with their eyes the ruins of cities destroyed for their wrongdoing, and they hear their histories, but they, nevertheless, follow in their footsteps overlooking their fate. If they are reminded of what happened to earlier communities, they nonetheless consider it unlikely that they will suffer the same fate. But if God grants them respite to test them further, they grow arrogant and heedless. They even ridicule anyone reminding them that they could suffer as people before them suffered. What is more they add to such ridicule a request for their punishment to be hastened. Here they are told that: *And God never breaks His Promise.*Such a promise or warning will inevitably come to pass at the time God, in His infinite wisdom, determines. If people hasten its fulfilment, it will not be made to come before its appointed time, because its delay is for a purpose known to God, and that purpose will not fail so as to grant human beings their ignorant wishes. Moreover, time is calculated differently by God: *And, truly, a day with your Lord is as a thousand years of what you number.* **(22:47)**

He gave respite to many past communities, but such respite did not save them from punishment when they persisted in their wrongdoing. This is a rule which God has set in operation and it cannot fail:*How many a town I granted indulgence while it is one that is unjust. Again, I took it and to Me was the Homecoming.* **(22:48)** Why would the ungrateful Arab, then, hasten their own punishment and deride God's warning when it is only a temporary respite that God grants such people?

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi-

dent you have learned.

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

Lesson 103(7). Critical Thinking Quranic Intellectual Standard

Definitiveness (to be precise)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)

Signs 22:49-22:57

Madinah: *Say: O humanity! Truly, I am only*
a clear warner to you. (22:49)
So those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality,
for them is forgiveness and a generous provision. (22:50)
And those who endeavored against Our signs, ones who strive to
thwart, those are the Companions of Hellfire. (22:51)
Makkah: *And We sent not before you any Messenger*
nor Prophet but when he fantasized, Satan cast fantasies into him.
But God nullifies what Satan casts.
Moreover, God set clear His Signs
and God is Knowing, Wise. (22:52)
for He makes what Satan casts a test
for those who in their hearts is a sickness
and their hearts, ones that harden.
And, truly, the ones who are unjust are in a wide breach. (22:53)
And those who were given the knowledge
know that it is The Truth from your Lord,
so that they believe in it and humble their hearts to Him.
And, truly, God is One Who Guides
those who believed to a straight path. (22:54)
And those who were ungrateful
cease not to be hesitant about it
until the Hour approaches them suddenly
or the punishment approaches them on a withering Day. (22:55)
Madinah: *On that Day the dominion will belong to God.*
He will give judgment between them.
So those who believed and did as the ones accord with morality
will be in Gardens of Bliss. (22:56)

And those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs,
for them will be a despised punishment. (22:57)

COMMENTARY°

A PARTING OF THE WAYS

At this point in the narrative describing the fate of past communities, and outlining the rule concerning those who persist in denying God's messages, the chapter addresses the Prophet instructing him to warn people and explain the inevitable outcome: *ay: O humanity! Truly, I am only a clear warner to you. So those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality, for them is forgiveness and a generous provision. And those who endeavored against Our signs, ones who strive to thwart, those are the Companions of Hellfire.* **(22:49-22:51)** We note that in this context, the Prophet's task is clearly stated as one of giving people a clear and plain warning, that leaves no room for ambiguity. This fits the immediate situation of stubborn rejection of God's message that makes people hasten their own doom.

His message, making its principles and values clear, perfects His revelations and removes all doubt that may surround its values and method of action. Whenever We sent forth a messenger or a prophet before you, and he was hoping for something, Satan would throw some aspersion on his wishes. **(22:52-22:54)**

There are many reports about the events leading to the revelation of these signs,but Ibn Kathir describes all these reports as lacking in authenticity. The most detailed of these reports is attributed to al-Zuhri, a leading Hadith scholar of the generation that followed the Prophet's Companions. It mentions that Chapter 53, The Star, was revealed at a time when some idolaters said to one another that they would leave Muhammad and his Companions alone if only he would say a good word about the idols they worshipped. The report goes as follows:

They felt that the Prophet did not criticize the Jews and Christians who opposed him in the same way as he denounced the practices of the idolaters. The Prophet was very grieved by their continued denial of his message and the persecution they inflicted on his Companions. He still hoped that they would be able to recognize divine guidance. God then revealed the chapter, The Star (see *Book Year 2*), including the following: (53:19-53:21) At this mention that the pagan's worshipped idols, Satan added the words: these are the sublime birds, whose intercession is to be hoped for. These were nothing but the rhyming words of Satan's invention, but they touched the hearts of all idolaters in Makkah who kept repeating them and expressing their delight to one another, claiming that Muhammad

had returned to his old religion, practiced by his people.

When the Prophet completed the recitation of the chapter, he prostrated himself, and all those present, Muslims and idolaters alike, also prostrated themselves. The only exception was al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, an old man, who took a handful of dust and placed it on his forehead. Both parties were amazed at this common prostration when the Prophet prostrated himself. Muslims were amazed that the idolaters should prostrate themselves when they did not believe in God, particularly because they were unaware of what Satan made the idolaters hear. The idolaters, on the other hand, were reassured by what Satan had introduced through the Prophet'shopes and implied to them that the Prophet read those words as he recited the chapter.

Therefore, they prostrated themselves because their idols were praised.All this was soon widely known, and Satan helped to circulate it. Before long, the news travelled to Abyssinia, where some Muslims had sought refuge, including Uthman ibn Maun. They were told that the people of Makkah had embraced the Quranic message and offered the formal prayer with the Prophet. They also came to know of al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah's gesture of prostration on a handful of dust he raised to his forehead. They felt that Muslims were now safe in Makkah, which prompted some of them to speedily return. But then God nullified Satan's aspersion and made His revelation clear and perfect, preserving it from Satanic fabrication. It was as God said: *And We sent not before you any Messenger nor Prophet, but when he fantasized, Satan cast fantasies into him. But God nullifies what Satan casts. Again, God set clear His signs. And God is Knowing, Wise, for He makes what Satan casts a test for those who in their hearts is a sickness and their hearts, ones that harden. And, truly, the ones who are unjust are in a wide breach.* **(22:52-22:53)** When God made His judgment clear and purged from it the Satanic rhyme, the idolaters increased their persecution of the Muslims.

FOILING SATAN'S EFFORTS

Does God foil Satan's scheming and make His revelations clear so that the right course to be followed is clearly mapped? *And God is Knowing, Wise.* Those with sickness in their hearts and minds find in such situations fertile ground for controversy: *And, truly, the ones who are unjust are in a wide breach.* **(22:53)** At the opposite end, people endowed with true knowledge and wisdom are reassured by God's clear verdict: *And those who were given the knowledge know that it is The Truth from your Lord, so that they believe in it and humble their hearts to Him. And, truly, God is One Who Guides those*

who believed to a straight path. **(22:54)**

Hasty Hopes

The chapter adds a comment on the fact that God protects His message against Satan's scheming, emphasizing that those who reject it will be vanquished, and that humiliating torture awaits them.

Yet the ungrateful will not cease to be in doubt about Him until the Last Hour comes suddenly upon them, or suffering befalls them on a day with no more [days] to follow. On that day, all dominion shall belong to God. He shall judge between them. Thus, all who believe and do righteous deeds shall find themselves in gardens of bliss, whereas for the ungrateful who have denied Our revelations there shall be shameful suffering in store: **(22:55-22:57)**

Such is the attitude of the ungrateful to the Quran in general. It is mentioned here as it closely relates to their attitude to whatever aspersion Satan may try to cast in the hopes of God's Prophets and Messengers, i.e., the two situations are inter-linked. They continue to have doubts about the Quran because their hearts have not felt the sort of pleasure and happiness it imparts so that they appreciate the truth it advocates. They continue to be in such state of doubt *until the Hour approaches them suddenly or the punishment approaches them on a withering Day.* **(22:55)** Such suffering befalls them on the Day of Judgement, which is described in the Quranic text as sterile, in the sense that it is not followed by any other day.

Such suffering is the right recompense for their scheming against the divine faith, denying God's clear revelations, and for their wilful refusal to obey Him. **(22:56-22:57)**

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills
Learning to Think Quranically

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.

I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

Lesson 103(8). Critical Thinking Quranic Intellectual Standard

Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic signs. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)
Signs 22:58-22:64

Madinah: *And those who emigrated in the way of God,*
then, they were slain or died,
certainly, God will provide them a fairer provision.
And, truly, God, certainly,
He is Best of the ones who provide. (22:58)
Certainly, He will cause them to enter a gate
with which they will be well-pleased.
And, truly, God is, certainly, Knowing, Forbearing. (22:59)
That is so! And whoever chastises for injustice
with the like of what he was chastised,
and, again, suffered an injustice,
God will, certainly, help him.
Truly, God is Pardoning, Forgiving. (22:60)
That is because God causes the nighttime
to be interposed into the daytime
and He causes the daytime
to be interposed into the nighttime.
And, truly, God is Hearing, Seeing. (22:61)
That is because God, He is The Truth.
And what they call to other than Him, it is falsehood.
And that God, He is The Lofty, The Great. (22:62)
Have you not considered that God caused water
to descend from heaven?
Then, in the morning, the earth becomes green.
Truly, God is Subtle, Aware. (22:63
To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
And, truly, God, He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise. (22:64)

COMMENTARY°

A FITTING REWARD

Migration, or leaving one's home, to serve God's cause represents a desertion of every comfort whether it be family, community and childhood memories, or property and material comforts. **(22:58-22:59)** When one puts one's faith ahead of all this for no other reason than to earn God's pleasure, one demonstrates that such a prize is more valuable than all material goods.

Those who are targets of human aggression may not be able to tolerate such treatment or bear it with patience. They would rather respond in kind, measure for measure. If aggressors persist, and continue with their oppression, God is certain to support the oppressed and help them against those who are unjust: **(22:60)** The condition that must be fulfilled for God's help to be forthcoming is that the action must be one of retaliation, seeking to repel aggression. Such help is not forthcoming for aggression of any sort. Moreover, retaliation must not be excessive; rather it must be limited in scale, replying, measure for measure, to the original aggression.

The comment made in the sign on the nature of this retaliation is that *Truly, God is Pardoning, Forgiving.* It is He who forgives and absolves. Human beings have no say in this. Indeed they may prefer to retaliate and to repel aggression. Given their nature, they are allowed to pursue such retaliatory action. God will help them t achieve victory.

God's promise of help to victims of aggression is linked to un versal laws that testify to His power. These laws operate most accurately, without fail, which, in turn, suggests that God's help to those at the receiving end of aggression is one of the unfailing universal laws He has set in operation. **(22:61)**

ABSOLUTE TRUTH

All this relates to the essential fact that God is the ultimate and absolute truth. His is the truth that controls the universe and operates its systems. Everything else is false, irregular, and cannot be maintained: *That is because God, He is The Truth. And what they call to other than Him, it is falsehood.* **(22:62)**

This is an adequate explanation and a guarantee that truth and justice will inevitably triumph, while falsehood and aggression are certain to be defeated. It is the same guarantee that the laws of the universe will operate without fail. One of these laws and phenomena is that the truth will be victorious and falsehood will suffer a humiliating defeat. God is certainly far superior to any absolute ruler who seeks to demonstrate his power over the weak. The sign concludes

with this comment: *And that God, He is The Lofty, The Great.* **(22:62)** Therefore , He will not allow aggression to swell, or injustice to he everlasting.

Further natural phenomena are shown as permanent indicators of God's power: *Have you not considered that God caused water to descend from heaven? Then, in the morning, the earth becomes green. Truly, God is Subtle, Aware.* **(22:63)** We see this happening all the time: rain pours down from the skies and the earth becomes green within a very short period. *To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And, truly, God, He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise.* **(22:64)** He is in need of nothing of what lives in the heavens and earth. Indeed all praise is due to Him for the favors He bestows on all His creatures.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers

Lesson 103(9). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Appropriateness

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj) Signs 22:65-22:72

Madinah: *Have **you** not considered*
that God caused to be subservient to you
what is in and on the earth?
And the boats run through the sea by His command.
And He holds back the heaven so that it not fall on the earth,
but by His permission.
Truly, to humanity God is Gentle, Compassionate. (22:65)
And it is He Who gave you life and, again, He will cause you to die
and, again, He will give you life.
Truly, the human being is ungrateful. (22:66)
For every community We assigned devotional acts
so that they be ones who perform rites.
*So let them not bicker with **you** in the command.*
*And call **you** to **your** Lord.*
*Truly, **you** are on a guidance, that which is straight.* (22:67)
*And if they disputed with **you**, then, **you** say:*
God is greater in knowledge about what you do. (22:68)
God will give judgment among you on the Day of Resurrection

about what you had been at variance in it. (22:69)
Have you not known that God knows what is in the heaven
and the earth? Truly, that is in a Book.
Truly, that is easy for God. (22:70)
And they worship other than God,
that for which He sent not down any authority
and of what they have no knowledge.
And there is no helper for the ones who are unjust. (22:71)
And when Our signs are recounted to them, clear portents,
you will recognize on the faces of those who were ungrateful,
that they are the ones who are rejected.
They are about to rush upon those who recount Our signs to them.
Say: Shall I tell you of worse than that?
God promised the fire to those who were ungrateful.
And miserable will be the Homecoming! (22:72)

COMMENTARY°

MERCY WITHOUT LIMIT

Once more the chapter points out some of the aspects of God's power as seen in nature: **(22:65)** This draws people's attention to the earth they live on, which contains a wide variety of powers and wealth which God has made subservient to man.

Have you not considered that God caused to be subservient to you what is in and on the earth? **(22:65)** It is God who created the laws that allow ships to sail through the sea, and who gave the human being the necessary means to discover these laws and utilize them to his benefit. Had the nature of the sea, or the ships, or man's powers of understanding and learning been different, none of this could have happened.

And He holds back the heaven so that it not fall on the earth, but by His permission. Truly, to humanity God is Gentle, Compassionate. **(22:65)** It is He who created the universe and chose its appropriate system. It is He who has made its laws which ensure that celestial bodies remain far apart from each other.

God Almighty holds the celestial bodies so that they may not fall upon the earth' through the system He has devised for the universe. He keeps them from falling 'except by His leave.' This is a reference to a time when He may decide to stop this system for a purpose He, in His infinite wisdom, wishes to happen. The chapter completes its reference to aspects of God's power and the perfection of natural laws by speaking of the human soul. It talks of human existence, life and death: **(22:66)** The first life is a miracle renewed with every child born at every moment of the night and day. Its secret con-

tinues to fill man's mind with wonder and to leave a vast area for us to contemplate. Death is also a secret that the human being cannot fathom. It occurs within a brief moment, yet the gulf between the nature of life and that of death is vast indeed, leaving a similarly vast area for contemplation. Life after death is something that lies beyond our faculties of perception, but our present life provides ample evidence for it. This is a further area for contemplation.

NO ROOM FOR ARGUMENT

Every community **(22:67-22:70)** has its own way of life, thought, behavior and beliefs, and these are subject to the consistent and accurate laws God has set to regulate people's nature, thinking, feelings and reactions to outside influences. A community that opens its hearts to the pointers to divine guidance and responds to relevant pointers in the universe and within the human soul finds its way to God. In this, it will benefit by the numerous signs pointing to His Oneness and encouraging compliance with His orders. By contrast, a community that shuts its mind to all this is in the wrong, sinking deeper into error.

God instructs the Prophet not to allow the ungrateful any chance to dispute with him over his mission, or the way of life he advocates. He must continue to implement it, paying no heed to anyone who wants to engage in argument and dispute. His is a straightforward way, as God Himself testifies: *Truly, you are on a guidance, that which is straight.* **(22:67)** This gives him all the reassurance he needs to follow divine guidance.

If the ungrateful try to dispute with him, he should cut short such arguments. It is no use wasting time and effort: *And if they disputed with you, then, you say: God is greater in knowledge about what you do.* **(22:68)** Argument can be useful with people whose hearts and minds are open to receive guidance, seeking knowledge and seriously searching for the right evidence. God will judge between all creeds and ways of life and their followers: *God will give judgment among you on the Day of Resurrection about what you had been at variance in it.* **(22:69)** He is the judge to whom no one can object, because on that day all argument is abandoned. Nor can there be any argument about the final judgement.

God makes His judgment on the basis of His perfect knowledge. He does not lose sight of any circumstances, and no motive or feeling is withheld from Him. He knows everything in the heavens and the earth, including people's intentions, motives, actions and reactions: *Have you not known that God knows what is in the heaven and the earth? Truly, that is in a Book.* **(22:70)** God's knowledge is not sub-

ject to any of the influences that erase things from memory or cause forgetfulness. His record is complete and perfect. Therefore the sign concludes with the statement: *Truly, that is easy for God.* **(22:70)**

Having made it clear to the Prophet that he must not allow the ungrateful a chance to dispute with him over his right way, the chapter shows how flawed and flimsy the way followed by the ungrateful is. It betrays total ignorance of the truth. They are deprived of God's help, and as such they have none to help them: **(22:71)**

The most singular thing is that while they worship false deities of which they have no knowledge, they refuse to listen to the voice of truth. They are hardened in their attitude, threatening to strike at those who recite God's revelations to them: **(22:72)**

Therefore, the Quran delivers a clear warning, pointing to the inevitable outcome: *Say: Shall I tell you of worse than that?* **(22:72)** What is worse than the evil they harbour within themselves, and the oppression they embark upon? *God promised the fire to those who were ungrateful.* **(22:72)** This is the right reply for the oppression they engage in. And the final comment is: *And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(22:72)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

LESSON 103(10). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

QURANIC CHAPTER 22: THE PILGRIMAGE (AL-HAJJ)

SIGNS 22:73-22:78

Madinah: *O humanity! A parable was propounded,*
so listen to it.
Truly, those whom you call to other than God
will never create a fly, even if they were gathered together for it.
And when the fly is to rob them of something,
they would never seek to deliver it from the fly.
Weak were the ones who are seekers
and the ones who are sought. (22:73)
They duly measured not the measure of God.
Truly, God is Strong, Almighty. (22:74)
God favors from the angels messengers and from humanity.
Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing. (22:75)
He knows what is in advance of them, and what is behind them,
and to God all matters are returned. (22:76)
O those who believed! Bow down and prostrate yourselves,
and worship your Lord, and accomplish good
so that perhaps you will prosper.‡ (22:77)
And struggle for God in a true struggling.
He elected you and made not for you
in your way of life any impediment.
It is the creed of your father Abraham.
He named you the ones who submit to God before
and in this Recitation that the Messenger be a witness over you
and you are witnesses over humanity.
So perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms
and cleave firmly to God.
He is your Defender. How excellent a Defender
and how excellent a Helper! (22:78)

COMMENTARY°

POWERLESS MAN

The chapter now makes a powerful, universal declaration that all deities people associate with God, including the ones to which the wrongdoers appeal for help, are weak and powerless. Their weakness is shown in a bustling and captivating scene: Humanity. An

aphorism is set forth; hearken, then, to it. **(22:73)**

The chapter adds another dimension in describing their powerlessness: *And when the fly is to rob them of something, they would never seek to deliver it from the fly.* **(22:73)** False deities, be they idols or humans, cannot retrieve anything from a fly when it robs them of it. Flies can rob people of that which is precious indeed. At the same time, a fly carries agents of some very serious diseases, such as tuberculosis, typhoid, dysentery and conjunctivitis. It can deprive a person of his eyes or other organs, or indeed deprive him of his life. A weak and contemptible fly can rob a human being of what he can never retrieve.

This powerful image stating a clear aphorism concludes with a simple comment: *Weak were the ones who are seekers and the ones who are sought.* **(22:73)** This comment further emphasizes the effects generated by the sign as a whole.

At this moment when we realize how weak and contemptible these false deities are, the chapter denounces the ungrateful for their faulty concept of God, clearly stating God's power: *They duly measured not the measure of God. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* **(22:74)** How could they understand Him as He really is when they associate with Him such powerless deities that cannot even create a fly? What understanding of God have they, when they see His highly sophisticated creation and yet they consider as equal to Him beings that cannot create even a little fly?

The chapter then mentions that God Almighty chooses His angel messengers to deliver His revelations to prophets, and chooses His human messengers to address humanity. All this is done on the basis of immaculate knowledge and total ability: **(22:75-22:76)**

The choice of both angel and human messenger is made by the Almighty, and it was from the Almighty that Muhammad received the Quranic message. It was God who chose Muhammad to be His Messenger to humanity. How could he be compared to those who rely on deities that are both weak and contemptible? *Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing. He knows what is in advance of them, and what is behind them.* His knowledge is perfect, immaculate, complete. Nothing present or absent, near or distant escapes God's knowledge. *To God all matters are returned.* **(22:76)** He is the ultimate arbiter, who has power over all things.

STRIVING FOR THE RIGHT CAUSE

Having exposed the absurdity of the idolaters' beliefs and the ignorance their worship rituals reflect, the chapter makes a final address to the Muslim community, urging it to be true to its beliefs and

to stick to the right way of life. **(22:77-22:78)**

And struggle for God in a true struggling. **(22:78)** This includes striving against one's enemies, laziness, evil and corruption. All these must be equally resisted. It is God who has assigned to you this massive responsibility and chosen you to fulfil it: "It is He who has chosen you." This choice adds to the seriousness of the responsibility, which means that it cannot be shrugged off or abandoned. Indeed it is an honor God has bestowed on the Muslim community for which it should be infinitely grateful.

Moreover, the assigned task is entwined with God's grace: *He elected you and made not for you in your way of life any impediment.* **(22:78)** Indeed, the Quranic message, with all its duties, worship and laws always observes the human being's nature and abilities. It aims to satisfy human nature and release human abilities so that they are used constructively. Human nature must neither be suppressed nor left without control. Moreover, the Quranic way of life has a long history in human life, linking the past with the present. *It is the creed of your father Abraham.* **(22:78)** It is the system that has continued on earth since the time of Abraham, without any long gap that allows the divine faith to be totally distorted, as happened in some periods prior to Abraham's time.

God has given the name 'Muslim' to the community that believes in His Oneness, and this name remained the same whether in olden days or in the Quran: *He named you the ones who submit to God before and in this Recitation.* The Quranic message means surrendering oneself totally to God, attributing no share of Godhead to anyone else. Thus, the Muslim community has enjoyed the same system across successive generations, and with successive messages and messengers, up to the time of the Prophet Muhammad. It was then that the divine message was entrusted to the Muslim community. Thus, the past, present and future are interlinked as God wants *that the Messenger be a witness over you and you are witnesses over humanity.* **(22:78)**

The Prophet is, thus, a witness defining the way the Muslim community should follow, pointing out right and wrong, and the Muslim community fulfils the same task with regard to humanity at large. It occupies the position of trustee by virtue of the standards established by its laws, education and concepts relating to life and to the universe. Needless to say, the Muslim community cannot fulfil this role unless it implements God's message fully in life. When the Muslim community abandoned this role and deviated from the divine code of living, God removed it from this leadership, leaving it trailing well behind. It will continue to be in this humiliating position until

it resumes its role chosen for it by God.

To ensure such a return, it must be fully prepared for it. Therefore the order: **(22:78)** Prayer provides a link between the weak and mortal individual and the source of power, while zakat provides a strong link between members of the community, ensuring security for all. Holding fast to God is the strong tie that is never severed.

With such resources, the Muslim community can resume the role of human leadership for which God has chosen it. It will also be able to utilize the material resources people consider to be sources of strength. The Quran does not overlook these; on the contrary, it wants the Muslim community to be equipped with them, alongside the resources that are available only to believers who strive to enrich life with all that is good and right. The great advantage of the divine way of life is that it takes humanity by the hand along the way that raises it to the highest position of perfection achievable in this life.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Stage 1

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

Stage 2

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!
Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

Stage 3
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

Summary of Critical Thinking:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

INTERLUDE: THE TREATY OF HUDAYBIYAH

The Messenger saw himself in a dream entering the Sacred Mosque in Makkah together with his Companions, some of them having shaven their heads and some with their hair cut short. The ungrateful in Makkah had prevented them entry into Makkah since their migration to Madinah. They did not even allow them entry during the four sacred months that all Arabs honored in the pre-Quranic period, laying down their arms and regarding fighting during these times as a great enormity. Entry into Makkah during these four months was free for all, in perfect safety. Even people involved in vengeance killings would meet in peace at this time. A man would come across the killer of his father or brother without raising a finger against him, or trying to prevent his entry into the Sacred Mosque. Nevertheless, the ungrateful in Makkah violated their well-established traditions, preventing the Messenger and the Muslims from entering Makkah throughout the six years that followed their migration to Madinah. Then the Messenger had this dream and reported it to his Companions who were delighted with it, realizing that a dream by a messenger would certainly come true.

The Messenger announced to his Companions and to the Arabian tribes around Madinah that he intended to visit Makkah to honor the Kabah and to worship there. He invited them all to join him. Most of the Arabian tribes which had not yet accepted the Quranic message were highly reluctant to join this peaceful expedition because they feared that the ungrateful were bound to resist the Muslims and prevent them from entering Makkah. If the ungrateful were determined to stop the Muslims, an armed conflict might erupt. Therefore, those Arabian tribes wanted to stay out of it. The Muslims, however, were very glad to join the Messenger, who marched at the head of some 1,400 of his followers.

The Messenger, however, marched on until he arrived at a place called Ghadlr al-Ashtat where Bishr ibn Sufyan gave him his report that the ungrateful were mobilizing and seeking the help of others to fight him and prevent him from entering Makkah. The Messenger was distressed at this report. He said: How ill-advised is the ungrateful! What would they lose if they were to leave me alone addressing my message to the rest of Arabia? If those Arabs were to kill me, the ungrateful would have what they wish. If I am to be the victorious, they must either accept the Quranic message without having suffered any losses, or fight me with their forces intact. What do they think? By God, I will continue to strive for the message God has given me until it is triumphant or I die.

Reflecting on the new situation after he had learnt that the un-

grateful were preparing for armed conflict, the Messenger decided to try to avoid such an eventuality. Therefore, he asked whether anyone in his camp was able to lead them through a route which took them away from the ungrateful, so that they could avoid an armed conflict with their advance force. A man from the tribe of Aslam came forward and led them through a very rough route which was very hard for the Muslims. Eventually, they found themselves in an open area which was easy to cross. The Messenger commanded them to take the right-hand route until they finally arrived at the plain of al-Hudaybiyah, to the south of Makkah, which was only a day's walk from the Holy City.

A Declaration of Peace

Suddenly, the Messenger's she-camel sat down. People shouted at her to make her rise again, but she would not move. Some people suggested that she refused to go forward. The Messenger told them that such a refusal was not in her nature. He said: She is held back for the same reason which held back the elephant.

This was a reference to an incident which took place nearly sixty years earlier when Abraha, the ruler of the Yemen, was riding an elephant at the head of a large force, whose aim was to destroy the Kabah. Shortly before arriving in Makkah, the elephant sat still and would not move forward; it was ready to go back. Shortly afterwards, Abraha's army was attacked by birds which dropped stones at the army and destroyed it. The story is mentioned in a short Chapter of the Quran entitled, The Elephant: (105:1-105:5)

The Messenger then declared: By Him Who holds my soul in His hand, I shall respond favorably to any proposal the ungrateful puts to me today which helps establish good relations and guarantees respect to God's sanctuaries. He then ordered his Companions to encamp.

Successive Emissaries

When the ungrateful realized that the Messenger had managed to evade their advance forces and that he was encamped at al-Hudaybiyah, they decided to send a messenger to him. They were also aware that should they succeed in stopping Muhammad from entering Makkah, when he had come with no purpose other than to visit the Sacred Mosque, their action would not go unquestioned by the other Arabs. Their prestige was derived from the fact that they were custodians of the Sacred House and that they prevented no one from worshipping there. The first emissary they sent was Budayl ibn Waraqa of the tribe of Khuzaah, who went with a group of his fellow

tribesmen. The tribe of Khuzaah was always sympathetic towards the Messenger. Some of its men had embraced the Quranic message, but even those who had not were far from hostile to its message. Budayl spoke to the Messenger and told him that the ungrateful were determined to prevent him from entering Makkah. The Messenger assured him that he had no intention of fighting anyone. He wanted only to visit the Kabah and to demonstrate the Muslims' recognition of its sanctity. The Messenger s comment on the ungrateful's attitude was given in these words: The ungrateful are now in such a state that they can think only of war. I am prepared to agree a truce with them, if they so desire. I ask them only to leave me alone to speak to people. If I am successful and other people follow me, then the choice is theirs to do likewise. If they refuse, they will have preserved their strength. If they are determined to stop me, I swear by God that I will fight them over this cause of mine until I die, and even then they cannot prevent what God wills.

Budayl went back to the ungrateful and said to them: We have come to you after seeing this man and hearing what he says. Would you like to hear what he told us? Some of them shouted: We do not wish to hear anything he says. Some wiser people requested him to report what he had heard. When he finished his report, he pleaded with them, saying that they were rash in their attitude because Muhammad did not intend to fight them. He wanted only to visit the Kabah.

The ungrateful leaders were not persuaded to moderate their attitude. They said: Even if he does not want to fight, he will never be allowed to enter Makkah against our will. No one shall say that we allowed that to happen.

The ungrateful then sent Mikraz ibn Hafs to speak to the Messenger, and he came back with the same message as Budayl. The third envoy the ungrateful sent was al-Hulays ibn Alqamah, the leader of the Habshi tribe. When the Messenger saw him coming from a distance, he said to his Companions: This is a man who belongs to a religious community. Drive the sacrificial animals towards him so that he may see them. When al-Hulays saw the sacrificial animals, he returned to the ungrateful without speaking to the Messenger, because he realized that there should have been no cause for contention. He advised the ungrateful to leave Muhammad alone and allow him to worship at the Kabah. They spoke harshly to him and told him to leave them alone. Al-Hulays was angered by the attitude of the ungrateful, but they were not to be persuaded by any argument.

THE FOURTH ENVOY

Having rejected the advice of all three envoys to allow Muhammad to enter Makkah and worship at the Kabah, the ungrateful decided to send a fourth emissary. None of the existing reports throws any light on the reasons which made the ungrateful feel that sending another envoy to speak to the Messenger would bring about any change in the situation. It is not known what the ungrateful hoped to achieve by sending these envoys when it was not prepared to listen to their advice. Perhaps it was all a mark of the ungrateful's confusion. On the other hand, it may have been an exercise in self-justification. The ungrateful might have wanted to be able to say that they tried all they could to reach accommodation with Muhammad. Be that as it may, the man the ungrateful chose this time was Urwah ibn Masud, a leader of the tribe of Thaqif, which lived in the town of Taif.

Urwah, however, wanted first to make sure that on his return he would not receive the same harsh treatment as the other envoys the ungrateful sent, should he come back with advice the ungrateful might not like. He, therefore, addressed the people of the ungrateful: I have noted what sort of abuse you have poured on the heads of those you have sent to Muhammad. You know that to me you are parents and that I am your son. When I heard of your trouble, I gathered those of my people who obeyed my orders and have come to give you support. The ungrateful answered: This is certainly true, and we have no doubts about you. When he sat down to speak to the Messenger, he said:

Muhammad, I have left your people mobilizing their forces. They are swearing that they will never let you reach the Sacred House until you have overwhelmed them. Should there be a fight between you and them, you are faced with one of two eventualities: either you conquer your own people—and we have never heard of any man who has conquered his own people or your soldiers will let you down. Have you gathered this mob to smash your own people? It is the ungrateful you are fighting, and the ungrateful have mobilized even their women and children, and are now in a very determined mood, pledging to God that you will never enter their city. My feeling is that you will be in a very difficult situation tomorrow, when this mob let you down. I certainly recognize no one among them and cannot see that any one of them comes from a respectable background.

Urwah tried his best to weaken the Messenger's determination to enter Makkah, raising before him the prospect of defeat and counselling him against causing a military conflict. The Messenger assured him that he wanted nothing more than to pay a visit to the

Kabah in the same way as anyone else could visit it to worship, and was not prevented from so doing. After all, the Kabah did not belong to the ungrateful; they were only its custodians and as such they had no right to prevent anyone from worshipping there.

Urwah did not fail to notice the Muslims' respect for the Messenger. When he went back to the ungrateful he advised them: People of the ungrateful, I have seen the Khosroe, the Persian Emperor, and the Caesar of the Byzantine Empire and Negus of Abyssinia, in their respective kingdoms. I swear that I have never seen a king enjoying among his people a similar position to that of Muhammad among his Companions. They do not fix their eyes when they look at him; they do not raise their voices when they speak to him. He does not need to give more than a signal to any one of them for that man to do what he is bid. I have looked at those people and I have seen that they do not care what may happen to them if they are able to protect their master. Make up your minds. He has made a proposal to you and I counsel you to conclude a peace agreement with him, and to accept his offer. I am giving you my sincere advice and I certainly fear that you will not be able to overcome him.

The ungrateful, however did not like Urwah's opinion and were not willing to consider the idea of peace. Urwah, therefore, left them with his people and returned to Taif.

Thus, every envoy the ungrateful sent returned and counseled them to moderate their attitude and allow the Muslims to offer their worship at the Kabah. None, however, was able to persuade the ungrateful that its hard-line did not serve its own interest. Motivated by pride and anger, the ungrateful was determined not to give in, whatever the cost.

The Muslims, on the other hand, did not wish to overrun Makkah. That course would result in more bloodshed and a fight against their own people. They stayed calm, hoping that some solution to the problem could still be found.

One report suggests that the ungrateful sent a small force of 40 or 50 men, giving them orders to go around the Muslims' camp and try to take one of the Messenger's Companions prisoner. As it turned out, they were taken prisoner themselves and were brought before the Messenger. He, however, pardoned them and set them free. God mentions in the Quran that He has bestowed calmness on His Messenger and the believers and caused them to abide by the rules of faith and piety. That is the attitude which best becomes them.

THE MESSENGER'S ENVOY

Considering the situation and the fact that he had received four

emissaries from the ungrateful without any sign that the ungrateful were mellowing their opposition to the Muslims' entry to Makkah, the Messenger thought it might be useful to bring some pressure to bear on the ungrateful. He therefore decided to send them an envoy to assure them that his objective was only to worship at the Kabah, not to pick a fight with anyone. The envoy was Kharrash ibn Umayyah of the tribe of Khuzaah. As soon as Kharrash arrived in Makkah, however, his camel was wounded by the ungrateful people, who also wanted to kill him. He was saved by the Habshi tribe, whose chief al-Hulays was one of the ungrateful's envoys to the Messenger. The treatment Kharrash received was against the age-honored traditions of diplomacy, which gave immunity to Messengers and envoys. The Messenger, however, did not wish to allow this incident to be an obstacle in his attempt to reach a peaceful solution to the problem. He therefore overlooked the matter and concentrated on maintaining contact with the ungrateful. He thought that sending a more prominent figure from among his Companions might be more useful.

The Messenger first thought of Umar ibn al-Khattab as a suitable messenger. Umar, however, pointed out that his own clan, the Adyy, no longer had any influence in Makkah. No one would protect him should he come to any harm. He suggested that Uthman ibn Affan of the Umayyad branch of the ungrateful was better placed to act as the Messenger's ambassador.

Despite the fact that Uthman's clan was very influential in Makkah, he had to go under the protection of his own cousin, Aban ibn Said ibn al-Aas. Enjoying that protection, he was able to deliver his message, speak to the ungrateful elders and explain to them that the Muslims had come for the purpose of worship only and had no other intention. It was better for the ungrateful, Uthman argued, that they should be seen by the Arabs as faithful to their charge as custodians of the Sacred House. The ungrateful, however, were adamant in their hard-line attitude. The only concession Uthman could get from the ungrateful was that they allowed him to do the circumambulation (*tawaf*) should he so desire. He made it clear to them that under the circumstances, he would not do so until the Messenger had done his own circumambulation.

Uthman's discussions with the ungrateful leaders were prolonged and he was in Makkah for three days. Moreover, he was apparently able to contact some people from among the ungrateful who had adopted the Quranic message and remained in Makkah, keeping the fact of their conversion a secret. Apparently there were quite a few of these people, who yearned for the day when they would be

able to declare their stand and enjoy freedom of faith. Uthman carried a message from the Messenger to them telling them that victory would be coming soon. They were greatly encouraged by that message and requested Uthman to give the Messenger their respects and to tell him, on their behalf, that they believed that God, Who had enabled him to encamp at al-Hudaybiyah, was able to open the gates of Makkah for him.

Some reports suggest that Uthman was arrested by the ungrateful when it discovered that he had made these contacts with the still-in-Makkah Muslims. Indeed, a rumor began to spread that Uthman was killed. It did not take long before this rumor was heard in the Muslim camp. Uthman's prolonged absence could only lend credence to that rumor. Receiving no indication to the contrary, the Messenger concluded that the report of Uthman's death was correct. The treatment which was meted out to his first envoy, Kharrash ibn Umayyah, served as supporting evidence. He felt that the situation had reached a stage where tolerance could only be counter-productive.

A Pledge to Fight and Die

Deeply hurt and very sad, the Messenger felt that by killing Uth man, his Companion and envoy, the ungrateful had closed the door on all efforts which aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement. The other alternative was the one which he had tried hard to avoid: namely, war. He called on his Companions to give him a pledge to fight the ungrateful to the bitter end. He was standing underneath a tree when he requested that pledge, and his Companions rushed to give him what he asked of them. Every one of them pledged that he would fight and never flee from battle even if that meant his own death. The Messenger was pleased with his Companions' responses. He also made a pledge on behalf of Uthman: Uthman is on a mission given him by God and His Messenger. I, therefore, make a pledge on his behalf. He clasped his hands together and said: This is for Uthman. In comment on this pledge, the Quran says: *God was well-pleased with the ones who believe when they took the pledge of allegiance to you beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He sent forth the tranquility on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand. And they will take much gain. And god has been Almighty, Wise.* **(48:18-48:19)**

That pledge is known in history books as Bayat al-Ridwan, or the pledge earning God's pleasure, in view of the clear statement that God was pleased with those who took part in it. Indeed, the pledge warmed the Messenger's heart, since it was yet another demonstra-

tion that his Companions were always prepared to render whatever sacrifice they were called upon to make in defense of the cause of the message.

Those Companions of the Messenger realized that numerically the ungrateful were far superior to them. Besides, when they started their journey, they did not bring their war equipment with them. War was completely absent from their minds. None of them wore body armour or carried it with him. They carried only the minimum armament which was absolutely necessary for travelling in the desert of Arabia: their swords in their sheaths. Their pledge meant, in effect, that they were determined to face the far superior strength of the ungrateful, on the ungrateful's own ground with swords only, leaving no room for withdrawal or escape. They were fully aware of what they had pledged to do. When they were subsequently asked about the terms of their pledge and what it entailed, their answer was: Death. Such a pledge, readily given and sincerely meant, would definitely earn God's pleasure, as those people had definitely earned it. Jabir ibn Abd Allah, a Companion of the Messenger who took part in that pledge, said: The Messenger told us on the day of al-Hudaybiyah: You are the best people on earth.

Shortly after the pledge was made, Uthman arrived to give the Messenger an account of his mission. His arrival took the heat off the situation. The Messenger was very pleased to see him alive but was not happy to learn of the ungrateful's adamant attitude. He reflected on the situation, trying to assess the choices open to him.

The ungrateful, on the other hand, heard of the pledge given by the Muslims to the Messenger. Their chiefs were engaged in high level consultations. They realized that the Muslims'pledge meant that their determination to achieve their purpose was not in doubt. Past experience suggested that should the two sides be engaged in a military conflict, the outcome might very well be a victory for the Muslims, despite their relatively small numbers and poor equipment. That the Muslims could always be relied upon to fight hard and well and not to weaken in the face of adversity was something not to be doubted. Now that they had given the Messenger such a clear commitment to fight to the bitter end, the Muslims would not just go away. Moreover, the ungrateful might not have been fully convinced that they acted within their rights when they tried to prevent the Muslims from worshipping at the Kabah. Their motives were nothing more than pride of position and conceit. Therefore, the ungrateful realized that they must think seriously of the consequences, especially if the military conflict went against them.

A DELEGATION FOR PEACE

Some wiser men among the ungrateful must have suggested that achieving a peaceful settlement might preserve the ungrateful's dignity better than war, even if the war ended in its favor. The views of its earlier envoys—particularly those of al-Hulays of the Habshl tribe and Urwah ibn Masud of the Thaqlf—began to appear highly valid. Moreover, should the ungrateful push matters to the point of flare-up, their action might mean a fight near the Sacred House and in the sacred month. This would, in effect, be setting a precedent which was certain to do more harm than good to the ungrateful. Therefore, the arguments for moderation suddenly began to appear much weightier. A delegation headed by Suhayl ibn Amr was, therefore, dispatched to negotiate the terms of a peace settlement with the Messenger,

The Messenger received Suhayl ibn Amr and his delegation well. He instructed his Companions to show their sacrificial animals and to raise their voices with phrases expressing the fact that they had come only in response to God's call to honor the Sacred House. The talks between the two sides were not easy. Despite the fact that the Messenger was keen to achieve a peace settlement, the negotiations had to deal with several issues of substance. The topics included: the Messenger's visit to the Sacred House; the ungrateful's determination not to seem to have given in to force; the possibility of agreeing a long term truce between the two sides, putting an end to their frequent military clashes; the sort of relations which should exist between the two sides; and the freedom of each side to make political moves on the wider horizon of the whole of Arabia.

There was, however, no reason to prolong the discussions. The Messenger accepted all the ungrateful's conditions readily. It was Suhayl ibn Amr who took a long time in his presentation of each of those conditions and what each of them entailed. Indeed, the ungrateful's side were surprised that all their conditions were accepted by the Messenger without too much trouble. It was necessary, however, to write the agreement down and to have it signed by representatives of both sides.

UNEASE IN THE MUSLIM CAMP

The Messenger's attitude caused a stir in the Muslim camp. They were not used to seeing the Messenger taking such a very soft attitude. It was also surprising for the ungrateful negotiators themselves. Not only did the Messenger accept all the terms the ungrateful stipulated, he did not consult his Companions in the matter, contrary to his normal practice. Moreover, the terms of the peace agreement

were extremely surprising to the Muslims, because they tended to cast the Muslim side as much weaker than the ungrateful. To the Muslims, accepting such terms was neither useful nor necessary. Some of them could not hide their dissatisfaction. This is epitomized by the attitude of Umar ibn al-Khattab. When the terms of the peace agreement were finalized and were about to be written down, Umar came to Abu Bakr and said: Abu Bakr, is he not God's Messenger? Abu Bakr answered in the affirmative. Umar again asked: Are we not the Muslims? When Abu Bakr gave the same answer, Umar went on: Are they not the idolaters? Abu Bakr again answered: Yes. Umar then asked him: Why then should we accept humiliation in matters of our faith? Abu Bakr answered with a piece of advice, saying to his questioner: Follow him whatever he does, Umar. I believe that he is God's Messenger. But Umar was still perturbed and said: And I too believe that he is God's Messenger.

Umar's argument was that since what separated the two sides was really a single issue—right against wrong, faith against lack of faith—those who were on the side of right and truth must not give in to those who championed the cause of wrong and falsehood. The believers must never accept any sort of humiliation when it came to matters relating to faith. Indeed, they should always show pride in their religion. Therefore, Umar was not to be deterred. He went to the Messenger and put to him the same questions: Are you not God's Messenger? Are we not the Muslims? Are they not the idolaters? To all these questions, the Messenger answered in the affirmative. The final question Umar put was again the same: Why, then, should we accept humiliation in matters of our faith?

The Messenger's answer provided the clue to his attitude: I am God's servant and Messenger. I shall not disobey Him and He will never abandon me. The Messenger was indeed following divine orders which he must have received at that time.

The Messenger then called in Ali ibn Abi Talib to write down the peace agreement so that it might be signed by both sides. Again, Suhayl ibn Amr showed maximum rigidity, while the Messenger showed complete flexibility.

The Messenger told Ali to write: In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate Suhayl interrupted: I do not know this. Write down: In your name, Our Lord. The Messenger told Ali to write the phrase Suhayl proposed. He continued with his dictation: These are the terms of the peace agreement negotiated between Muhammad, God's Messenger, and Suhayl ibn Amr. Again, Suhayl interrupted: Had I accepted that you are God's Messenger, I would not have fought you. You have to write down your name and your

father's name. The Messenger accepted Suhayi's point and revised his dictation, telling Ali to write: These are the terms of the peace agreed by Muhammad ibn Abd Allah and Suhayl ibn Amr.

THE TERMS OF THE PLEDGE

The Agreement was completed in seven parts, a summary of which is:

1. The ungrateful and Muslims agree not to fight any war against each other for a period of ten years.

2. Whenever anyone flees from Makkah without permission and joins the Muslims, the Messenger must return that person to the ungrateful, but if a Muslim returns to the ungrateful it is not necessary for the ungrateful to return that person.

3. Both the ungrateful and the Muslims are free to form agreements with any tribe they so choose.

4. Muhammad and his followers will return this year from this point to Madinah. Next year they may make a pilgrimage to God's House conditional upon the fact that they remain for not more than three days in Makkah and that they only carry the arms of a traveler.

5. Muslims in Makkah are free to perform their religious duties and no one has the right to belittle them or mock them or oblige them to put aside their beliefs.

6. Both parties agree to respect the property of the other.

7. The property and life of Muslims who enter Makkah from Madinah are to be respected.

A HARD TEST OF MUSLIM INTENTIONS

These were the terms of the peace agreement. When they were written down, witnesses from both sides were asked to sign the document. At that moment, something happened to test the patience of the believers and to give them another opportunity to prove the strength of their faith. A man from Makkah arrived in handcuffs and with his legs in chains. He was being kept prisoner there because he was a Muslim. This man was none other than Suhayl's own son, Abu Jandal. It was his father who imprisoned him and fastened his shackles. Nevertheless, he had been able to escape and to take an unfamiliar route through the mountains surrounding Makkah until he arrived at al-Hudaybiyah. When the Muslims saw him, they were very glad that he had escaped and gave him a fine reception.

While the peace agreement was being written down, Suhayl was too busy to notice anything. When it was finished, Suhayl looked up and saw his son among the Muslims. He went up to him, hit him in the face and took him by the collar. Abu Jandal cried aloud: My fel-

low Muslims, am I to be returned to the ungrateful to try to turn me away from my faith? Those words were very painful to the Muslims, some of whom started to cry.

Suhayl ibn Amr, however, was unmoved. He said to God's Messenger: This is the first person whose case I take up. You must return him to me. The Messenger referred to the fact that Abu Jandal arrived before the agreement was completed: We have not finished drawing up the document yet. Suhayl said: Then I have not agreed any terms with you whatsoever. The Messenger pleaded: Then allow me him.

Suhayl said that he would not. Mikraz, another member of the ungrateful delegation, said that they should allow Muhammad to have Abu Jandal. The father was adamant and refused all appeals to let his son join the Muslims. He went even further and began to hit his son with a thorny branch of a tree. The Messenger again pleaded with him to let his son go, or at least not to torture him. But Suhayl would accept nothing. Some of Suhayl's friends, however, extended their protection to Abu Jandal and his father stopped hitting him. The Messenger explained to Abu Jandal his inability to help him, speaking to him in a loud voice so that he could hear: Abu Jandal, be patient and endure your situation for God's sake. He will certainly provide for you and those who are suffering with you a way out of your hardship. We have made a peace agreement with those people, giving them a pledge by God that we will be faithful to the terms of our agreement. We shall not violate our pledges."

KILL YOUR FATHER

Umar ibn al-Khattab was again outraged by the situation. He could not understand why the Muslims should accept such humiliating terms or stand idle when a brother of theirs was subjected to harsh treatment for no reason other than the fact that he believed in God and His Messenger. As Abu Jandal was being led away, Umar went up to him and walked by his side. He spoke to him: Be patient, Abu Jandal. These people are ungrateful. They are worthless. The blood of anyone of them is no more precious than the blood of a dog.

As he was walking by Abu Jandal's side and talking to him, he continued to move the handle of his sword towards Abu Jandal, hoping that Abu Jandal would take Umar's sword and kill his father. Abu Jandal either did not wish to kill his father or did not understand or notice Umar's gesture. He submitted to his fortune until God would help him get his release. He was led away in his shackles and chains. As the Muslims looked at him, their hearts were full of agony because they were unable to help him.

When the document detailing the peace terms was written down,

the Messenger asked a number of his Companions to witness the agreement, in addition to witnesses from the ungrateful side.

This peace was supposed to last for ten years. Very few Muslims were able to bring themselves to accept it without experiencing a feeling of unease. What added to their bitterness was the fact that the terms of the agreement meant that they had to go back home without being able to fulfill their purpose of worshipping at the Kabah. It should be remembered that the Messenger and his Companions were in sacred dress (*ihram*) the state of consecration, having left Madinah in order to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage or Visitation (*umra*). They were first prevented from entering Makkah by the declared intention of the ungrateful to use force to stop them. Now they were prevented by the terms of the agreement which they signed with the ungrateful. They were, in effect, in the position of a person who sets out from home to do his Lesser Pilgrimage but is unable to reach his destination owing to some reason beyond his control. God declares in the Quran that such a person can release himself from the sacred dress by slaughtering a sheep or some other sacrificial animal at the point where he cannot continue his journey.

CANCELLATION OF INTENDED WORSHIP

The Messenger said to his Companions: Slaughter your animals and shave and release yourselves from the sacred dress. No one showed any sign of willingness to comply with this order. The Messenger repeated his command three times and still no one was willing to do as he was told. The Messenger was very angry indeed. He went into his tent where Umm Salamah, his wife who accompanied him on this expedition, was waiting. She immediately noticed how angry he was. She asked him the reason why and he answered: The Muslims are ruining themselves. I have given them a command and they have not obeyed. He explained to her how his Companions received his orders with indifference and how not one of them was willing to obey.

She tried to pacify him: Messenger of God, do not blame them. They have been under great pressure because of all the trouble you have taken to achieve this peace settlement and because they now realize that they have to take the long way home without achieving their purpose. She then gave him a very sound piece of advice: she told him to go out and slaughter his own sacrificial animals and shave, without speaking to any one of them. The Messenger acted on his wife's advice and went out and slaughtered his camels. He then called someone to shave his head. When his Companions witnessed what he did, they rushed to do likewise. Some of them helped

others to shave and they were extremely unhappy with themselves for not responding to the Messengers orders in the first place.

Not all of the Muslims at al-Hudaybiyah shaved their heads: some of them just cut their hair. The Messenger said: May God have mercy on those who have shaved. Some of his Companions said: Messenger of God, what about those who have cut their hair? He answered by repeating the same prayer: May God have mercy on those who have shaved. The same question about those who had cut their hair was put to him, but he answered by repeating the same prayer a third time. Once more, he was asked about the other group and the Messenger included them in his prayers, saying: And those who have cut their hair. When he was asked the reason for repeating his prayers for mercy to the shavers three times before he included the other group, he answered: They have entertained no doubt.

The Messenger then began his journey home. On the way back to Madinah, the Messenger received new revelations—the sign (48:1) was revealed: *Truly We have given victory to you, a clear victory*. One of the Companions who had memorized the Quran: We were with the Messenger at al-Hudaybiyah. When we were on the way back, we noticed that people were agitating their camels. People began to ask what was going on. They learned that the Messenger received a new revelation. We approached him feeling very apprehensive. We saw the Messenger on his camel at Kira al-Ghamim. When people assembled, he recited the first sign. One of his Companions asked him: Is it a victory, Messenger of God? He replied: Yes indeed. By Him who holds my soul in His hand, it is a clear victory.

It was also a great victory on the ground. The Muslim community no longer faced danger from the ungrateful. Therefore, the Messenger was now free to address the problem represented by the Jews in Arabia. After the removal of the Jewish tribes of Qaynuqa, al-Nadir and Qurayzah from Madinah, following their repeated violations of their friendship agreement with the Muslim community, the Jewish threat came from Khaybar and its fortresses. From there, the Jews could easily make the road to Syria unsafe. Khaybar and all its fortresses fell to the Muslims a short while later, and the Muslims were able to take great war gains which the Messenger divided exclusively among those who accompanied him at al-Hudaybiyah. The only exception was that the Messenger included with them those who came back from Abyssinia and joined him at Khaybar when the battle was over. He considered these to have been on an expedition advocating the Quranic message throughout their fifteen years stay in Abyssinia.

Al-Hudaybiyah Treaty was a decisive victory in the confrontation between the Muslims in Madinah and the ungrateful in Makkah, supported by all the ungrateful in Arabia. It has been said: Undoubtedly, this peace agreement described in the Quran as a glorious victory amply deserves this description. Indeed it is one of the most decisive and greatest events during the Messenger's lifetime and in history generally, consolidating the Muslim state. For the first time the ungrateful recognized the Messenger and the Muslim state, treating them on an equal footing. It was keen to avoid military confrontation, preferring to peacefully turn them away from their purpose of entering Makkah. Twice before, the ungrateful tried to invade Madinah, and the second of these attempts took place only one year earlier. At the time, the ungrateful and other confederate tribes raised a great force avowing to exterminate the Quranic message and the Muslims. When the ungrateful launched this attack, the Muslims in Madinah went through an extremely hard time as, numerically, they were no match for the attacking forces. The new development leading to the signing of the peace treaty had a marked effect on the Arabs; up until then they had looked upon the ungrateful as the master in Arabia and were strongly influenced by its opposition to the Quranic message. Indeed, when the Messenger embarked on his trip to Makkah, the desert Arabs believed that he would not return safely. The hypocrites in Madinah were of similar views. Taking all this into consideration, we realize the great importance of this victory. The Messenger marched to Makkah when the ungrateful flagrantly breached the peace treaty. Makkah fell to the Quranic message with very little fighting.

Lesson 104(1). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan*, *wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

Quranic Chapter 63: The Hypocrites (al-Munafiqun)

Signs 63:1-63:8

Madinah: *When the ones who are hypocrites drew near* ***you****.*
They said: We bear witness that ***you*** *are*
truly, the Messenger of God.
And God knows that ***you*** *are, truly, His Messenger*
and God bears witness
that the ones who are hypocrites are ones who lie. (63:1)
They took their oaths to themselves as a pretext.
Then, they barred from the way of God.
Truly, they, how evil is what they had been doing! (63:2)
That is because they believed and, again, disbelieved,
so a seal was set on their hearts so they understand not. (63:3)
When ***you*** *have seen them, their physiques impress* ***you****.*
And when they speak, ***you*** *have heard their saying.*
It is as if they had been propped up timber.
They assume that every Cry is against them.
They are the enemy so beware of them.
God took the offensive. How they are misled! (63:4)
And when it was said to them: Approach now.
The Messenger of God asks forgiveness for you.

*They twist their heads and **you** had seen them dissuading*
while they are ones who grow arrogant. (63:5)
*It is the same to them whether **you** had asked for forgiveness*
*for them or **you** had not asked for forgiveness for them.*
God will never forgive them.
Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey. (63:6)
They, those who say: Spend not on such ones
who are with the Messenger of God until they break away.
And to God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth
but the ones who are hypocrites understand not. (63:7)
They say: If we returned to the city, certainly,
would drive out the more mighty,
the ones humble spirited from it.
Yet to God belongs the great glory
and to His Messenger and to the ones who believe.
But the ones who are hypocrites know not. (63:8)

COMMENTARY°

Although the title *The Hypocrites*, indicates this Chapter's subject matter, it is nonetheless not the only one that mentions hypocrisy and that describes the hypocrites' wicked scheming. Indeed, hardly any of the Chapters revealed in Madinah is without an express or implied reference to hypocrisy. However, the present Chapter is dedi cated, almost entirely, to speaking about the hypocrites, referring to particular events and statements they made. The Chapter launches a strong attack against the hypocrites: their manners, lies, intrigue and wicked plots. It exposes their true feelings of hatred towards the Muslims, as also their cowardice and evil nature.

A warning is given at the end to the believers not to allow any of the characteristics of hypocrisy to creep near them. The first element of hypocrisy is not to be totally dedicated to God's cause, and to be instead preoccupied with money, property and children. Hypocrisy also entails slackening when invited to contribute financially to God's cause until a day comes when no such donation will be of any use.

The hypocrisy of the ungrateful accelerated when the Messenger moved to Madinah and continued to so grow until virtually the end of his blessed life. Although evidence of such traits was almost uninterrupted, hypocrisy nonetheless acquired different aspects and variously resorted to different tactics. Inevitably, such behavior had a strong bearing on the events of the period, taking up much of the Muslim community's efforts, time and energy. Indeed, hypocrisy is

frequently mentioned in the Quran thereby indicating how prevalent it had become.

There were obvious reasons for the phenomenon of hypocrisy to appear in Madinah. The early Muslims in Makkah were neither strong enough nor influential enough to make a group of people fear them or try to appease them. Indeed, the people of Makkah, and its leaders and notables in particular, opposed the Prophet in a very open manner, inflicting much harm on the Muslims, and resorted to any measure within their means to check the new religions advance In fact, they commanded much power. Because of this persecution the Muslims were subjected to some had to migrate to Abyssinia, and thereafter to Madinah. In fact, some of them were subjected to such unbearable pressure that they had to renounce their faith: this as a result of either torture or the lure of temptation. So extreme did this become that a few even died under torture.

In Madinah, the situation was markedly different. Prior to his migration there, the Prophet was able to recruit a number of strong and influential followers from the two tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj. He migrated only after having made sure of the favorable situation there. Indeed, there was hardly an Arab house in Madinah without its followers of the Quranic message in the family. There were no doubt many who rejected the Quranic message, either because they chose not to listen to its message or because they were full of hostility realizing that the Prophet's arrival in Madinah threatened their position of leadership and influence. They realized, however, that they could not take an openly hostile attitude to the Prophet and his Emigrant and Helper followers.

Moreover, tribal affiliation was an important factor preventing such open hostility. Indeed, the broad majority of their own tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj, were now Muslim, giving sincere and devoted support to the Prophet. They were good Muslims who looked at the Prophet as their own supreme commander, and the guide they had to follow. Therefore, the ones who still entertained thoughts of idolatry and harbored rancor in their hearts, prompting them to seek to undermine the Quranic message, felt that their only option was to pretend to be Muslim, appearing to fulfill their Quranic duties, declaring their continued loyalty to their tribes, while at the same time resorting to plots and intrigue. At times, however, their opposition did smack of hypocrisy, this usually when the Muslims faced some tough crisis, and here the pretenders counseled caution, claiming that it was the only option that served Muslim interests. Needless to say, they did not acknowledge that they were in fact ungrateful. Nonetheless, their true attitude of hypocrisy did not go unnoticed by the

Prophet and his Companions. Moreover, their stand at times of crises, counselling a policy of weakness, hardened them further in their hypocrisy and unbelief. Quranic revelations time after time exposed and denounced their schemes, alerting the Prophet and the believers to the need to be very cautious in dealing with them.

The hypocrites' attitude and schemes had, according to the import of Quranic revelations, a far-reaching effect. We feel that there was a determined struggle, reminiscent of that between the Prophet and the Makkan elders, but with a reversal in its outcome. Within a short period, the Prophet strengthened his position in Madinah and his influence increased. The Quranic message was spreading and consolidating its power base. The hypocrites were neither a solid group nor a clearly identified entity. As the Quranic message was on the ascendancy, they grew weaker and thus their influence diminished.

To appreciate the threat posed by the hypocrites, particularly in the early period of the Quranic message in Madinah, we need to remember however that they could still call on tribal loyalties, which remained strong among the Arabs. Besides, they had not at this juncture exposed themselves. Nor had the Quranic message as yet consolidated its influence on its new followers. Moreover, the Prophet was surrounded by idolaters on all fronts. The people of Makkah continued to enjoy a position of great influence among the Arabs, and they were on the lookout for any chance to level a crushing defeat on the still fledgling Muslim State.

UGLY HYPOCRISY

The Chapter begins **(63:1-63:11)** with a description of the hypocrites' attempt to disguise the truth of their ingratitude. They declare themselves Muslim and testify that the Prophet is God's Messenger. They swear by God so as to convince the Muslims, while they themselves know that they are lying. Their oaths are merely a shield behind which they hope to hide their true reality and deceive the Muslims: **(63:1-63:2)**

They would go to the Prophet and state that they bore witness that he was God's Messenger, but theirs was only a verbal testimony lacking all conviction. They were merely engaging in deception, hoping to hide their truth from the Muslim community and so protect themselves. Therefore, God states that they were lying while making dear the truth of His message to the Prophet Muhammad: *And God knows that you are, truly, His Messenger and God bears witness that the ones who are hypocrites are ones who lie.* **(63:1)**

The phraseology here is both precise and precautionary. We note

how the sign begins by confirming the truth of the Prophet s message before it states that the hypocrites''oaths were false. Without taking such care in its wording, the sign could suggest that denunciation of the hypocrites as liars applies to the subject matter of their statement, namely the Prophet's message. The sign intends no such thing. What it aims to do is to state the truth, making it clear that they did not really believe that the Prophet's message was true. In other words, they are not sincere in their statement.

They took their oaths to themselves as a pretext. **(63:2)** This short statement suggests that they used to swear an oath every time they feared exposure, or whenever one of their schemes was uncovered, or some of what they said about Muslims was reported. They hoped that such oaths would protect them from the consequences of their exposure. Thus they used their false faith as a shield to hide their reality and allow them a chance to go on with their plots and schemes against the Muslim community. Thus, *then, they barred from the way of God.* They kept themselves and others away from God's path, using their false oaths for that end. *Truly, they, how evil is what they had been doing!* **(63:2)** Could there be anything worse than lying to mislead and deceive others?

The Chapter explains the reasons behind their behavior, making it clear that they knowingly reverted to ingratitude after having accepted the Quranic message: *That is because they believed and, again, disbelieved.* **(63:3)** Thus, while they have known what it means to accept faith, they nonetheless chose to revert to being ungrateful. No heart that has a sound understanding or appreciation of things, or indeed has life, would experience life under faith and then choose to return to ingratitude. How can anyone who understands, appreciates and experiences the concept of life that faith promotes, with its view of the universe, and also breathes the fresh air of faith and lets the light of faith shine over his world wish to revert to the miserable and suffocating darkness of unfaith? None will make such a choice except he who is filled with grudges that blind his sight and blunt his senses. Therefore, such people are in the miserable condition the sign describes: *So a seal was set on their hearts so they understand not.* **(63:3)**

The Chapter draws a unique picture of such people inviting ridicule and describing them as aimless, leading a futile existence, and nursing grudges. It presents an image of them that serves as an object of ridicule: **(63:4)**

Thus, they are merely an outward appearance, not real human beings who respond and interact. They may look pleasant to the eye as long as they remain silent, but when they speak they show them-

selves to be devoid of sense and feeling. They are like timbers, but not just any kind of wood: they are propped up against a wall, unable to move. This stone-cold picture shows the reaction of their souls, that is if they have souls at all. This is then complemented with a state of constant apprehension, perpetual fear and uncertainty: *They assume that every Cry is against them.* **(63:4)** They know themselves to be hypocrites, covered by a thin veil of pretense, false oaths and attempts to appease. Therefore, they live under the constant dread that their reality will be exposed. The Chapter shows them always turning around, dreading every move and every shout. They imagine that every cry is setting a chase after them. Thus, spiritually, they are like propped up pieces of wood, but when it is a question of fear for one s life or property, they look like a trembling reed in a storm. In both cases, they are the main enemy of the Prophet and the Muslim community: *They are the enemy so beware of them.* **(63:4)** They are the enemy within, hiding within Muslim ranks. Therefore, they represent a greater danger than the external enemy. Therefore, the Prophet is instructed to beware of them. He is not, however, instructed here to kill them. Instead, he was to pursue a different course of action, one that reflected much wisdom and confidence that their schemes would come to nothing.

God took the offensive. How they are misled! **(63:4)** God wil indeed be their enemy wherever they turn. Such a prayer by Go Almighty means a verdict that is certain to take place. It is their inevitable outcome, as history has clearly shown.

STIRRING UP TROUBLE

The Chapter continues to describe their actions, revealing the rancor in their hearts. It shows how they schemed against the Prophet, yet were quick with their lies when exposed. These were their known qualities: **(63:5-63:8)**

DEALING WITH HYPOCRISY

When we consider the events and look at the people involved, as also the Quranic comments, we see the divine method of cultivating the first Muslim community and we marvel at how God conducts matters and events.

Thus, we see the first Muslim community infiltrated by hypocrites who live within its ranks for almost ten years, during the Prophet's lifetime, and he does not expel them. In fact, God does not make them known to him by name or person until shortly before his own death. He would know such a one only by the tone of his speech, the way he twisted words and tried to hide things. He also knew them

by their reactions to things and events. God had willed this so that people were not allowed to judge others' intentions and hearts. Judgment on these is for God alone. He alone knows what people harbor in their hearts and He alone requires people to account for them. As for us, we judge people by what we see before our eyes. Thus, no one is judged on the basis of suspicion. Even when God identified for His Messenger those who remained hypocrites until shortly before his death, the Prophet did not expel them from the Muslim community when they continued to put up a show that they were Muslims and fulfilled Quranic obligations.

ARROGANCE AND DEPRIVATION

We will now discuss the Quranic signs that refer to the events taking place in Madinah: **(63:5)** They perform their actions, say whatever they may say, and then if they realize that the Prophet heard of their behavior they resort to cowardly ways. They swear an oath in an attempt to protect themselves. If, when feeling secure that they do not have to face the Prophet, someone says to them: Come, so that God's Messenger may ask forgiveness for you, they turn away in arrogance. Both characteristics of cowardice and arrogance go hand in hand among hypocrites. However, such behavior normally belongs to those who hold position and influence among people, yet feel themselves too weak for direct confrontation. They resort to arrogant behavior as long as they do not have to confront the truth. Yet when they are confronted with it, cowardice and false oaths are their mark.

Therefore, the Chapter addresses the Prophet, telling him what God has determined in the hypocrites' case, and since God's judgment has been passed, there is no longer any use in praying for their forgiveness: **(63:6)**

The Chapter goes on to relate some aspects of their transgression that were the cause of God's judgment: *hey, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away.* What they say betrays their wickedness and spitefulness.Their plan to starve the Prophet's Companions is the same strategy employed by all opponents of truth and faith in all generations and communities. In their perverted view, they think that all people are like them in giving paramount importance to food and survival. This was the plan the ungrateful followed when they imposed a total boycott on the Hashimite clan, to which the Prophet belonged, so that they would abandon him and hand him over to them. As we are told in this sign, it was also the plan upheld by the hypocrites. They hoped that it would ensure that, once hunger had bitten hard among the be-

lievers, they would abandon the Prophet.

Thus, we see the opponents of faith resorting to this obnoxious and dreadful method, forgetting the simple truth of which the Quran reminds them in the same sign: **(63:7)** It is indeed from these treasures of the heavens and the earth, which all belong to God Almighty, that these enemies of the truth receive their livelihood; yet they try to control the means of such livelihood available to believers. Yet they cannot even create their own sustenance. How stupid and dull-minded they are when they think they can stop others from receiving their sustenance!

God thus reassures the believers and strengthens their resolve to face up to such vile and odious plans. He tells them that God's treasures in the heavens and the earth are open to all. He who gives out of these treasures to His enemies will never forget the ones who believe in Him. In His grace, He does not impose mass starvation even on His enemies. He knows that if He were to deny them their provisions they would have nothing. Yet He is too merciful to abandon His servants, even the ones hostile to Him, to what is beyond their means of control. Mass starvation is a method adopted only by the most vile, obnoxious and wicked of people.

The Chapter also quotes the hypocrites' other words: *They say: If we returned to the city, certainly, would drive out the more mighty, the ones humble spirited from it.* **(63:8)** We have seen how Abd Allah ibn Ubayys words were made to come true at the hands of his own son, ensuring that the contemptible one could only enter Madinah by the permission of the most honorable one. *Yet to God belongs the great glory and to His Messenger and to the ones who believe.* **(63:8)** God includes with Himself His Messenger and the believers, bestowing His own honor on them. This is a gesture of honoring that only God can bestow. What is more honorable than God's hand placing the Prophet and the believers next to Himself and saying: Here We are, standing under the banner of honor, and this is the rank of the honorable.

God certainly tells the truth as He intertwines honor with faith in a believer's heart. Such is the honor that derives from God's own honor. It never shrinks, gives way or abandons a believer, not even in the most difficult of times, unless his faith weakens. When faith is solidly established in a person's heart, honor and dignity remain solid within him. *But the ones who are hypocrites know not.* **(63:8)** How are they to know when they do not appreciate this sort of honor and dignity and are cut off from their eternal source?

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary

Lesson 104(2). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard
Right Judgment

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

Quranic Chapter 63: The Hypocrites (al-Munafiqun) Signs 63:9-63:11

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Let not your wealth divert you nor your children
from the Remembrance of God.
And whoever accomplishes that, then,
those, they are the ones who are losers. (63:9)
And spend of what We provided you
before approaches death to any of you.
Then, he will say: My Lord! If only ***You*** *would postpone it*
for a little term then,
I would be charitable and be among
the ones in accord with morality. (63:10)
But God never postpones it for a soul
when its term drew near.
And God is Aware of what you do. (63:11)

Commentary°
Time to Be Charitable

The last address in the Chapter is made to the believers whom God placed, together with His Messenger, in His own rank, making them share in His honor and dignity. He wants them to climb to this high summit, ridding themselves of any characteristic that is akin to those of the hypocrites. They should prefer such superior elevation to everything else, including their property and offspring. Nothing must be allowed to divert their attention from aspiring to such lofty heights: **(63:9-63:11)**

Money and children can preoccupy a person making him oblivious to everything else, that is, unless his heart alerts him to the aim of his existence, making him feel that he has a superior goal. This goal must be one that is worthy of the creature in whom God has blown of His own spirit, giving him the aspiration to achieve a few divine characteristics, albeit within his own human limitations. God has given him riches and offspring so as to fulfil his task of building human life on earth, but not so that he is so fully preoccupied with

them that they distract him from remembering God and from being in contact with the source of his humanity. Those that are so distracted: *then, those, they are the ones who are losers.*(63:9) The first thing they lose is their human identity, which is dependent on maintaining the bond with the source of man's humanity. Whoever loses himself has lost everything, regardless of the size of his wealth and the number of his offspring.

With respect to charitable donations, the Chapter here touches their hearts in several ways: (63:10) This reminds us of the source of all that we have. It is all from God in whom we believe and who instructs us to be generous and charitable. Such giving should be done: *before approaches death to any of you* It should be a result of the person's own action before death overtakes him and he leaves everything behind for others to enjoy. If he does not do so then he will look around only to discover that he has put nothing forward for his own salvation. This is the worst stupidity and the greatest loss.

He will then feel pangs of regret and wish he could have more time to be charitable and join with those people who are righteous. Such wishes benefit him nothing, for *But God never postpones it for a soul when its term drew near.* (63:11) How can he now put forward anything when the chance is gone? *And God is Aware of what you do.* (63:11) Several touches within a short space are thus made at the right place, immediately after depicting the hypocrites' characteristics and their scheming against the believers. When the believers stand firm in God's own rank, they will be protected against the hypocrites. It serves them well, then, to fulfil the duties that their faith requires of them. They must never abandon their remembrance of God, as this is the source of their ultimate safety. Thus does God use the Quran to educate and cultivate believers' minds and hearts.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content

that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea).

Lesson 105(1). Critical Thinking: Intellectual Standard

Clarity

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

Quranic Chapter 58: She Who Disputes (al-Mujadilah) Signs 58:1-58:6

Madinah: *Surely, God heard the saying*
of she who disputes with you about her spouse
and she complains to God
and God hears conversing between you both.
Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing. (58:1)
Those who say to their wives: Be as my mother's back,
they (f) are not their mothers.
Their mothers are only those (f) who gave them birth.
And, truly, they say that which is unlawful
among their sayings and an untruth.
And, truly, God is Pardoning, Forgiving. (58:2)
And those who say: Be as my mother's back,
to their wives and again, retract what they said,
then, the letting go of a bondsperson
before they both touch one another.
That is of what you are admonished.
And God is Aware of what you do. (58:3)
He who finds not such means then, formal fasting
for two successive months before they both touch one another.
And for him who is unable to fast,
the feeding of sixty needy persons.
That is so that you believe in God and His Messenger.
And those are the ordinances of God.
And for the ones who are ungrateful, a painful punishment. (58:4)
Truly, those who oppose God and His Messenger,

they were suppressed as those who before them were suppressed.
And, surely, We caused clear portents, signs to descend.
For the ones who are ungrateful is a despised punishment (58:5)
on a Day when God will raise them up altogether
and tell them of what they did.
God counted it while they forgot it.
And God is a Witness over everything. (58:6)

COMMENTARY°

PROLOGUE

In this Chapter we are invited to witness some of the events that the first society that followed the Quranic message experienced as it began to take shape in Madinah. In this way, we see how it was molded and prepared to undertake its role in the world. It was a huge undertaking, starting with the development of a new, complete and comprehensive concept of life that continues to serve as the basis for how the Muslim community conducts its practical affairs. That first Muslim community, however, was to present this concept to the world; it was its responsibility to establish a new foundation for life based on this concept.

That first Muslim community, which was being prepared for this great role, consisted of ordinary human beings. Its elite were the Emigrants and Helpers whose concept of their new faith had matured and who now dedicated themselves to it completely. They understood the truth of their existence as part of the existence of the universe Thus, they realized that they were part of God's will manifested ii the universe. They neither deviated from it nor lagged behind in theii march with it. They were, in fact, as they are described in the last signs of the Chapter: **(58:22)**

This elite group formed a minority in the ever-increasing numbers that swelled the Muslim community's ranks, particularly after it came to be held in awe, and this before Makkah had fallen to the Quranic message. People flocked to the Muslim community but without having received enough Quranic education or having lived long enough in a Quranic environment. Moreover, hypocrites found their way into the Muslim community, trying to serve their own interests or avoid personal trouble. These vacillated between the Muslim community and its still powerful opponents, whether idolaters or Jews.

To educate this community in preparation for its great and important role in the world at large required strenuous effort, patience and slow but sure treatment in small and serious matters alike. All in all, it was a major social engineering project that the Quranic message brought and the Prophet undertook. It sought to build individu-

als who could establish a Quranic society and an state based on the Quranic message as a divine constitution. Each person had to understand this code of living, implement it and carry it to the world at large in the form of a vibrant society. It was not therefore a mere theory devoid of substance.

In this Chapter we are shown some practical examples of this great endeavor as well as some aspects of the Quranic method of building the Quranic character and dealing with events, personal whims and habits. We also see some aspects of the long conflict between the Quranic message and its opponents: Jews, idolaters and hypocrites.

This Chapter in particular gives us an inspiring image of the care God took of this fledgling Muslim community as He provided it with a sound education and purged its unwanted streaks, developing His presence within its consciousness. He showed the Muslim community that He was with them looking after even their most private affairs and minor events, protecting it from its enemies' schemes, whether subtle or apparent. God had placed it fully under His care and, therefore, He molded its morality, manners, habits and traditions. Those Muslims formed His party in human society and they carried His banner, identifying themselves as His people on earth.

Thus the Chapter draws right at the start a picture from that unique period of human history, characterized by direct contact between heaven and earth, and with heavens direct involvement in the daily life of this particular group of people: . **(58:1)** What we see here is the involvement of heaven, providing judgment, in the ordinary affair of a small, poor family. God listened to the woman's argument as she pleaded with the Prophet, yet Ayisha, the Prophets wife who was nearby, could hardly hear her. This picture fills us with the pleasure of feeling God to be near us, taking care of our concerns.

The Chapter then confirms that those who contend with God and His Messenger, i.e. enemies of the Muslim community, are destined to be the losers on earth and to endure humiliating suffering in the life to come. They will be punished for their evil deeds which God reckons but they forget, even though these are their own deeds: *And God is a Witness over everything.* **(58:6)**

This is followed by a reminder that God is present when any group of people, three or more, engage in secret discussion, thinking that they are totally unobserved. God is with them wherever they happen to be: **(58:7)** Our feelings of God's presence are here enhanced by the realization that He is fully aware of all that takes place.

This reminder of God's presence serves as preparation for the warning issued to those who in their secret conversations conspire

to harm the Muslims and cause them grief. They are warned that God sees all their scheming and records all their conspiring. He knows what they intend of sin, aggression and disobedience of Gods Messenger. They are told that God will take them to account for all this. He will punish them as they deserve to be punished. The Muslims are also issued with a command not to speak in secret about anything that is in conflict with righteousness and God-consciousness.

The Chapter continues with its purpose of educating the Muslim community, urging the believers to adopt good and friendly manners, showing their obedience, when they attend the Prophet s circle or any circle of study or worship. It lays down some rules for discussion with the Prophet, highlighting the seriousness of such discussion. The remainder of the Chapter speaks about the hypocrites who befriend the Jews and conspire with them, and who then try to conceal this with false swearing before the Prophet and the Muslim community. It depicts an image of them in the life to come when they are also quick to repeat their false oaths, trying thus to avoid Gods punishment. They think that since their swearing in this world spared them the anger of the Prophet and his followers, it may spare them God's anger on the Day of Resurrection. The Chapter re-emphasizes that those who contend with God and His Messenger are the ones to suffer humiliation; they are the losers. This is something that Go has decreed, just as He decreed that He and His messengers will pr vail. This is stated in order to show the weakness of any hostile p sition. Yet at the time, some Muslims thought such people to be toc strong and tried to maintain good relations with them. They did not realize the importance of the Muslim community having an independent stand under God's banner, and feeling safe under His care.

As the Chapter draws to its end, it paints a bright picture of God's party, represented at that time by the elite community of Emigrants and Helpers. This is the situation that the Quran wants the Muslim community to end up with. God has heard the words of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband, and complained to God. God has heard what you both had to say. God hears all and sees all.

Lesson 105(1) 58:1-58:6

A Personal Case in Dispute

God has heard the words of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and complained to God. God has heard what you both had to say. God hears all and sees all. Even if any of you say to your wives, **(58:1-58:4)**

In pre-Quranic days, a man who became angry with his wife

might say to her, "You are to me like the back of my mother", and thereafter she was forbidden to him. She was not divorced however, but rather in a state of suspense. She could neither have normal marital relations with her husband nor be free to find some other arrangement for herself. This was yet another aspect of the unfair treatment of women in pre-Quranic Arabia.

These signs speak of one such event that took place before the ruling on this problem, known as *zihar*,1 had been laid down. The details of the case relating to the woman at the center of the case, Khuwaylah bint Thalabah:

It was concerning me and Aws ibn al-Samit that God revealed the opening sign of the Chapter, The Pleading. I was married to him and he had grown old, with a quick temper. He came in one day and I questioned something he had said. He was angry as a result and said to me: *Be as my mother's back.* He then went out and sat with his people for some time. He came back later and he indicated that he wanted to have sex. I said: In no way! By Him who holds Khuwaylah's soul in His hand, you cannot approach me when you have said what you said until God and His Messenger have ruled in our case. He tried to force me, but I overpowered him in the way a woman can overpower a weak old man. I left him and went to one of my neighbors to borrow a dress from her.

I went to the Prophet and sat in front of him. I told him what had happened and complained strongly about my husband's bad manners. The Prophet said to me: Khuwaylah! Your cousin is an old man; so be kind and God-conscious in your treatment of him. Before I left, revelations were bestowed from on high concerning me. The Prophet experienced what he usually experienced when revelations were given to him. Then he came to and said: Khuwylah! God has revealed Quranic sign concerning you and your mate. He then read to me the signs starting with: *Surely, God heard the saying of she who disputes with you about her spouse* and complained to God. God has heard what you both had to say. *God hears conversing between you both.*

The Prophet then said to me: Tell him to free a POW/slave. I said: Messenger of God! He does not have the means to do so. He said: Then let him fast two consecutive months. I said: He is certainly an old man who cannot fast. He said: He should then feed sixty poor people with a wisq (A wisq is a measure of volume estimated to weigh about 130 kilogrammes of wheat) of dates. I said: Messenger of God! By God, he cannot afford that. The Prophet then said: We will help him, then, with a sack of dates. I said: Messenger of God! I, too, will help him with another sack. The Prophet said: That is good and kind of you. Go and give this to charity on his behalf, and

take good care of your cousin. I did as the Prophet told me.

This, then, is the case of the woman whose argument with the Prophet God heard and listened to. It is on the basis of this case that God pronounced His ruling from on high, giving this woman her right so that she and her husband could be free of worry. He thus showed the Muslims what to do if such a family problem occurred.

This is the personal situation that opens a Chapter of the Quran, God's book, whose words are echoed by the universe as they are bestowed from on high. It opens with the statement: *Surely, God heard the saying of she who disputes with you about her spouse and she complains to God.* We see here that God is present in this private case of a woman who is a mere individual in the community at large. God is not so preoccupied with conducting the affairs of the universe as not to listen to an individuals case and give His ruling on it.

EDUCATION THROUGH PRACTICE

When we look at the Quranic report of this case, we cannot miss that elements of education and guidance are given side by side with the verdict and the comment on it. This is the usual method of the Quran, providing all that is necessary.

This is an amazing opening. **(58:1)** The Chapter then states the principle that governs such cases: *And, truly, they say that which is unlawful among their sayings and an untruth.* **(58:2)** This deals with the case in its entirety. *Zihar* does not rely on any solid basis. A wife is not a mother so as to become forbidden like one. Somebody's mother is the woman that gave birth to that person. A wife cannot become a mother at the utterance of a word or a few words. Such a statement lacks all substance, it is utter nonsense. In life, all relations should be based on what is true, clear and solid so as to prevent any muddle or confusion. *And, truly, God is Pardoning, Forgiving* what has passed of such incidents.

Having laid down the principle so clearly, the verdict is stated in detail: **(58:3)** God has made freeing a slave a way of atonement for various offenses. This is one way the Quranic message freed those who had fallen into slavery in consequence of the system prevalent at the time, which allowed for the enslavement of prisoners of war. Various views have been stated with regard to the phrase: *and again, retract what they said,* We choose the view that says that they resume marital relations which they had earlier forbidden themselves by *zihar*. The freeing of a slave should occur before it becomes permissible for them to so go back. A comment is added here: *That is of what you are admonished.* **(58:3)** The atonement required is an admonition and a warning against reverting to this totally unacceptable

practice. *And God is Aware of what you do.* (58:3) He knows its nature, how it happens and your intention in doing it.

This comment is given before the verdict is completed. It serves to keep hearts alert and to strengthen discipline, reminding people of God s authority and His knowledge of whatever is apparent or concealed. The Chapter then states: **(58:4)** This is followed by a comment and a directive: *That is so that you believe in God and His Messenger.* **(58:4)** These people were indeed believers. However, this clarification and these penalties provide a direct link between their affairs and Gods order. This makes belief operative in ordinary life, giving faith real authority in society. *And those are the ordinances of God.* **(58:4)** He has set these bounds so that people will not transgress them. He is also angry with those who do not observe these bounds. *And for the ones who are ungrateful, a painful punishment.* because of their transgression, lack of faith and going beyond the limits He has defined.

IN CONTENTION AGAINST GOD

The last sentence in the sign,' Grievous suffering awaits those who will not believe? is certainly a fitting ending as it completes the discussion of the woman's situation, while also providing a bridge to the theme of the next sign that speaks about those who contend against God and His Messenger. This is characteristic of the superb Quranic method as it smoothly moves from one theme to another: **(58:5-58:6)**

These people who are in contention: *Truly, those who oppose God and His Messenger, they were suppressed as those who before them were suppressed.* **(58:5)** The way this sentence is phrased in Arabic may be understood as a prayer against them. A prayer by God is a sentence of judgment that makes it inevitable since it is He who pronounces this sentence, and His will is always done. The phrase, 'those who lived before them,' refers either to earlier communities who were punished by God, or to the then the ungrateful who suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of the Muslims prior to the revelation of this Chapter, as happened, for example, at the Battle of Badr.

And, surely, We caused clear portents, signs to descend. **(58:5)** This sentence separates the two fates suffered by the ungrateful in this life and in the life to come, in order to point out that both fates are clearly stated in these signs. It also tells us that these ungrateful do not face these fates as a result of ignorance or any ambiguity in the truth. Indeed, the truth has been put to them clearly and lucidly in these revelations, which they too have been given.

As the Chapter refers to their fate in the hereafter, it adds an inspiring comment that serves an educational purpose: **(58:5-58:6)** They are made to suffer shame in punishment for their arrogance. This shameful suffering will take place on the day when all will be resurrected. Thus, it will be seen by all. Besides, the suffering is forgotten these, God has recorded them all, as nothing escapes His knowledge: *And God is a Witness over everything.* **(58:6)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

Lesson 105(2). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Fairness (right-minded)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

Quranic Chapter 58: She Who Disputes (al-Mujadilah) Signs 58:7-58:13

Madinah: *Have you not considered that God knows*
whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.
There will be no conspiring secretly of three,
but He is their fourth nor of five, but He is the sixth,
nor of fewer than that nor of more, but He is with them
wherever they had been.
Again, He will tell them of what they did
on the Day of Resurrection.
Truly, God is Knowing of everything. (58:7)
Have you not considered those who were prohibited
from conspiring secretly?
Again, they revert to what they were prohibited from
and hold secret counsel in sin and deep-seated dislike
and in opposition to the Messenger?

And when they drew near you they gave you greetings with that
with which God gives not as a greeting to you
and they say to themselves:
Why punishes us not God for what we say?
Hell will be enough for them.
They will roast in it.
Then, miserable will be the Homecoming! (58:8)
O those who believed!
When you hold secret counsel, hold not secret counsel in sin
and deep-seated dislike and in opposition to the Messenger.
But hold secret counsel for virtuous conduct
and God-consciousness and be God-conscious
before Whom you will be assembled. (58:9)
Conspiring secretly is only from Satan
that he dishearten those who believed.
But he is not one who injures them at all,
but with the permission of God.
In God let the ones who believe put their trust. (58:10)
O those who believed! When it was said to you:
Make ample space in the assemblies, then, make room.
God will make room for you.
And when it was said: Move up, then, move up.
God will exalt those among you who believed
and those who were given the knowledge in degrees.
And God is Aware of what you do. (58:11
O those who believed! When you consulted with the Messenger
put charity forward in advance of your conversing privately.
That is better for you and purer.
But if you find not the means, then, truly,
God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (58:12
Are you apprehensive to put forward charity
in advance of your conversing privately?
If, then, you accomplish it not,
God turned in forgiveness to you.
Perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms
and obey God and His Messenger.
And God is Aware of what you do. (58:13)

COMMENTARY°

WHISPERS AND CONSPIRACIES

The Chapter then portrays God's presence in an inspiring image that leaves a telling effect on our hearts: **(58:7)**

The sign begins by stating God's knowledge that takes in every-

thing in the heavens and earth. Our imagination is left to roam across the wide horizons and the remote corners of the earth, drawing a picture of this knowledge that leaves out nothing large or small, apparent or hidden, in this vast universe. It then draws gradually closer touching its addressees' hearts, presenting an image of Gods knowledge that shakes them strongly:. **(58:7)**

Again, He will tell them of what they did on the Day of Resurrection. **(58:7)** This statement sends a shudder of fear into peoples hearts. The mere presence of God and His hearing of all conversations is ominous. Now they look at the consequences of this presence in the form of punishment. What happens when that which people say in secret is publicized in the presence of all on the Day of Resurrection, when all humanity of all generations are witnesses!

The sign ends in the same way as it started, giving a general image: *Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* **(58:7)** Thus the notion of Gods full and comprehensive knowledge, which is stated in various ways in this sign, is driven home to everyone. This inevitably leaves a profound effect on our hearts and minds.

This awesome picture of God's knowledge serves as an introduction to a warning issued to the hypocrites who held secret conversations, conspiring against the Prophet and the Muslim community in Madinah: **(58:8)**

The sign suggests that the Prophet's initial policy in dealing with the hypocrites was to advise them to be clear and sincere in their attitude, and to stop conspiring with the Jews against the Quranic message. Yet still they persisted in their deviant ways, scheming against the Muslim community, trying in every way possible to disobey the Prophet and cause disruption.

The sign also suggests that some of them used to offer their greeting to the Prophet in a twisted way, giving it a bad meaning: *And when they drew near you they gave you greetings with that with which God gives not as a greeting to you and they say to themselves: Why punishes us not God for what we say?* **(58:8)** They might have used the same means as the Jews did when they pronounced the greeting, peace be to you, as, *assam* (*alaykum*, which means death to you. They might have used some other way that appeared innocent but which nonetheless concealed an ill wish. They even thought that had Muhammad been truly a Prophet, then God would have punished them for what they said by way of greeting or in their whispers and secret conversations.

It is clear from the way the Chapter opens then unfolds that God had told the Prophet of what they said and schemed. The Chapter began with the announcement that God heard the woman pleading

with the Prophet, and then it stated that God is witness with any group, large or small. All this suggests that He informed the Prophet of the hypocrites' schemes and the thoughts they harbored.

An answer is given to their ill-conceived thoughts: *Hell will be enough for them. They will roast in it. Then, miserable will be the Homecoming!* (58:8)

WHAT TO SAY IN SECRET

The Chapter then addresses the believers by their very quality of having accepted the faith. It tells them that they must not indulge in the sort of secret whispers the hypocrites resorted to, encouraging each other to commit sin, aggression and disobedience of the Prophet. It reminds them to remain God-conscious and tells them that such whispers as the hypocrites engage in is inspired by Satan who aims to cause grief to the believers. Therefore, it is totally unbecoming of those who have faith:

It seems that some in the Muslim community had not fully absorbed the sense of Quranic discipline: (58:9-58:10) Such people met when times were hard to consult among themselves, and this was unknown to their leadership.

Some people are put off secret conversations and side whispers unknown to the Muslim community to which they belong and whose interests are the same as their own. In other words, they must not think themselves separate from the Muslim community in anyway. The Chapter tells them that when other Muslims see such side whispering and secret conversations, they are hurt by them. They feel apprehensive, concerned that a lack of trust has crept into the community. Satan always tries to tempt whisperers to go further in order to cause worry and grief to others. However, the Chapter reassures the believers that Satan will not achieve his purpose: *Conspiring secretly is only from Satan that he dishearten those who believed. But he is not one who injures them at all, but with the permission of God.* (58:10) Believers place their trust in God and in no one else.

This is a wise precaution against what causes suspicion. Sometimes, however, there is need for a private discussion in order to keep a secret, or to avoid a scandal. This is acceptable and it normally takes place among community leaders. It must never, however, be through a side group with the rest of the community unaware of what is going on. Such a practice is divisive and leads to friction and grief, which is Satan's aim. God's promise is definitive. Satan will not achieve his purpose by such means, because God will protect the Muslim community. He is fully aware of every secret conversation, every conspiracy against the Muslim community. Satan can never harm the believers: *but with the permission of God.* (58:10) This ex-

ception is added to emphasize that God's will is absolute and free of restriction in any situation to which His promise applies.

In God let the ones who believe put their trust. **(58:10)** He is the Guardian who protects the believers. He is the Almighty who knows all, the Witness to all things. Nothing in the universe escapes His knowledge. Nothing occurs unless it be by His will. He has promised to protect the believers. Could there by anything more reassuring?

REFINED MANNERS

The believers are encouraged to maintain another aspect of good behavior and fine manners: . **(58:11)**

Again we note the Quranic method of making people willing to comply with every instruction. The Chapter promises those who make room for others that God will make good room for them: *God will make room for you.* **(58:11)** It also promises those who were instructed to leave their place so as to give it to others that they will enjoy an elevated position with God: *God will exalt those among you who believed and those who were given the knowledge in degrees.* **(58:11)** This, in recompense for their obedience and accommodating attitude.

The occasion was one of being close to the Prophet in order to learn from him. The Chapter teaches believers that good faith, which makes people accommodating and obedient, and knowledge, which refines hearts and manners, will ensure a higher position with God. This as a reward for willingly vacating a position close to the Prophet, obeying his order given for a particular purpose he had in mind: *And God is Aware of what you do.* **(58:11)** He rewards people according to what He knows of their feelings and intentions.

Ali ibn Abi Talib was the one who acted on the instructions given in this sign: *O those who believed! When you consulted with the Messenger, put charity forward in advance of your conversing privately. That is better for you and purer. But if you find not the means, then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(58:12)** According to reports, he set aside a number of dirhams, i.e. the silver currency of the time. Whenever he wanted to speak alone to the Prophet he gave one dirham in charity. This requirement was nonetheless difficult for the Muslims, as they were generally poor. The instruction, however, fulfilled its purpose, making them aware of the value of a private conference with the Prophet. God lightened their burden, revealing the next sign which abrogated the requirement of paying to charity before such a conference took place. The sign also directed the Muslims to attend better to their various aspects of worship:

Are you apprehensive to put forward charity in advance of your conversing privately? If, then, you accomplish it not, God turned in forgiveness to you. Perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and obey God and His Messenger. And God is Aware of what you do (58:13)

These two signs and the reports we have about the occasions in which they were revealed provide an aspect of the educational efforts that aimed to cultivate the manners and social approach of the Muslim community, even in matters of detail that were not particularly serious.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

Summary of critical thinking:

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon

your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

Lesson 105(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

How is Point of View defined?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

Quranic Chapter 58: She Who Disputes (al-Mujadilah) Signs 58:14-58:22

Madinah: *Have you considered those who turned in friendship*
to a folk against whom God was angry?
They are not of you, nor are you of them
and they swear to a lie while they know. (58:14)
God prepared a severe punishment for them.
Truly, they, how evil is what they had been doing! (58:15)
They took their oaths to themselves as a pretext

and they barred from the way of God.
So for them is a despised punishment. (58:16)
Avails them not their wealth and their children against God at all.
Those will be the Companions of the Fire.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (58:17)
On a Day when God will raise them up altogether,
then, they will swear to Him as they swear to you,
assuming that they are something.
They, they are ones who lie. (58:18)
Satan gained mastery over them,
so he caused them to forget the Remembrance of God.
Those are of the Party of Satan.
Regard the Party of Satan,
they will be the ones who are losers. (58:19)
Truly, those who oppose God and His Messenger,
those are among the humiliated in spirit. (58:20)
God prescribed: I will prevail,
truly, I and My Messengers.
Truly, God is Strong, Almighty. (58:21)
You will not find any folk who believe in God and the Last Day
who make friends with whoever opposed God and His Messenger
even if they had been their fathers or their sons
or their brothers or their kinspeople.
Those, He prescribed belief in their hearts,
and confirmed them with a Spirit from Himself.
And He will cause them to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run
as ones who will dwell in them forever.
God was well-pleased with them
and they were well-pleased with Him.
Those are the Party of God. Lo! the Party of God.
They are the ones who prosper. (58:22)

Commentary°

False Swearing

The Chapter speaks anew about the hypocrites who befriended the Jews in Madinah, describing their true position and attitude. It threatens to expose their hypocrisy and to inflict a terrible end upon them. It makes clear that the Quranic message will be triumphant, despite all their schemes and conspiracies: **(58:14-58:19)**

This strong denunciation of the hypocrites who befriended those who had incurred God's anger, i.e. the Jews, suggests that these hypocrites were very active in scheming against the Muslim community, conspiring with its avowed enemies. It also suggests that the author-

ity of the Quranic message had now been consolidated so as to strike fear into the hypocrites' hearts. Thus, when the Prophet and the believers confronted them with what God might have exposed of their scheming, they resorted to swearing falsely, denying what was attributed to them, knowing, however, that they lied as they swore. They hoped that by thus forswearing they would spare themselves any punishment for scheming against the Muslim community: *They took their oaths to themselves as a pretext and they barred from the way of God. So for them is a despised punishment.* **(58:16)**

Repeated warnings are issued to them in this passage: **(58:15-58:17)** The Chapter describes their abject and miserable position on the Day of Judgment when they will swear to God as they used to swear to people: *On a Day when God will raise them up altogether, then, they will swear to Him as they swear to you, assuming that they are something. They, they are ones who lie.* **(58:18)** This description suggests that hypocrisy had become so entrenched in their hearts that it would remain with them on the Day of Judgment, in the presence of God who knows peoples deepest secrets and innermost thoughts: *they swear to you, assuming that they are something.* **(58:18)**

The Chapter brands them as confirmed liars: *They, they are ones who lie.* **(58:18)** It then explains the cause of their condition: *Satan gained mastery over them, so he caused them to forget the Remembrance of God. Those are of the Party of Satan. Regard the Party of Satan, they will be the ones who are losers.* **(58:19)** A heart that forgets to remember God becomes corrupt and given to evil: *Those are of the Party of Satan.* **(58:19)** They stand under his banner, act in his name, obey his instructions, work for his objectives. This situation of unmitigated evil ends in total loss: *Regard the Party of Satan, they will be the ones who are losers.* **(58:19)**

Such hypocrites were intimate with the Jews, thinking that they were a power to be reckoned with. Therefore, they always sought their help and advice. Therefore, God makes it clear to them that His enemies will always suffer defeat and humiliation, while His cause and His messengers will be victorious: *Truly, those who oppose God and His Messenger, those are among the humiliated in spirit. God prescribed: I will prevail, truly, I and My Messengers. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* **(58:20-58:21)**

THE MEASURE OF FAITH

As the Chapter draws to its close, it outlines the constant rule that believers apply, or the accurate measure of faith as it settles in people's hearts: **(58:22)**

This provides complete comparison between God's party and

the party of Satan. It is a question of taking ones final and unhesitating position with the party of distinction, after discarding all burdens and temptations, so as to uphold the one and only tie. *You will not find any folk who believe in God and the Last Day who make friends with whoever opposed God and His Messenger.* **(58:22)** Never has God put two hearts in one man's body. Never can anyone harbor two loves in his heart: one love for God and His Messenger and one for their enemies. It is all a question of faith or unfaith; the two can never meet: E*ven if they had been their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kinspeople.* **(58:22)** All bonds of kinship and blood relations are severed when they come into conflict with faith. These bonds may however be maintained and respected if there is no contention or dispute between the two camps. The Quran instructs believers to maintain good relations with parents if they are the ungrateful, provided that there is no war going on between Gods party and Satan's party. Should there be contention, war and conflict, these bonds are to be totally severed.

Those, He prescribed belief in their hearts, and confirmed them with a Spirit from Himself. **(58:22)** Faith is confirmed in their hearts by God's hand, written in their breasts by His right hand. It cannot be erased or be subject to ambiguity or confusion. They cannot achieve such resolve without the support of a spirit of His own making. Their hearts cannot beam so brightly without the light that emanates from this spirit, gives them strength and binds them to the only true source of strength and light.

And He will cause them to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run as ones who will dwell in them forever. (58:22) This is their reward for abandoning every tie and bond, and discarding all desire for worldly temptation. *God was well-pleased with them and they were well-pleased with Him.* **(58:22)** This is a pleasant picture that radiates contentment and reassurance. It shows us the situation of these believers in their lofty position and pleasant surroundings. They bask in their feeling of mutual pleasure with their Lord. They maintain their links with Him and discard all others. He then accepts them, admits them to His presence and makes it clear to them that He is pleased with them. They are gratified by this closeness to Him.

Those are the Party of God. Lo! the Party of God. They rank under His banner, move under His leadership, follow His guidance, implement His code of living, and do on earth what He has willed, as they are part of His will. *They are the ones who prosper.* **(58:22)** Who will be successful if God s partisans are not?

Thus humanity is split into two groups: God's party and Satan's party, raising two banners: the banner of the truth and the banner of

falsehood. Every person must choose to either belong to God's party and support the truth or to side with Satan, standing under the banner of falsehood. The two parties are clearly separated. They can neither meet nor mix.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us that the treasures that God sends down are in a know measure. What are some of the treasures that God sends down? The fertilizing winds and rain water. There are underlying important numbers to be studied in understanding how the universe and the earth work. Everything has a known number. God is the Creator and Originator of the universe.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 106(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 49: THE INNER APARTMENTS (AL-HUJURAT)

SIGNS 49:1-49:10

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Put not yourselves forward in advance of God and His Messenger.
And be God-conscious. Truly, God is Hearing, Knowing. (49:1)
O those who believed!
Exalt not your voices above the voice of the Prophet
nor publish a saying to him as you would openly publish something
to some others so that your actions not be fruitless
while you are not aware. (49:2)
Truly, those who lower their voices near the Messenger of God,
those are those who are ones God put to test their hearts
for God-consciousness.
For them is forgiveness and a sublime compensation. (49:3)
Truly, those who cry out to you from behind
the inner apartments, most of them are not reasonable. (49:4)
And if they endured patiently until you would go forth to them,
it would have been better for them.
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (49:5)
O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you
with a tiding, then, be clear
so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.
Then, you would become ones who are remorseful
for what you accomplished. (49:6)
Know you that the Messenger of God is of you.

If he obeys you in much of the affairs, you would,
certainly, fall into misfortune.
But God endeared belief to you
and made it appear pleasing to your hearts.
And He caused to be detestable to you ingratitude
and disobedience and rebellion.
Those, they are the ones who are on the right way. (49:7)
This is a grace from God and His divine blessing.
And God is Knowing, Wise. (49:8)
And if two sections among the ones who believe
fought one against the other, then,
make things right between them both.
Then, if one of them was insolent against the other,
then, fight the one who is insolent until it changed its mind
about the command of God.
Then, if it changes its mind, make things right between them justly.
And act justly. Truly, God loves the ones who act justly. (49:9)
Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters,
so make things right between your two brothers/sisters.
And be God-conscious so that perhaps you will find mercy. (49:10)

COMMENTARY°

PROLOGUE

This Chapter, composed of no more than 18 signs, is majestic, indeed superior. It includes a number of basic facts of faith, Quranic law and human existence. It opens up before our hearts and minds wide horizons and gives rise to a host of important thoughts. It refers to systems of formation and organization, principles of education and upbringing, fundamentals of legislation and essential directives which could take a hundred times its length. It puts before our eyes two great issues for reflection and deliberation.

REFINING ROUGH MANNERS

The Chapter starts with this first loving address that aims to alert hearts: **(49:1-49:5)** Believers, do not make any suggestion to God or His Messenger, concerning any of your affairs or of life in general. Do not presume to have a say in any matter before God has stated, through His Messenger, what He wants concerning it. Do not attempt to judge any matter unless you first refer to what God and His Messenger say.

We see that it is all a question of a psychological attitude defining the standards to be observed in relation to God and His Messenger, and the process by which instructions are received and carried

out. This is an essential part of how Quranic law is enacted and implemented. It is all based on an essential God-conscious quality and its reinforcement. This quality stems from the awareness that God hears all and knows all. Furthermore, this all-embracing truth is incorporated into one single, short sign.

The believers applied this standard to their relationship with their Lord and His Messenger. None of them would ever presume to suggest anything to God or His Messenger. None would voice an opinion unless God s Messenger asked him to do so. None would make a judgement concerning any matter without first referring to what God and His Messenger said about it.

WHEN SPEAKING TO THE PROPHET

The second aspect of good manners concerned the Prophet's Companions' own discourse with him and the respect they should feel and show. This was to be observed in how they spoke to him and in the level of their voices. This was how they should manifest their respect for the Prophet as they sat with him. As God drew their attention to this requirement, He addressed them by that quality they loved to have and warned them that violation of His orders might bring grievous consequences in its wake: **(49:2)**

Piety that manifests itself in a God-conscious attitude is a great gift God grants to certain hearts He chooses after initially testing them. **(49:3)** It is thus implanted only in hearts that are suited to it, having first proven their merit. Those who lower their voices in the presence of God s Messenger are they who have proven themselves in a test of hearts. They are the ones who fear God, a quality that earns them forgiveness and a rich reward from God.

The ninth year of the Muslim calendar is called: The Year of Delegations because delegations from all over Arabia arrived in Madinah to embrace the Quranic message and pledge their loyalty to the Prophet. The Chapter refers to an incident that took place that year when the delegation of Tamim arrived. These were unrefined Bedouins. They shouted to the Prophet from outside his wives' apartments that were situated next to the mosque: Muhammad, come out and speak to us! The Prophet disliked their uncivilized manner. Therefore, the next sign of the Chapter was revealed: **(49:4-49:5)**

MAKING SURE BEFORE TAKING ACTION

The first address **(49:6-49:8)** in the Chapter defines the leadership and the source from which to receive orders. The second establishes the standards of manners and respect to be maintained in dealing with this leadership. Both serve as the basis for all legisla-

tions and directives that follow in the Chapter. It is imperative for the source and the leadership to be well defined so that directives and instructions be given their true value and so that they are properly obeyed. Therefore, the third address explains to the believers how to receive news and reports and the need to verify their reliability: *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance. Then, you would become ones who are remorseful for what you accomplished.* **(49:6)**

The sign specifically mentions the evildoer because he is more likely to lie. It is important that suspicion should not be widely spread in the Muslim community. If every report is doubted, the system of gathering intelligence and information becomes paralyzed. In a Muslim community, individuals are normally treated as trustworthy, and the information they bring is considered reliable. An evildoer is treated differently: his information is not accepted until it is verified. Thus, the community steers a middle way between accepting and rejecting the information relayed to it. The community does not rush into action on the basis of a report given by someone whose behavior leaves much to be desired. Such rash action might lead to committing a wrong against other people, and subsequent regret. Furthermore, such rash action may incur God's displeasure and put the community in a position of committing an injustice.

MAKING LIFE TOO HARD

This is a reality **(49:7)** that we can very easily imagine because it actually happened. However, when we reflect on it, we see that it is superior, beyond imagination. Is it easy to imagine a continuous, dynamic contact between heaven and earth, witnessed by all, whereby heaven speaks to people on earth about their public and private affairs, correcting their errors one by one, and giving them advice about their most intimate affairs? Any one of them might do or say something, or even entertain a thought, and yet heaven is aware of it all. What happens next is that God informs His Messenger of what has taken place and directs him to do or say whatever is necessary about it. This is something so great that it might not be fully appreciated by some of those present at the time. Therefore, they are reminded of it in this particular way: **(49:7)** In other words, be aware of this fact and give it its due importance.

One outcome of this new-found knowledge is that they must not act presumptuously in the presence of God and His Messenger. The Quran, however, puts this even more lucidly and forcefully, telling the Muslims that what God s Messenger decides on any matter, on

the basis of God's revelation or inspiration, is good for them as it combines ease and mercy. Had God's Messenger obeyed all their thoughts, they would have found matters far more difficult. God is more aware than them of what is of benefit to them. His Messenger represents mercy in everything he chooses for them: *Know you that the Messenger of God is of you. If he obeys you in much of the affairs, you would, certainly, fall into misfortune.* **(49:7)** This implies that they should leave all their affairs in the hands of God and His Messenger. They should submit fully, surrendering themselves to God s will, implementing His orders as they receive them, and suggesting nothing to God s Messenger.

The Chapter then draws their attention to the grace of faith He guided them to, making their hearts warm to it as He revealed its beauty and benefit such that they would love it dearly. He has also made unbelief, wrongdoing and sin hateful to them. All this is part of God's grace which He bestows on them: **(49:7-49:8)**

The human being is hasty, but he is unaware of the likely consequences of his precipitate action. The human being may also make suggestions concerning his own or other people s affairs, without knowing whether his suggestions will bring benefit or cause harm: *And whoever repents not, then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* (17:11) If the human being would only submit himself to God, accepting what God chooses for him, knowing that God's choice is better, more compassionate and beneficial for him than what he may choose for himself, he would be much more comfortable. He would complete this short journey on this planet with ease and contentment. But this is also an aspect of God's grace which He grants to whomever He wills.

FIGHTING BETWEEN MUSLIM BELIEVERS

This **(49:9-49:10)** is a practical rule to protect the community of believers from strife resulting from excesses and hard feelings. This rule is given immediately after the requirement to verify the reports given by evildoers, making sure that the believers do not rush into action that may be counterproductive. Whether this sign was revealed in consequence of a particular case, as some reports suggest, or whether it was merely initiating a piece of legislation to outline what the Muslim community should do in such cases, it nonetheless provides a general and highly effective rule that stamps out strife and ensures solidarity within the Muslim community. It also establishes justice, Tightness and fairness. All this is based on believers being God-conscious and their hope that He will bestow His grace on a community that deals with justice and works for reconciliation.

The Quran either supposes or confronts the possibility of two groups of believers taking up arms against each other, yet it accepts that both are believers, even though one of them, or indeed both of them, may be in the wrong. It requires the Muslim community, other than the two fighting groups, to work for reconciliation between the two. But if one of them acts wrongfully, refusing to give up what it has no right to claim, or indeed if both act wrongfully, refusing reconciliation or refusing to abide by God's law over that which they dispute, then the believers must fight those who act wrongfully until they revert to God's commandment. The commandment at issue here is the ending of strife and conflict between believers and accepting God's judgement over anything contentious. Should those acting wrongfully revert to God s commandment, then the believers should establish reconciliation based on strict justice and equity, in obedience of God and seeking His pleasure: *Truly, God loves the ones who act justly.* **(49:9)**

This judgement is followed by a touch that aims to bring out genuine feelings of brotherhood among believers. It is the bond that unites them after they have fallen out. They are also reminded of the need to always be God-conscious, suggesting that this is the only way to earn His grace. *Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters, so make things right between your two brothers/sisters. And be God-conscious so that perhaps you will find mercy.* **(49:10)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In read-

ing it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

LESSON 106(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of themselves without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in

the extremist ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teache how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions ex plicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Quranic community, they find

that the Arabs in pre-Quranic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

Quranic Chapter 49: The Inner Apartments (al-Hujurat)
Signs 49:11-49:18

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Let not a folk deride another folk.

Perhaps they be better than they, nor women deride other women.
Perhaps they be better than they.
Nor find fault with one another nor insult one another
with nicknames.
Miserable was the name of disobedience after belief!
And whoever repents not, then, those,
they are the ones who are unjust. (49:11)
O those who believed! Avoid suspicion much.
Truly, some suspicion is a sin.
And spy not nor backbite some by some other.
Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his lifeless brother?
You would have disliked it. And be God-conscious.
Truly, God is Accepter of Repentance, Compassionate. (49:12)
O humanity! Truly, We created you from a male and a female
and made you into peoples and types that you recognize one another.
Truly, the most generous of you with God
is the most devout.
Truly, God is Knowing, Aware. (49:13)
The nomads said: We believed.
Say to them: You believe not.
But say: We submitted to God, for belief enters not yet into your hearts.
But if you obey God and His Messenger,
He will not withhold your actions at all.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (49:14)
The ones who believe are not but those who believed in God
and His Messenger.
Again, they were not in doubt
and they struggled with their wealth and themselves in the way of God.
Those, they are the ones who are sincere. (49:15)
Say: Would you teach God about your way of life
while God knows whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth?
And God is Knowing of everything. (49:16)
They show grace to you that they submitted to God.
Say: Show you submission to God as grace to me?
Nay! God shows grace to you in that He guided you to belief if you,
truly, had been ones who are sincere. (49:17)
Truly, God knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth.
And God is Seeing of what you do. (49:18)

COMMENTARY°

NO RIDICULE, DEFAMATION OR INSULT

The human society the Quranic message establishes in the light

of Quranic guidance operates a high standard of manners. **(49:11)** Every individual in this society has his or her integrity, which may not be compromised. Indeed, it is part of the integrity of the whole community. To slander anyone is to slander oneself, because the whole community is a single entity and its integrity is one.

In this sign, the Quran again addresses the believers by their most beloved description, *O those who believed.* It forbids that one group should deride another, be they men deriding other men, or women deriding other women. For how can they know whether or not the ones they deride enjoy a better status with God?

The Quran, however, does not stop at implying this. It works on the sentiment of brotherhood in faith, reminding the believers that they descend from a single soul. Whoever defames anyone actually defames all. Therefore, the Quran says: *Let not a folk deride another folk.* **(49:11)** It should be mentioned that the word the Quran uses for defaming has a particular resonance that imparts a feeling that also has a physical effect.

Having outlined the true values in God's measure, and appealed to feelings of brotherhood and of belonging to one soul, the Chapter now reaches out to the believers' sense of faith, warning them that they will lose this noble quality if they indulge in derision and ridicule: *Nor find fault with one another nor insult one another with nicknames.* **(49:11)** To indulge in this is akin to renouncing faith after one has believed. The Chapter goes even further than this by threatening to consider this an act of wrongdoing, something that is often expressed in the Quran as being synonymous with associating partners with God. *And whoever repents not, then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(49:11)** Thus, the Chapter establishes the rules for refined manners in a noble community.

NO SUSPICION OR BACKBITING

This sign **(49:12)** establishes yet another fence in this noble society, protecting the integrity and freedom of individuals, while at the same time teaching people how to cleanse their feelings and consciences. Thus the Quran purges a Muslim's inner conscience so that it is not contaminated with evil suspicion and consequently incurs sin. It leaves it clean, free of doubt, entertaining only friendly and affectionate thoughts towards one s brethren. In this way it steers society away from suspicion so that the community enjoys reassurance and is not marred by worry and apprehension. Life in a community where ill thoughts have no place is both serene and comfortable.

The Quranic message does not, however, stop at this point in educating peoples hearts and souls. The sign we are looking at es-

tablishes a principle that applies to peoples dealings with each other. It protects the rights of those who live in its pure society so that they are not punished or tried on the basis of suspicion. Indeed, suspicion does not even form a proper basis for interrogating people or investigating their affairs.

This sign shows us the limit to which the Quranic message goes in protecting peoples freedom, integrity, rights and status. How does this compare with what even the best democratic countries boast of with regard to protecting human rights? This standard, which the Quran sets for believers, is far superior indeed. Moreover, the Quranic message achieves this in real life, after it establishes it in people's hearts and consciences.

The sign moves on to lay down another principle that provides social guarantees: *Avoid suspicion much. Truly, some suspicion is a sin.* **(49:12)** Spying may be an action that follows immediately on entertaining suspicion. On the other hand, it may be an independent action that seeks to look at other peoples faults and errors. The Quran opposes spying because it is morally base. It aims to purge people's hearts from sinking into this vile pursuit in order to keep up its high moral standards.

Next comes the order that forbids backbiting. This is given in such a way that it provides a graphic description of the disgusting nature of this action: *And spy not nor backbite some by some other. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his lifeless brother?* **(49:12)** The order tells Muslims that they must not backbite. It then paints a scene that fills even the most insensitive of people with disgust. showing someone eating his dead brother's flesh. It immediately declares that they have, of course, a very strong and natural aversio to such behavior. Therefore, they also have a strong aversion agains backbiting.

Following all these prohibitions against suspicion, spying and backbiting, the Chapter awakens believers' God-conscious instinct, inviting anyone who has committed any of these unlawful acts to hasten and repent in the hope of God's mercy: *And be God-conscious. Truly, God is Accepter of Repentance, Compassionate.* **(49:12)**

With such consistent treatment the Muslim community was purged and attained its high standard. It became like a dream that came true, a model to be followed and relished.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF HUMANITY

Having addressed the believers in such a way as to elevate them to a superior level of refined manners and morality, the Chapter then

addresses all humanity, of all races, colors and communities, reminding them that they all share one origin. One standard applies to them all: it is the same one that elevates the Muslim community to its superior level of unparalleled purity. **(49:13)** All of you people, who present such different races and colors, communities and tribes, come from one origin. Therefore, you should not divide into groups or fall out with each other and so waste your energy.

Humanity! You are being called by the One who created you out of a male and a female to inform you of the purpose of making you into nations and tribes. It is not so that you stir up conflict and enmity. It is rather for the purpose of getting to know one another and living peacefully together. Differences of language, color, temperament, manners, talents and abilities do not lead to conflict and strife. In fact, they make for cooperation so that all tasks are fulfilled and all needs met. Color, race, language, homeland and similar factors are of no importance in God's sight. There is only one criterion to determine peoples worth: *Truly, the most generous of you with God is the most devout.* **(49:13)** Noble indeed is the one who is noble in God's sight. He gives you your value on the basis of His perfect knowledge and His awareness of values and measures: *Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* **(49:13)** Thus all dividing factors and values are discounted leaving only one measure and one value by which all humanity are tested.

THE MEANING OF TRUE FAITH

As the Chapter draws to its end, it fittingly explains the truth of faith in reply to those Bedouins who claimed to be believers when they did not even understand the nature of faith. This also serves as a reply to those who tried to press their acceptance of the Quranic message as a favor they thought they did for the Prophet. In essence, they do not appreciate that it is only through God s favor that people believe.

The Bedouin say: **(49:14-49:18)**

The first of these signs is said to have been revealed in relation to the Bedouins of the Asad tribe who, as soon as they accepted the Quranic message, boasted saying, 'We have attained to faith.' They even counted this as a favor they performed for the Prophet. They said to him: Messenger of God! We have become Muslims. Other Arabs have fought you, but we have not. God wanted to show them the truth of what was in their hearts when they said this, stating that they only embraced the Quranic message in submission while the truth of faith had not touched their hearts or souls. *Say to them: You believe not. But say: We submitted to God, for belief enters not yet*

into your hearts. **(49:14)** Nevertheless, God's grace has dictated that they will be rewarded for every good action they do, letting nothing go to waste. Even the outward manifestation of the Quranic message, which has not yet penetrated into people's hearts to become genuine faith, is sufficient to make their good deeds count and be recorded. Thus, their deeds are not wasted like those of the ungrateful. No part of their reward is wasted as long as they continue to obey: *But if you obey God and His Messenger, He will not withhold your actions at all.* **(49:14)** This is because God is quick to grant forgiveness and bestow His mercy. He accepts from His servant the first step and rewards him for submission and obedience while waiting until faith settles in his heart: *Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(49:14)**

God then explains to them the nature of genuine belief: *The ones who believe are not but those who believed in God and His Messenger. Again, they were not in doubt and they struggled with their wealth and themselves in the way of God.* **(49:15)**

Those, they are the ones who are sincere. **(49:15)** They are true in their faith, and true to their claims that they are believers. Unless those feelings in a believers heart are a reality, bringing tangible effects into practical life, faith remains theoretical.

We need to reflect a little on the precautionary note in this sign: *The ones who believe are not but those who believed in God and His Messenger. Again, they were not in doubt.* **(49:15)** This point about never entertaining doubt is not a merely additional clause. It points to a real experience and provides treatment for a condition that may arise even after one has truly believed. The way this is phrased is significant, and never then entertained any doubt. The need to entertai no doubt and the need for the steadfast pursuit of the right way point to what a believing soul may experience under severe pressure and testing hardship. Doubt or hesitation may creep in. A believer may have to deal with severely testing times and calamities that shake the very foundation of his world. Therefore, the one who remains steadfast, entertaining no doubt and pursuing the right way in all situations is the one who deserves high rank with God.

Putting the fact in this way alerts believers' hearts to the slips and risks in their way. This enables them to take precautions, prepare themselves to withstand any hardship that comes their way, and maintain their course even in the face of the most adverse circumstances.

The Chapter continues its address to the Bedouins, telling them that God knows what is in their hearts. Furthermore, He can tell them what they harbour in their minds, without waiting for them to tell Him: *Say: Would you teach God about your way of life while God*

knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth? And God is Knowing of everything. **(49:16)**

God knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth **(49:16)** His is a perfect knowledge that comprehends the very nature of everything in the heavens and the earth. His knowledge is not based on appearances and effects, but on a perfect knowledge of the nature of things that is independent of time and free of any limitation. Moreover, *And God is Knowing of everything.* **(49:16)** This encompasses the entire universe and everything in it.

GOD'S REAL FAVOR

Having explained the true nature of faith, the Chapter then addresses the Prophet, referring to those Bedouins and how they asserted that they had done the Prophet a favors by accepting the Quranic message. This very action is clear evidence that the nature of faith had not yet penetrated their hearts. They had not yet experienced the beauty of faith: *They show grace to you that they submitted to God. Say: Show you submission to God as grace to me? Nay! God shows grace to you in that He guided you to belief if you, truly, had been ones who are sincere.* **(49:17)**

That God should select certain individuals from among His servants and grant them all this represents His immeasurable bounty and grace. Indeed, all other types of grace and bounty, including that which brings people into existence and gives them life, seem to dwindle by comparison to what faith represents. Later in the Chapter we will look in detail at God's words: *God shows grace to you in that He guided you to belief if you, truly, had been ones who are sincere.* **(49:17)**

God certainly tells the truth as He says: *They show grace to you that they submitted to God. Say: Show you submission to God as grace to me? Nay! God shows grace to you in that He guided you to belief if you, truly, had been ones who are sincere.* **(49:17)** Indeed faith is the supreme favor that can only be granted by God the Bounteous to whomever He knows to be deserving of it.

Truly, God knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And God is Seeing of what you do. **(49:18)** The One who knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth also knows what is hidden in people s innermost souls. He knows people's feelings and sees what they do. He does not derive His knowledge from the words they say, but from the feelings they harbour in their hearts and the actions that confirm their feelings.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN

Outline: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Prove: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

Relate: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

Review: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

State: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

Summarize: When you are asked to summarize or present a summariza tion, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

Trace: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?

Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way?
Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•

Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.

Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.

Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•

Why was she willing to do this? Was she scared?

What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?

Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

Appendix: Correlation between the Present Order of Chapters in the Quran and their Chronological Order

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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Laleh Bakhtiar

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 20 of the Revelation (7 AH/628-629 CE)

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YEAR 20 OF THE REVELATION
MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 30, 7 AH
CA. MAY 11, 628 CE-APRIL 30, 629 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 20, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 7 AH/ca. May 11, 628 CE-April 30, 629 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra ('Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: I: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

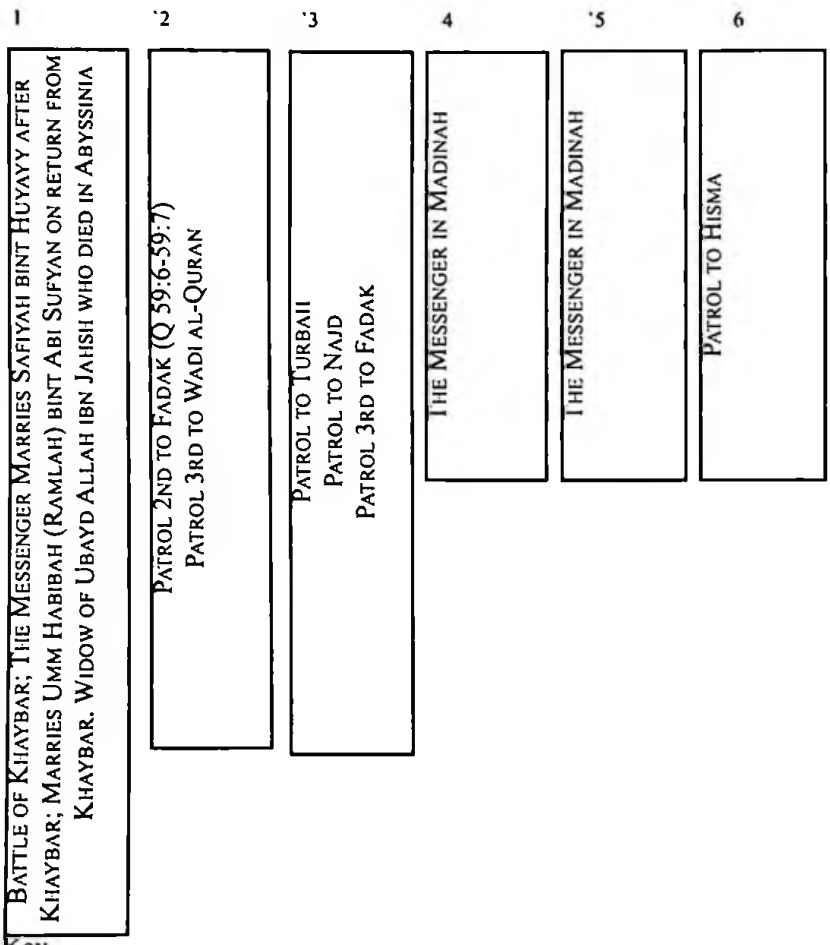
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 20*

TIMELINE



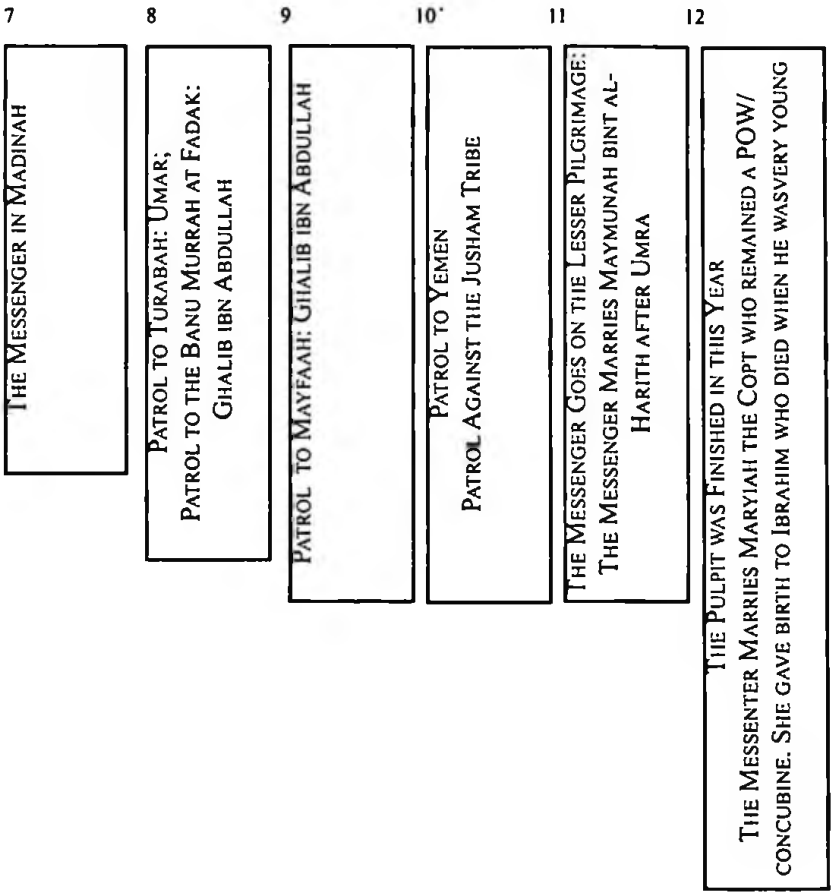
Key

1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Preview *Book Year 20*

Timeline



Key
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle, Siege = Led by the Messenger
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 20 presented here begins with Lesson 107 and Quranic Chapter 66, the 107th chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 64, 61 and finally Lesson 110 and Quranic Chapter 62, the 110th chapter revealed.

PRELUDE

THE CAMPAIGN TO KHAYBAR

After his return from al-Hudaybiya the Messenger stayed in Madinah during Dhu al-Hijja and part of al-Muharram, the polytheists superintending the pilgrimage. Then he marched against Khaybar.

The Messenger realizes that now that there is a truce with the ungrateful who practice ingratitude to the One God, it is time to secure the northern areas, the tribes of which had been instrumental in supporting the ungrateful at the Battle of the Confederates. He turns towards Khaybar, occupied by Jews who are hostile to the Quranic message.

Khaybar is an area of fortresses which had deemed to be impregnable. Although news traveled from Madinah to Khaybar that the Messenger is planning to besiege the fortresses, the Jews pay no heed because they have an army of 10,000 men and have been promised a 4000 strong army support from the Ghatafan tribe. The Muslim army arrives at Khaybar and takes position between Khaybar and its allies of the Ghatafan. All of this is done silently during the night. In the morning, when the farmers leave the fortress to go to their farm areas, they see the Muslim army.

The Messenger cries out::God is Greater; Khaybar is crushed!. And then he recites 37:177. The Jews hold a council and decide to defend the fortresses in separate groups. This decision came from their lack of unity which is revealed in the Quran (see 59:14). The Jewish tribes did not realize that they are up against a small, but united, army as the Quran proclaims in 61:4 and promises them victory in 2:249.

The Muslim army attacks the fortress closest to them on the first day. Garrisons from the other fortresses do not march out to help that garrison and it falls to the Muslim forces. In spite of the fact that the Khaybar army is known for its marksmanship in shooting arrows, and the nurses, including Umm Salamah, Safiyyah bint Abd al-Muttalib, Umm Ayman, Nusaybah, and Umm Sulaym, are prepared, the Muslims' shields hold the arrows at bay.

On the sixth night, when little more than the first garrison had been taken, 'Umar captures a spy who tells the Muslim army which fortress they may most easily capture and in which are located many weapons and war machines that had been used in the past to capture other fortresses. The Muslims take that fortress the next day and bring out the war machines including a ballista for hurling rocks and two testudos for bringing men up to the walls beneath a roof that is impregnable so they could go through the entrance. All of the smaller fortresses fall to the Muslims.

However, the Muslims face great resistance when they try to take the fortress named Naim. On the night before the attack, the Messenger says: Tomorrow I will give the standard to a man whom God and His Messenger love. God will give us victory by his hands; he is not one who turns back in flight.

The standard that the Messenger had taken to Khaybar is a large black

one made from a cloak of Ayisha called "the Eagle." This he gave to Ali ibn Abi Talib and he prays for victory which is granted after a great struggle on the part of the Muslim forces.

The Jews inside the remaining fortresses are wondering what had happened to the Ghatafan tribes' forces which had been promised to them. They do not know that the 4000 strong army had left their camp and had been moving towards Khaybar when they heard a voice saying: Your people! Your people! Your people! and they feared that the Muslims had attacked their homes instead of Khaybar so they returned to their own area. There they found everything in order, but decided that because of the delay they would not reach Khaybar on time to participate in the defeat of the Muslims which they thought had already come about.

Finally the Muslims faced the most difficult of the fortresses of Khaybar, that of the Citadel of Zubayr. The Muslim army besieged it for three days with no apparent effect on the people inside. Then a Jew slipped out from another fortress and in return for the safety of himself, his family, and his property, he told the Muslims that the people inside the Citadel of Zubayr had access to an underground river from inside the fortress so they did not store any water. If the Muslims prevented this water from flowing under the fortress, they would succeed in their siege. This is done and the Citadel of Zubayr falls to the Muslims.

Finally the Muslims besiege the last of the fortresses to offer any resistance, the one called Qamus. This fortress belonged to the leader of the Kinanah, the most wealthy and powerful of the Jewish Nadir clans. They hold out for fourteen days when finally they decide to negotiate with the Messenger. The Messenger agrees in exchange for their surrender of all of their property, the people could leave and no one would be killed or made captive. He warns the head of the Kinanah clan, however, that if anyone is caught trying to take any of his property with him, he would be killed.

As the people begin to leave the Messenger asks the leader of the Kinanah where the treasures of the Nadir tribe are, the ones that they would carry through the streets in their processions. The leader says that the treasure had been sold in order to buy arms and weapons for war. It is not long before the Muslims find the treasure and learn that the leader of the tribe himself had tried to hide it. He is put to death as he had been warned would happen.

The rest of the fortresses surrender on the same terms. A delegation is then sent to the Messenger asking if the Jews can remain as farmers of the land and that they will give half the annual produce to Madinah, in exchange. The Messenger agrees on condition that if he decides in the future they should be exiled, they will comply.

LESSON 107(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

The Quran cautions:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 66: THE FORBIDDING (AL-TAHRIM)

SIGNS 66:1-66:7

Madinah: *O Prophet! Why have you forbidden*
what God permitted to you.
Looking for the goodwill of your spouses?
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (66:1)
God imposed on you the dissolution of such of your oaths.
And God is your Defender.
And He is The Knowing, The Wise. (66:2)
And mention when the Prophet confided
to one of his spouses a discourse,
she, then, told it to another.
God disclosed to him of it.
He acquainted her with some of it and turned aside some of it.
When he told her about it, she said:
Who communicated this to you?
He said: The Knowing, The Aware told me. (66:3)
If you two repent to God, the hearts of you both

will be bent towards it.
And if you helped one another against him,
then, truly, God, He is his Defender and Gabriel
and ones in accord with morality, the ones who believe.
And the angels after that are his sustainers. (66:4)
Perhaps if he divorced you (f), his Lord will cause in exchange
for him spouses better than you (f),
ones who submit (f) to One God, ones who believe (f),
ones who are morally obligated (f),
ones who repent, ones who worship (f),
ones who are inclined to fasting (f),
women previously married and virgins. (66:5)
O those who believed! Protect yourselves and your people
from a fire whose fuel is humanity and rocks
over which are angels, harsh, severe
who rebel not against whatever God commanded them
and they accomplish what they are commanded. (66:6)
O those who were ungrateful! Make not excuses this Day.
You are only given recompense
for what you had been doing. (66:7)

COMMENTARY°

PROLOGUE

God has willed that the Quranic message should be His final message, and the code of living it outlines should be the one suitable for the rest of human life. Furthermore, the life of those who believe in the Quranic message should be consistent with the law that governs the universe, and the message should be the faith to guide human life and shape all its activities. Therefore, He made this code of living comprehensive and perfect, catering for all human abilities and potentials. At the same time, this code elevates such abilities and potentials to the level suited for the creature God has placed in charge of the earth, honoring him above many of His other creatures, and blowing into him of His own spirit. Consistent with this will of His, God has made the Quranic message naturally forward-looking. It enables life to grow while at the same time elevating it to the highest standard of purity. It does not stop any creative aspect or suppress a useful potential. On the contrary, it awakens and enhances these while ensuring a proper balance between forward movement and rising to a higher horizon. It is this which prepares the human spirit in this life for the superior happiness and bliss of the life to come, and the human mortal for a life everlasting.

God has also willed that the Messenger who delivers this final

message should be a man who reflects the faith, with all its distinctive characteristics and its special nature. Thus, as he goes through life, the Prophet becomes a true and practical translation of this faith, its nature and direction. He is an ordinary human being whose human abilities have attained a high standard: physically strong, with perfect constitution, sound senses, alert, able to perfectly feel all there is to feel. At the same time, he is full of emotion, naturally alert and sensitive, appreciates beauty, and is receptive and responsive. Moreover, he is of great intelligence, broad-minded, strong-willed, and he controls his feelings and reactions. Above all this, he is the Prophet whose soul reflects pure light, able to undertake the night journey from Makkah to Jerusalem and his subsequent ascendance to heaven. He is the one who is addressed from on high, sees the light of his Lord, and whose nature is in touch with the nature of everything in the universe: small and large stones greet him, the branches of trees yearn for contact with him, and Uhud, the mountain, shakes at his presence. All these powers and potentials are balanced within his personality in such a way as to reflect the balance of the faith he has been chosen to present to humanity.

God has made the Messenger's life, its private and public aspects, an open book for the benefit of his followers and humanity at large. They can read in it all aspects of the Quranic message and its practical implementation. Therefore, there is nothing in it that is secret or limited to a closed circle. Indeed, many of its aspects are stated in the Quran, revealing things that for an ordinary person are normally kept private. Indeed, even those aspects of human weakness, which are beyond our control, are left open for all to see. We almost see the wisdom behind so revealing such aspects of the Messenger's life to humanity. Nothing in his person or in his life belongs exclusively to him. He and all aspects of his life belong to his message. Why should, then, any aspect of his life be hidden? His life is the Quranic message, something that is both close to us and easy to implement. The Messenger is assigned the task of presenting it in practice in his own life, just as he presents it by word and directive. This is the role assigned to him.

His Companions—may God be pleased with them and reward them well—conveyed to us all the details of his life. Nothing, whether of little or great importance in his daily life, is left unrecorded. It was part of God's will to have such a detailed record of His Messenger's life, or rather to have a detailed record of the Quranic message as lived by the Messenger. What his Companions reported is added to what the Quran records of the Messenger's life and both form an everlasting record of this noble life, which benefits all humanity.

THE MESSENGER'S WIVES

In its opening section, this Chapter presents an episode of life in the Messenger's home, showing some of the reactions and responses between some of his wives, and between them and himself. It also shows how these reactions and responses were reflected in the life of the Muslim community as a whole. This is followed by directives given to the community on the basis of what took place in the Messenger's homes, between his wives. The time when these events took place is not precise, but reference to the various reports detailing them confirm that they definitely occurred after the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab bint Jahsh.

It may also be useful to give here a summary of the Messenger's marriages and his home life at that time. This will enable us to visualize the events referred to in the Chapter. This brief outline is based on the work by Ibn Hazm and the Messenger's biography by Ibn Hisham. We will also add some brief comments as appropriate.

The Messenger's first wife was Khadija bint Khuwaylid. He was 25 when he married her. She was 40. She died three years before the Prophet's migration to Madinah. He did not marry another wife during her lifetime, and by then he was over 50 years of age.

After Khadijah's death, the Messenger married Sawdah bint Zimah. She was a widow of al-Sakran ibn Amr ibn Abd Shams. Her husband was one of the early Muslims, and he was among the first migrants to Abyssinia. When he died, the Messenger married her.

He then married Ayisha bint Abu Bakr. She apparently was young, and he did not hold his wedding with her until he had settled in Madinah. She was the only virgin he married. It is said that she was only nine years of age at the time of her marriage. By the time he passed away, she had been with him nine years and five months.

The Messenger then married Hafsa bint Umar, just over two years after settling in Madinah. She had been married before. Her father had offered her in marriage to Abu Bakr and to Uthman, but they both declined. The Messenger had promised her father something better for her so he married her himself.

The Prophet also married Umm Salamah. Her first husband, Abu Salamah, was wounded at the Battle of Uhud, and his wound did not heal until he died. The Prophet then married her, looking after her children by her first husband.

He then married Zaynab bint Khuzayma. Her first husband, Ubaydah ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib, was killed at the Battle of Badr. Zaynab died during the Prophet's lifetime. It is also reported that her first husband was Abd Allah ibn Jahsh who fell a martyr at the Battle of Uhud. Perhaps this report is more accurate.

Zaynab bint Jahsh was his next wife. He himself had given her in marriage to Zayd ibn Harithah, his former servant whom he had adopted as a son, but marital life between her and Zayd was fraught with difficulties. So, Zayd divorced her. She was pretty. Indeed, she was the one Ayisha's felt most able to compete with because she was the Prophet's cousin, born to his paternal aunt, and because of her beauty.

Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith was the next wife to be taken by the Messenger. This was in the middle of the sixth year of the Islamic calendar. Ibn Ishaq attributes the following report to Ayisha: When the Prophet distributed the women taken as POW/slaves after the Expedition of al-Mustalaq, Juwayriyyah fell to Thabit ibn Qays ibn Shammas or his cousin. She made an agreement with him to buy her own freedom. She was very pretty. Anyone who saw her felt very attracted. She went to the Messenger seeking his help in paying what she owed for her freedom. When I saw her at my doorstep, I hated her, realizing that the Messenger would see of her beauty what I saw. She entered his room and said to him: Messenger of God. I am Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith. My father is the chief of his tribe. You are not unaware of the trouble that has befallen me. I am here to seek your help in paying for my freedom after I had made an agreement to so buy myself. The Messenger said to her: What about something better? She asked him: What is that, Messenger of God? He said: I will pay for your freedom and marry you. She said: I accept. He said: It is done.

Mariyah the Copt, a POW/slave/concubine was presented to the Messenger by the ruler of Egypt. She bore him a son named Ibrahim who died at a young age. Mariyah remained a POW/slave-concubine.

The Messenger married Umm Habibah bint Abu Sufyan after the al-Hudaybiyah Peace Treaty. She had migrated to Abyssinia, but her husband, Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh, who converted to Christianity there and left her. The Messenger proposed marriage to her. It was King Negus who officiated at the marriage and paid her dowry on behalf of the Prophet. She then returned to Madinah.

Following the Battle of Khaybar, the Messenger married Safiyyah bint Huyayy ibn Akhtab. Her father was the chief of the Jewish tribe, al-Nadir. She had been married to Kinanah ibn Abl al-Huqayq, a Jewish leader. Ibn Ishaq reports that she was brought to him with another woman who had fallen prisoner. Bilal walked them through the battlefield passing a number of Jews who had been slain. The other woman cried out loud as they passed by, throwing dust over her own head. The Messenger said: Take this devil woman away

from me. He ordered that Safiyyah be kept behind him, throwing his robe over her. His Companions thereby realized that he would take her himself. The Messenger is reported to have said to Bilal: Are you devoid of compassion? How can you walk two women through the grounds where their men folk have been killed?

Maymunah bint al-Harith ibn Hazn was the maternal aunt of Khalid ibn al-Walid and Abd Allah ibn Abbas. Before marrying the Messenger she was married to Abu Ruhm ibn Abd al-Uzza, or perhaps, Huwaytib ibn Abd al-Uzza.

Rayhanah bin Zayd from the Jewish al-Nadir tribe captured with the POW/slave-concubines after the defeat of the Qurayzah tribe. She remained his POW/slave-concubine until her death. She died before the Messenger.

At the death of the Messenger, three of his wives had passed away before him and Mariyah remained a POW/slave-concubine after his death. Many of the tribes had been eager to claim a marriage relationship with the Messenger.

Thus, we see the special reasons that made it necessary for the Messenger to marry each of his wives. He was chosen as a human being, but with superior qualities and characteristics. Different as they were, his motives for whatever he did in his life, including his marriages, matched his superior qualities. In his home, he lived with his wives as a human being entrusted with the delivery of God's message. Indeed, God commanded him to declare the fact: *Say: Glory be to my Lord! Have I been but a mortal Messenger?* (17:93)

THE EVENT

The opening section **(66:1-66:7)** of the Chapter speaks of an event in the lives of the Prophet and his wives. Based on this incident and the directives issued in connection with it, particularly the request that the two conspirators among the Prophets wives repent, the Chapter also calls on believers to repent of their sins and requires that heads of families ensure their families are well brought up. They are specifically urged to protect themselves and their families from hell. A direct image of hell is also included here. The Chapter then concludes by citing various examples. Noah's and Lot's wives are shown as examples of ingratitude in a house emanating belief, while Pharaoh's wife is depicted as someone holding to right faith while living in a house full of the ungrateful. Mary is also shown as a pure woman who received a breath of God's spirit and believed in God's words and scriptures. **(66:1-66:5)**

THE REPORTS

The Prophet used to have a honey drink at Zaynab bint Jahsh's home and then stay for some time with her. Hafsa and Ayisha secretly agreed that when he came to either of them they would say to him: You have eaten *maghadfir* (*maghdfir* is a glue-like type of food with a sweet taste and bad smell); I can smell it. When this occurred, he said: No. I only had a honey drink at Zaynab's. I will not do it again, and I have made an oath to this effect. Do not tell anyone of this. This is what he prohibited himself, even though it was permissible for him to have.

It seems that either Ayisha or Hafsa told her co-conspirator of the Messenger's decision to no longer take this honey drink. God then informed him of the same. He went back to her and mentioned some of what went on between the two of them, but without recounting it all in order not to embarrass her. He only touched upon the subject so that she realized that he was aware of it all. Surprised, she asked him: Who told you all this? It might have occurred to her that his other wife was the one to tell him. *He said: The Knowing, The Aware told me.* **(66:3)**

His information, then, was given by the One who knows it all, which, in turn, implies that the Messenger was also aware of it in toto, not merely what he mentioned to her.

This incident angered the Messenger, exposing as it did that intrigue was going on in his home. He, therefore, swore that he would not touch any of his wives for a full month. People in the Muslim community also heard that the Messenger was thinking of divorcing his wives. This Chapter was then revealed and the Messenger's anger subsided. Subsequently, he resumed his life with his wives.

THE QURANIC DISCUSSION

We will now look at its treatment in the Quran. The Chapter begins with a mild reproach by God to His Messenger: *O Prophet! Why have you forbidden what God permitted to thee. Looking for the goodwill of your spouses? And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. God imposed on you the dissolution of such of your oaths. And God is your Defender. And He is The Knowing, The Wise.* **(66:1-66:2)**

The reproach is mild but effective. It is not proper for a believer to prohibit himself something that God has made lawful. The Prophet had not imposed a legal prohibition on himself with regard to the honey drink he liked or to Mariyah. He only decided to refrain from enjoying either. This gentle reproach makes it clear that it is not right to deliberately deprive oneself of what God has made lawful in order

to appease someone else. The comment at the end of the sign is: *And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(66:1)** This suggests that such deliberate action would require questioning unless it was overlooked by an act of God's forgiveness and grace.

As for the oath that the Quranic text suggests the Messenger made, God stated a way for him to release himself from it. This means that an oath that establishes a situation other than what is best should be atoned for so as to release oneself from it and then take up the better option. *And God is your Defender.* **(66:2)** He helps you to overcome your weaknesses and to cope with what may be hard for you. Therefore, he has ordained for you a way out of your oaths so as to ensure that you do not incur unnecessary hardship. *And He is The Knowing, The Wise.* **(66:2)** He legislates for you on the basis of His absolute knowledge and perfect wisdom. He only commands you to do what is within your power and what is best suited for you. Therefore, do not prohibit yourselves anything other than what He has forbidden, and continue to make lawful only what He has made lawful. It is clear that the comment here fits perfectly with the directive already stated.

The Chapter then refers to what the Prophet said to one of his wives, but mentions neither its subject matter nor its details. None of this is important. What is important, however, is what it signified and the knock-on effects it generated: *And mention when the Prophet confided to one of his spouses a discourse.* **(66:3)** What we are looking at here is something unique in human history. We are looking at a period when there was direct contact between heaven and ordinary people. Here is a direct, public and detailed intervention by heaven in human affairs. God informs the Messenger of a conversation between two of his wives concerning something he had told one of them in confidence. When the Messenger mentioned this to the wife who had divulged it, he only hinted at a certain aspect of it, rather than giving her a detailed account. At the same time, he also informed her of the source of his information: it was the One solid source that could not be mistaken: *She, then, told it to another. God disclosed to him of it. He acquainted her with some of it and turned aside some of it. When he told her about it, she said: Who communicated this to you? He said: The Knowing, The Aware told me.* **(66:3)**

The choice of God's attributes of perfect knowledge and complete awareness of everything particularly suit the conspiratory situation under discussion. Thus, the one who asked the question is reminded of that which she might have forgotten or overlooked. We are all so reminded whenever we read the Quran.

A change of style then follows. The Chapter is no longer report-

ing an incident; it is now addressing the two women involved, as if the matter is taking place at this very moment: *If you two repent to God, the hearts of you both will be bent towards it. And if you helped one another against him, then, truly, God, He is his Defender and Gabriel and ones in accord with morality, the ones who believe. And the angels after that are his sustainers.* **(66:4)** They are, thus, invited to turn to God in repentance after their hearts had swerved from rightful action.

We so realize that the incident had such a profound effect on the Messenger as to require the statement that he is given full protection by God. Furthermore, Gabriel, the believers and all angels stand ready to give him their full support. The Messenger is thus reassured and comforted after this serious breach of confidence. Indeed, the whole situation must have been considered as very serious, implying far-reaching consequences for it to have necessitated such assurances. They felt that the Messenger's own comfort and the maintenance of serenity and peace in his home were more important than anything else. This, then, gives us a clear indication of how the Muslim community viewed these developments, a view in line with how heaven treated it. It is, then, a correct view.

The next sign provides similar import. It details the qualities of the women whom God may give to His Messenger, should he divorce his current wives. This is addressed to all his wives by way of an implicit threat: *Perhaps if he divorced you (f), his Lord will cause in exchange for him spouses better than you (f), ones who submit (f) to One God, ones who believe (f), ones who are morally obligated (f), ones who repent, ones who worship (f), ones who are inclined to fasting (f), women previously married and virgins.* **(66:5)** They are, thus, indirectly called upon to adopt these qualities. The first quality is full submission to God and the fulfilment of all religious obligations. Next, is complete faith that leads to surrendering oneself to God, which is the literal meaning of the Arabic word *islam*. Devotion, the third quality, means conscious obedience of God. The Messenger's wives should also be penitent, which means that they should regret any slip into sin and follow this by turning to do God's bidding. To worship in humility is another quality they should possess. It is the means by which to communicate with God and express our submission to Him. Thoughtful reflection is how we have translated the quality the Chapter that literally means wandering, contemplating. What it means here is that they always reflect on God's creation and contemplate the great universe He has created. Having all these qualities, these new wives would be either virgins or previously married, in the same way as the Messenger married those wives already with

him.

This warning was apparently necessary because of the telling effect their conspiracy had on the Messenger, incurring his anger. He was never given to anger, but the matter was clearly serious. The Messenger felt comforted and reassured when these signs were revealed, addressing him personally as also members of his household. Thereafter, the atmosphere in his blessed home regained its serenity as a direct result of God's statements. This was an honor given to the Prophet and his household, given their important role in the solid implementation of God's code for human life.

We have thus seen a picture of the home life of the man who was entrusted with establishing a nation and a state on hitherto unknown lines. This nation was to be entrusted with the fulfilment of divine faith in its final form. It was to be the practical establishment of a devout society that sets the example for future generations. We see also a picture of a man of exceptional greatness and nobility. Yet, he lived his humanity just as he fulfilled the tasks of his prophethood; the two were intertwined. It was God's will that he should be a human Messenger delivering His last message to humanity, outlining a perfect code for all humanity.

It is a perfect message delivered by a perfect Messenger. One aspect of its perfection is that its every adherent remains a human being: none of his abilities or talents are suppressed or prevented from developing and flourishing. At the same time, it cultivates and educates him so as to attain the highest standard within his power.

Thus has been the method of the Quranic message with those who understood it well and who have molded their lives on the basis of its teachings. They became living examples of it. The Messenger's practical life, with all that it involved of human experience, endeavours, strengths and weaknesses, was intertwined with the divine message. As we see in the case of those who were closest to him and his own family, his life was the practical example of how to live the message. It set the model for those who wish to learn an easy and practical way of implementing God's message. It also steered away from theoretical assumptions that have no practical effect.

God's purpose was thus fulfilled: the final message to humanity was revealed in full, the Messenger who could receive it and give it its practical form was chosen, and his life was left as an open book for all, studied and reviewed by one generation after another.

A BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Now the Chapter addresses the believers enjoining them to fulfil their family duties, providing good education, admonition and re-

minders so that they protect themselves and their families from hell. It provides an image of the fire and how the ungrateful stand before it. In line with the call to those involved in the earlier event to turn to God in repentance, the same call is made to the believers, adding an image of heaven which awaits those who repent of their sins. This second section of the Chapter concludes with a call on the Messenger to strive hard against the ungrateful and the hypocrites:

O those who believed! Protect yourselves and your people from a fire whose fuel is humanity and rocks over which are angels, harsh, severe who rebel not against whatever God commanded them and they accomplish what they are commanded. O those who were ungrateful! Make not excuses this Day. You are only given recompense for what you had been doing. **(66:6-66:7)**

A believer's responsibility with regard to himself and his family is heavy and awesome. He and his family are liable to punishment in the fire of hell and it is his responsibility to protect himself and his family from such a dreadful fate. It is a terrible fire *whose fuel is humanity and rocks,* **(66:6)** People there are treated in the same way as stones: cheap, abject and thrown away with a total disregard as to what may happen to them. A fire fuelled by stones must blaze fiercely, and a torment that combines its scourge with humiliation compounds the suffering. Everything about it is absolutely terrible: *over which are angels, harsh, severe* so that they suit the punishment they are required to administer: *who rebel not against whatever God commanded them and they accomplish what they are commanded.* **(66:6)** By nature they always obey every command God gives them, and are well able to carry out any such assignment. Possessing such qualities, they are chosen to guard the fire of hell, while every believer is responsible for protecting himself and his family from it. He has to attend to his responsibility now, in this life, before it is too late. When the chance is gone, no excuse is acceptable. The unbelievers will try to present excuses, but they are confronted with the facts that leave them in utter despair: *O those who were ungrateful! Make not excuses this Day. You are only given recompense for what you had been doing.* **(66:7)** That day is not a time for presenting excuses. It is the day when reward and punishment are given. The unbelievers will only take what their own actions incur.

The Quranic message speaks of a faith that takes care of the family. Therefore, it sets certain duties and responsibilities a believer must fulfil with regard to his home and family. The home is the nucleus of the Muslim community. Muslim families are the cells that make up the Muslim society. Every single home is a fortress of faith that must have no flaw in its internal structure. Everyone inside

guards their positions so that no external enemy can infiltrate them. Otherwise, the whole society would be penetrated from within, and so would fall apart should any external attack occur. It is the first duty of a believer to attend to his home and family so that it is internally solid and well guarded. Before he tries to present his message to others, he must close any loophole within.

In this set up, a Muslim mother has an essential role to play; a Muslim father cannot on his own ensure the security of the fortress. Together, the two must cooperate fully in the upbringing of their sons and daughters. A group of men on their own can never succeed in establishing a Muslim society. Indeed, it is women who have a more important role to play in taking care of the new generation and safeguarding the future of the Muslim community. Hence, the Quran addressed both men and women. It set out a system for the Muslim home, placing on believers a clear responsibility for their families, in the same way as they are responsible for themselves:*O those who believed! Protect yourselves and your people from a fire whose fuel is humanity and rocks.* **(66:6)**

Advocates of the Quranic message must be fully aware of this and ensure that they put it into practice. Their first efforts must be addressed to their homes: to their wives and mothers first, and to their children and the rest of their families. Great importance should be attached to the education of the Muslim woman, so that she can make her family home a Muslim home. Anyone who wants his home to be based on the Quranic message must start by choosing a Muslim wife. Otherwise, the formation of a Muslim community will take far too long and its structure will remain weak and flawed.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?

6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Prophet is told to tell the servants of God that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. How will the servants of God be treated in the next life? They will be amidst gardens and springs. They will enter in peace as ones who are safe. God will reward His servants. Those who are the servants of God will receive a great compensation. The consequences for those who are servants of God will be eternal peace. The servants of God will be rewarded.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

LESSON 107(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment just as Umar al-Khattab had been regarding the conversion of the people around him. What were they listening to? What was Muhammad telling them: Why would my sister and her husband have converted? What is special about this message?.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 66: THE FORBIDDING (AL-TAHRIM)
SIGNS 66:8-66:12

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Turn to God for forgiveness
remorsefully, faithfully.
Perhaps your Lord will absolve you
of your evil deeds and cause you to enter into Gardens
beneath which rivers run.
On the Day God will not cover
the Prophet with shame and those who believed with him.
Their light will hasten about between them and on their right.
They will say: Our Lord! Fulfill for us our light and forgive us.
Truly, ***You*** *are Powerful over everything.* (66:8)
O Prophet! Struggle against the ones who are ungrateful
and the ones who are hypocrites
and be ***you*** *harsh against them.*
And their place of shelter will be hell.
And miserable will be the Homecoming! (66:9)
God propounded an example for those,
ones who are ungrateful,
like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot.
They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants,
ones who are in accord with morality.
But they both (f) betrayed them
so they avail them not against God at all.
And it was said: Enter the fire along with ones who enter. (66:10)
And God propounded an example for those who believed:

Behold the woman of Pharaoh; she said:
My Lord, build for me near ***You*** *a house in the Garden*
and deliver ***You*** *me from Pharaoh and his actions*
and deliver me from the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (66:11)
And Mary, the daughter of Imran,
who guarded her private parts,
so We breathed into it of Our Spirit
and she established as true the Words of her Lord
and His Books and she had been
among the ones who are morally obligated. (66:12)

COMMENTARY°

O those who believed! Turn to God for forgiveness remorsefully, faithfully. Perhaps your Lord will absolve you of your evil deeds and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run. On the Day God will not cover the Prophet with shame and those who believed with him. Their light will hasten about between them and on their right. They will say: Our Lord! Fulfill for us our light and forgive us. Truly, ***You*** *are Powerful over everything. O Prophet! Struggle against the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be* ***you*** *harsh against them. And their place of shelter will be hell. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(66:8-66:9)**

How are the believers to protect themselves and their families from the fire of hell? The way is mapped out for them, and they are further equipped with great hope: *O those who believed! Turn to God for forgiveness remorsefully, faithfully. Perhaps your Lord will absolve you of your evil deeds and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run. On the Day God will not cover the Prophet with shame and those who believed with him. Their light will hasten about between them and on their right. They will say: Our Lord! Fulfill for us our light and forgive us. Truly,* ***You*** *are Powerful over everything.* **(66:8)** The way, then, begins with sincere repentance setting the heart on an honest course that allows no deception. This means genuine regret for past sins and a commitment to do what is good and required. Such repentance is certain to rid a persons heart of any residue sin may leave behind and encourages only what is good. Both qualities are necessary to make the repentance sincere and effective.

When repentance is sincere, it brings with it a hope that God will forgive the repentant their sins and admit them into heaven on the day when the ungrateful are given their humiliating punishment. No disgrace will on that day attach to the Messenger or those who

followed him and accepted his message. This prospect is very tempting as it brings about great honor, with the believers being joined to the Messenger as one group treated with dignity when others are shamed. Furthermore, they are given light that *their light will hasten about between them and on their right.* **(66:8)** Thus they are identified among the great multitude, and they can find their way to their ultimate goal, which is heaven.

In that fearful position when everyone is in the grip of worried anticipation, they are inspired with a humble prayer: *They will say: Our Lord! Fulfill for us our light and forgive us. Truly, You are Powerful over everything.* **(66:8)** The fact that they say such a prayer when the situation makes everyone speechless is a sign that their prayer will be answered. God inspires believers to offer such a prayer only when He will be pleased to answer it. This means that their very prayer is a blessing God bestows on them in addition to the honor and the light already given to them.

How different all this is from the fire fuelled by people and stones! However, both reward and punishment highlight the responsibility of every believer to protect himself and his family from the fire and to place them in a position where they deserve to receive the reward of heaven. In the light of the event that took place in the Prophet's home, we can appreciate the message given in these verses. A believer is responsible for setting his household on the right way, just as he is responsible for ensuring that he purges his heart of sin and follows divine guidance.

OUR OWN HARD TASK

The situation with the first Muslim community was easier than it is in our present day. A Muslim society was already established in Madinah, where the Quranic message, its vision of a clean, virtuous human life and its laws based on this vision were the driving force. Men and women looked up to God and His Messenger for judgment. When judgment was given, it was accepted as final. In such a society, it was easy for women to mold themselves as the message wanted them to be. Likewise, it was easy for husbands to advise their wives and bring up their children in line with the Quranic system.

We are now in a totally different situation, as we have sunk back into a state of ignorance that influences our society, its laws, morality, traditions, systems, manners and culture. Women find themselves in the midst of this society and feel its crushing pressures as they try to bring their lives in line with the Quranic message, whether on their own initiative or guided by their fathers, husbands or brothers.

In that first Muslim community, the man, the woman and society

all had the same perspective and looked to the same source for judgment. In our own time, the man is looking up to a theoretical abstract while the woman writhes under the heavy pressure of a society that is extremely hostile to her perspective. There is no doubt that the pressures society brings to bear on women are many times greater than its pressure on men.

A Muslim man must realize the size of his responsibility in order to address it properly. This requires that he exert much greater efforts than a Muslim man in the first Muslim community. This is why it is essential for anyone who wants to establish a Muslim home to look first of all for a partner who can guard his fort. She must be a woman who derives her perspective from the same source, the Quranic message. He will have to sacrifice certain things. He must sacrifice superficial attractions that society presents, looking instead for a woman of firm belief who will help him in building a Muslim family. Muslim fathers who want to be part of the Quranic revival must also realize that the new cells in this revival are a trust they must safeguard. It is their task to educate, cultivate and bring them up on the Quranic message before they address their message to anyone else.

Once more we refer to the nature of the Quranic message that requires the establishment of a community that runs its affairs according to the message and gives it a practical presence. The Quranic message is based on the need to establish a community that believes in it and adopts it as a way of life and a code of law. It is from the Quranic message, the complete and perfect system, that this community derives all its concepts and perspectives. Such a community is the fertile soil where the message finds its practical model. Within this community, people look at this model and feel free of the pressures of an non-Quranic society. Moreover, the Muslim community ensures that its members are not subjected to any persecution.

We, thus, see the importance of establishing a Muslim community where Muslim girls and women live, protected from the crushing pressures of the non-Quranic society around them. In such a community they are no longer torn apart by their own Quranic perspective and traditions that are non-Quranic.

It is essential rather than merely desirable for a Quranic community to be established along the lines of its message, adopting its ideas, morality, manners and life concepts and implementing them within its own ranks. Only such a community can safeguard its concepts and values, advocating them in a practical way, seen by all. Thus individuals in an non-Quranic society, who are addressed by the advocates of the message, will look at the Quranic way of life and be motivated to come out of the darkness in which they live and

replace it with the light the Quran provides. Eventually, when God wills that the Quranic message should triumph, new generations will be raised under its care, protected from the ignorance that has long prevailed.

It was to protect the first Muslim community that the command was issued to the Prophet to strive hard against those who take a hostile stand towards it: *O Prophet! Struggle against the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. And their place of shelter will be hell. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(66:9)** This is particularly significant in light of the earlier command to the believers to protect themselves and their families against the non-Quranic message. It is also significant in respect of the invitation given to them to sincerely repent of their sins so that their bad deeds are erased and they are admitted into heaven. It highlights the importance of safeguarding the environment where protection from takes place. Thus, oppressive and wicked elements are not allowed to attack the Muslim community whether from outside, as the ungrateful used to do, or from within as the hypocrites did.

In its order to strive hard against the enemies of the Quranic message, the Quranic statement groups together both the ungrateful and the hypocrites because they shared the same mission—the destruction of the Muslim community, or at least its disintegration. To strive against them is, then, the sort of effort that protects from the fire, and to be hard against them is the proper response required of the Prophet and the believers in this present life. As for the life to come: *And their place of shelter will be hell. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(66:9)**

We note that the harmonious tune this second section of the Chapter sings of its message is also in perfect harmony with the first section that dealt with a particular event in the Messenger's own home.

CONTRASTING EXAMPLES

The final signs of the Chapter sounds as if it is a direct continuation of its first. It speaks of ungrateful women married to Prophets and women believers in the midst of the ungrateful:

God has given examples of unbelievers: Noah's wife and Lot's wife. *God propounded an example for those, ones who are ungrateful like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot. They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants, ones who are in accord with morality. But they both (f) betrayed them so they avail them not against God at all. And it was said: Enter the fire along with ones*

who enter. And God propounded an example for those who believed: Behold the woman of Pharaoh; she said: My Lord, build for me near You a house in the Garden and deliver You me from Pharaoh and his actions and deliver me from the folk, the ones who are unjust. And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her private parts, so We breathed into it of Our Spirit and she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been among the ones who are morally obligated. **(66:10-66:12)**

Reports speaking of the betrayal of Noah and Lot by their wives suggest that it was a betrayal of their messages, rather than their being unfaithful to their marriage bonds. Noah's wife used to join the ungrateful in his community in making fun of him, while Lot's wife used to inform his people when he received guests, knowing what they tried to do with such visitors.

Similarly, reports concerning Pharaoh's wife make it clear that she lived in his palace as a believer in God Almighty, and suggest that she was of Asian origin following a divine religion that was revealed before the time of Moses.

Having made an order to believers to protect themselves and their families from incurring punishment in hell, the Chapter now highlights the principle of individual responsibility. The Prophet's wives, and indeed wives of all believers, are told here that ultimately they are personally accountable for what they do and the decisions they make. Their individual responsibility cannot be waived merely because they are married to a Prophet or to a devout believer. *God propounded an example for those, ones who are ungrateful like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot. They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants, ones who are in accord with morality. But they both (f) betrayed them so they avail them not against God at all. And it was said: Enter the fire along with ones who enter.* **(66:10)** When the question is one of belief or ingratitude, or one of betrayal of faith, there can be no special privilege for anyone, not even for Messenger's wives.

Pharaoh's wife gives the perfect contrast. She was living in the midst of sweeping ingratitude, but that did not deter her from seeking her own personal safety. She disowned all connection with Pharaoh's palace, praying to God to grant her a home in heaven. She disavowed any relation with Pharaoh, praying that God grant her safety from him. Realizing that as Pharaoh's wife she was the closest person to him and his actions, she feared that some blame might attach to her. She, therefore, made it clear that she had nothing to do with all this, further praying to God that He keep her away from it: *Deliver You me from Pharaoh and his actions* **(66:11)** She disowned Pharaoh's

people while at the same time living in their midst: *And deliver me from the folk, the ones who are unjust* **(66:11)**

The prayer of Pharaoh's wife and her overall position is a shining example of rejecting all temptation that the life of this world can offer, even at its most splendid. Pharaoh was the most powerful king on earth, and his palace offered the best that a woman could desire. Yet his wife chose faith in preference to all this. She did not merely treat it with contempt; she considered it evil and sought refuge with God from yielding to it, praying to be saved from it and its consequences. Yet Pharaoh's wife was a woman standing on her own in the midst of a great kingdom, which makes her all the more admirable and gives her an even greater position. As we have stated earlier, women are more sensitive and responsive to social pressures. However, this woman, on her own, resisted the pressures exerted by society, the palace, the throne, the courtiers and her own royal position, lifting her head to heaven seeking its light. She certainly provides a great example of submission to God, resisting all temptations and overcoming all impediments. Hence she deserved her special mention in God's book, the words of which are echoed throughout the universe as they are revealed from on high.

And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her private parts, so We breathed into it of Our Spirit and she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been among the ones who are morally obligated. **(66:12)** Thus, her innocence is made absolutely clear, refuting any vile accusations against her: *So We breathed into it of Our Spirit.* **(66:12)** It was from this breathing of God's spirit into her that Jesus, her son, was born, as detailed in Chapter 19, Mary. We will not go into the details of his birth here, limiting ourselves only to the discussion of the present text which highlights Mary;s purity, complete faith and total obedience of God: *And she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been among the ones who are morally obligated.* **(66:12)**

The fact that Pharaoh's wife is the one chosen to be mentioned here together with Mary is indicative of her own sublime status; a status enhanced by the special circumstances of her own life. Both women are splendid examples of women who combined firm faith with purity of behavior and total devotion. God sets these two examples for the Messenger's own wives in the context of the event reported in the first section of the Chapter. They are also examples set before believing women in all generations.

This Chapter gives us a glimpse of the Messenger's own life, drawn in the inspiring style of the Quran. No human report speaking of the period can give us a similar picture. This because Quranic expressions are more inspiring and far-reaching. In this way, a single

event is cited to state the truth that remains valid for the rest of time.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran reiterates that the Hour is that which will come. How does the Quranic message tell the Prophet to behave towards the ungrateful? Be graciously forgiving of them as their fate rests with God. The fate of everyone is in the hands of God. We are not responsible for the actions of others. We are each responsible for our own actions. The Hour will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I don't waste time. All people waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in tr[illegible] I could have left a half hour
Sometimes Ie w
Sometimes I sp
Sometimes I ju

LESSON 108(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

QURANIC CHAPTER 64: THE MUTUAL LOSS AND GAIN (AL-TAGHABUN)

SIGNS 64:1-64:10

Madinah: *Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God*
and whatever is in and on the earth.
His is the dominion and to Him belongs all the praise.
And He is Powerful over everything. (64:1)
He it is Who created you:
So some of you are ones who disbelieve
and some of you are ones who believe.
And God is Seeing of what you do. (64:2)
He created the heavens and the earth
with The Truth and He formed you
and formed your forms well.
And to Him is the Homecoming! (64:3)
He knows what is in the heavens and the earth
and He knows what you keep secret
and what you speak openly.
And God is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (64:4)
Approaches you not the tiding
of those who were ungrateful before?
They experienced the mischief of their affair
and there is a painful punishment for them. (64:5)
That had been because their Messengers approach them
with the clear portents, but they said:
Will mortals guide us?
So they were ungrateful and turned away.
And God is Self-Sufficient.
And God is Rich, Worthy of Praise. (64:6)
Those who were ungrateful claimed

that they will never be raised up.
Say: Yea! By my Lord, you will, certainly, be raised up.
Again, you will be told of what you did.
And that is easy for God. (64:7)
So believe in God and His Messenger,
*and in the Light *
which We caused to descend.
And God is Aware of what you do. (64:8)
On a Day when He will amass you for the Day of Gathering,
that will be the day of the mutual loss and gain,
and whoever believes in God
and does as one in accord with morality,
He will absolve him of his evil deeds
and He will cause him to enter Gardens
beneath which rivers run
as ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.
That will be winning the sublime triumph. (64:9)
But for those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs,
those are the Companions of the Fire,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
And miserable will be the Homecoming! (64:10)

COMMENTARY°

PROLOGUE

The signs from the beginning up to the direct address to the believers in **(64:14)** aim to establish the foundations of faith and to instil the Quranic message. It addresses the ungrateful directly, presenting its theme to them. It uses universal and psychological effects and portrays images of the destruction of earlier communities that denied God's messages. It also presents images of the Day of Judgment, emphatically confirming resurrection. This indicates that the addressees denied it altogether.

The last signs, from **(64:14-64:18)**, address the believers in a manner similar to that used in Chapters revealed in Madinah, urging them to spend their money in the service of God's cause, and warning them against failure in the test that their riches and children represent. Similar addresses can be found in many Chapters of the Madinah period, and this because of the problems faced by the fledgling Muslim community there. This address also includes a comforting aspect to help the Muslims bear with patience any reversals, calamities or burdens; all these are attributed to God's will. This is the concept these Chapters seek to confirm, particularly after the command given to the Muslim community to fight for God's cause and what this in-

volves of sacrifice.

THE CREATOR AND HIS CREATION

The first section of the Chapter **(64:1-64:10)** aims to establish the proper concept of the universe based on faith, present the true bond between the Creator and the universe He has created, and mention some of God's names and attributes as well as their effect on the universe and on human life:

All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extol the limitless glory of God; all sovereignty belongs to Him and all praise is due to Him. He has power over all things. It is He who has created you, yet some of you are ungrateful and some do believe. God sees all that you do. He has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with the truth, and fashioned you, giving you a comely appearance. To Him all shall return. He knows what is in the heavens and the earth; and He knows what you conceal and what you reveal. God has full knowledge of the secrets of all hearts. **(64:1-64:4)**

This concept is one hundred per cent accurate. It depicts what believers have always known and followed. All divine messages have preached the concept of God's Oneness and His creation of everything in the universe. They all make it clear that God takes care of everyone and everything in the universe. We have no doubt about this, since the Quran confirms the same about all God's Messengers and the messages they advocated. Therefore, we pay little attention to what we find today in distorted scriptures or to what is written on comparative religion by people who do not believe in the Quran, in whole or in part. Deviation from the true divine faith is the result of what has been introduced by some followers of these messages, giving the appearance that they did not preach the pure concept of God's Oneness, or that God is not in full control and direct contact with every creature. All this is deviation and does not belong to the original form of any divine religion, which remains the same from the first to the last of God's messages. It is impossible that God should have sent down a religion that is in conflict with these essential principles, as alleged by scriptures that have been distorted.

This pure concept allows the human mind to understand, as best as it can, the true nature of Godhead, feel the power of the Almighty, and recognize it in everything we see in the universe. We can thus see the work of this supreme power within ourselves, live within its scope, and appreciate its effects that cannot be removed from our senses or our minds. We see it encompassing everything, conducting all affairs, controlling all events, taking care of all. Nothing escapes it, small or large, trivial or important. This means that the human

heart will always be highly sensitive, truly alert, entertaining feelings of apprehension and expectation, fear and hope. Thus the human being goes about life, looking up to God with every move and every action, feeling His power and realizing that He sees all, watches all and controls all. Yet He is also ever merciful to all and bestows His grace on everyone and in all situations.

Moreover, this concept enables us to feel that the entire universe turns to its Lord. So, we turn with the universe and join it in extolling God's limitless glory. We realize that the whole universe is controlled by God's will, subject to His wisdom, and so we submit to His law. This is why we describe it as a universal concept of faith. Its universality is emphasized in a variety of ways throughout the Quran.

GOD'S LIMITLESS POWER

Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God and whatever is in and on the earth. His is the dominion and to Him belongs all the praise. **(64:1)** Everything in the heavens and the earth turns towards their Lord, extolling His limitless glory and praising Him. The heart of this universe is a believing heart, and the soul of everything that exists is a believer. God owns all, and they all know this truth. God is praised in Himself, glorified by all His creation. When the alone stands in the midst of this great universe rebelling against the truth, cold-hearted, spiritless, turning away from his Lord and Master, refusing to glorify Him, he is at odds with all, discarded by all.

And He is Powerful over everything. **(64:1)** His is absolute, limitless and unrestricted power. The Quran impresses this truth on every believer's heart. As the believer recognizes its significance, he knows that placing his trust in God alone means that he relies on the power that can do and achieve everything, without limit or restriction. This understanding of God's power and His glorification and praise by all that exists is part of the universal concept of faith that the Quranic message formulates.

The second point penetrates deep into the human heart. It is the human being alone who stands in the midst of the universe in two states of belief and unbelief, while all the universe believes in its Creator, and extols His limitless glory and praise: *He it is Who created you: So some of you are ones who disbelieve and some of you are ones who believe.* **(64:2)** It is by God's will and through His power that the human being was originated. He gave him the ability to turn to or away from faith. Thus, the human being is distinguished among God's creation by this dual ability. Therefore, he is assigned the great trust and momentous responsibility of faith. God has honored this creature by giving him the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood;

furthermore, the choice is up to him. He has also given him the standard by which he can evaluate his own actions and determine his way. This standard is the religion God revealed to human Messengers. In this way, God has helped the human being to shoulder the trust assigned to him, depriving him of nothing that he needs. *And God is Seeing of what you do.* **(64:2)** He watches a person's actions, knows his true intentions and the direction he takes. Let the human being, then, go about life alert to the fact that he is watched by the One who sees all. This concept of human nature is part of the clear and straightforward Quranic concept of the human being's position in the universe, as well as his abilities and responsibilities towards the Creator of the universe.

The third point emphasizes the truth that is inherent in the nature of the universe and which ensures the proper functioning of the heavens and the earth. It also highlights the fine beauty of God's creation as seen in the creation of the human being. It also makes it clear that all creatures will ultimately return to Him: *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth and He formed you and formed your forms well.* **(64:3)**

The first sentence in this sign: *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth* implants in a believer's mind that the truth is firmly established in the very foundation of this universe. It is neither transitory nor incidental. The very structure of the universe is founded on this basis. This is stated by none other than God who created the heavens and the earth and knows what foundation He has given them. When this fact is firmly settled in our consciousness, it gives us total reassurance about the basis of our faith. It is the same truth that serves as the foundation of the universe. This means that this faith must inevitably triumph, and must remain pure and well established. Whatever else is false and will certainly be swept away.

Another fact is stated in the same sign: *And He formed you and formed your forms well.* This gives a person the feeling that he has special privilege with God who has bestowed on him the blessing of a comely appearance, both physically and spiritually. The human being is the most perfected creature on earth in respect of his physical constitution and his spiritual qualities, which also entails marvellous secrets. Therefore, he has been placed in charge of the earth, which is a vast area by human standards. A careful glance at the human being's general physical constitution, or at any of his physical systems, is sufficient to portray this fact most clearly: *And He formed you and formed your forms well.* It is an appearance that combines beauty and perfection. The beauty varies between one physical form and another, but the design itself is so beautiful and so well executed,

that it enables all functions and qualities that distinguish the human being above all other living creatures to work together perfectly.

And to Him is the Homecoming! **(63:3)** Every thing, situation and creature will return to Him. The ultimate destiny of the universe and with it the ultimate destiny of the human being is with Him. It is from His will that they originated and to Him they will return. He is the First and the Last who holds everything from its both ends, the beginning and the end. He, in His limitless glory, is not restricted by anything.

The fourth point in the opening section of the Chapter describes God's perfect knowledge that includes all and everything. He is fully aware of what the human being declares and what he conceals, and knows what is even more deeply hidden than the deepest and closest of secrets. He knows what people entertain deep in their hearts: *He knows what is in the heavens and the earth and He knows what you keep secret and what you speak openly. And God is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* **(64:4)** When this fact is firmly established in the human mind it gives him a better knowledge of his Lord, contributing to his concept of the universe. It influences his feelings. He leads his life fully aware that God knows all there is to know about him, including his most secret thoughts and unexpressed feelings.

The three signs that follow the first are enough to enable a person to live with the full awareness of the truth of his existence and that of the universe around him. He will also be aware of the bond he has with his Lord, how he should behave towards Him and how to fear Him in every situation in which he finds himself.

THE OBJECTIONS OF THE UNGRATEFUL

The next signs remind us of the fate of earlier communities that denied God's messages and the signs He gave them. They objected to the fact that God assigned His messages to human Messengers, in the same way as the idolaters in Makkah objected to the Prophet Muhammad and denied all the clear proof he put before them:

Approaches you not the tiding of those who were ungrateful before? They experienced the mischief of their affair and there is a painful punishment for them. That had been because their Messengers approach them with the clear portents, but they said: Will mortals guide us? So they were ungrateful and turned away. And God is Self-Sufficient. And God is Rich, Worthy of Praise. **(64:5-64:6)**

The addressees here are, most probably, the ungrateful. They are reminded of the fates suffered by earlier communities who denied the truth, and warned against a similar fate. The interrogative form is adopted either as a denunciation of their stubbornness after they

have been given such information or it is used to draw their attention to this same history that relates to them. They were fully aware of what happened to some of these communities, such as the Aad, Thamud and the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, they passed by them in their trips to the north and south of Arabia.

The Quran mentions their fate in this life and states what awaits them in the life to come: *And there is a painful punishment for them.* **(64:5)** It then explains why they deserved what happened to them and what they are still to face: *That had been because their Messengers approach them with the clear portents, but they said: Will mortals guide us?* **(64:6)** It is the same objection voiced by the Makkan idolaters to the Prophet. It is an arrogant objection that betrays a total ignorance of the nature of the divine message and its being a code to be implemented in human life. Therefore, it must be practically represented in a human being, in the Messenger who lives according to it and presents a model of its implementation. Thus, others will then be able to mold their own lives in the same way, and to the best of their abilities. Were the Messenger to belong to any other than the human race, people would not have had a practical example against which to mold their feelings and lives. Moreover, this objection betrays ignorance of the true nature of the human being and his elevated status, which enables him to receive and deliver a divine message instead of God assigning it to an angel, as the ungrateful frequently suggested. The human being carries the spirit of God breathed into him when God first created Adam. This prepares him to receive God's message and to deliver it complete as he receives it from on high. This is an honor bestowed on the human race, rejected only by those who are ignorant of the high status God gives to the human being when, within his own personal world, he gives full effect to this breath of God's spirit in him. Furthermore, the objection reflects the arrogance and false pride of those who refuse to follow a human Messenger, as if such following would detract from the status of those ignorant, arrogant ungrateful. To them, it is acceptable to follow a Messenger who belongs to a different kind of creature, but to follow one from their own ranks is too unbecoming.

Therefore, they disbelieved in God's Messengers and turned away from them, rejecting the clear proofs and signs that they brought them. Their pride, combined with their ignorance of human nature, stood as a barrier preventing them from accepting the truth. Thus, they chose to turn away from God's guidance and to disbelieve in Him. *So they were ungrateful and turned away.* **(64:6)**

And God is Self-Sufficient. And God is Rich, Worthy of Praise. **(64:6)** He does not need that they should accept His guidance, nor

does He need their worship. Indeed, He needs nothing from them or from anyone else. He is free of all need.

Such is the story of those who in earlier times denied God's messages and were made to taste the fruits of their ingratitude. It also explains the reasons behind what happened to them and what awaits them in the life to come. How can present generations follow in their footsteps and deny the truth now? How can they risk a similar fate?

The Truth of Resurrection

The next signs carry the theme of the previous one further, stating the situation of those ungrateful who deny the resurrection. It is clearly apparent that these were the idolaters whom the Prophet addressed, calling on them to believe in his message. This section instructs the Prophet to confirm, most emphatically, to them that the resurrection will certainly take place. Indeed, it adds a scene from the Day of Judgment that depicts the fates of the two groups who either deny or accept it. It calls on them to believe, obey and attribute everything that happens in the world to God Almighty:

The ungrateful allege that they will not be raised from the dead. *Those who were ungrateful claimed that they will never be raised up. Say: Yea! By my Lord, you will, certainly, be raised up. Again, you will be told of what you did. And that is easy for God. So believe in God and His Messenger, and in the Light which We caused to descend. And God is Aware of what you do. On a Day when He will amass you for the Day of Gathering, that will be the day of the mutual loss and gain, and whoever believes in God and does as one in accord with morality, He will absolve him of his evil deeds and He will cause him to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run as ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. That will be winning the sublime triumph. But for those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs, those are the Companions of the Fire, ones who will dwell in it forever. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(64:7-64:10)**

Right from the start the Chapter describes the argument of the ungrateful as an allegation, thereby branding it as a lie. It follows this with a directive to the Prophet to assert his message of resurrection most emphatically, swearing by his Lord to its truth. Nothing can be more emphatic than an oath the Messenger makes by his Lord. *Those who were ungrateful claimed that they will never be raised up. Say: Yea! By my Lord, you will, certainly, be raised up. Again, you will be told of what you did.* **(64:7)** Nothing of it will suffer neglect. God knows their deeds better than they do, so He will tell them all about it on the Day of Resurrection. *And that is easy for God.* He knows all that is in the heavens and the earth, open and secret, as

well as what is in people's hearts, expressed or otherwise. He also has power over all things, as stated earlier in the Chapter.

The Chapter then calls on them to believe in God and His Messenger, and in the light He has given His Messenger, which is the Quran and the faith embodied in the Quran. It is indeed light, since it comes from God, and *God is the light of the heavens and the earth.* **(24: 35)** The Quran enlightens the heart to make it shine, able to see the truth inherent within it: *So believe in God and His Messenger, and in the Light which We caused to descend.* **(64:8)** This call on them to believe is followed by a comment that makes them realize that their situation is fully observed by God: *And God is Aware of what you do.* **(64:8)**

The next sign continues to draw the scene of the Day of Resurrection: *On a Day when He will amass you for the Day of Gathering, that will be the day of the mutual loss and gain, and whoever believes in God and does as one in accord with morality, He will absolve him of his evil deeds and He will cause him to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run as ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. That will be winning the sublime triumph.* **(64:9)** It is called the Day of the Gathering because all creatures from all generations are gathered together on that day, which is also attended by the angels. Only God knows the numbers of the angels. The heaven in which there is an angel in every little space of four fingers is this great expanse for which we know no limit, and in which a sun like ours appears to be no more than a fine particle floating in the air. Does this then give us an approximation for the number of angels in it? Furthermore, all these angels will form part of the assembled mass of creatures on the Day of Gathering.

It will be in front of this great assembly that the loss and gain will take place: the believers will take all happiness purely for themselves while the ungrateful will be totally deprived of it before being sent to hell. These are two greatly different lots. The sense we receive is that of a competition where the winners take all. Therefore, each side wants to deprive its competitors. The believers end up winners and the ungrateful, losers. This is what is meant by mutual loss and gain, as explained in the same sign and that which follows: *But for those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs, those are the Companions of the Fire, ones who will dwell in it forever. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(64:10)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells the Prophet to say to the people that he was commanded to be the first who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God. He was not among the polytheists, the ungrateful who worshipped more gods than there are. There is only One God and a Muslim is one who submits to the One God. To submit means that one does not rebel against God's will. To submit to the One God is to be saved. That Muhammad was commanded to be the first one [among you] who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God.

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

LESSON 108(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 64: THE MUTUAL LOSS AND GAIN (AL-TAGHABUN)

SIGNS 64:11-64:18

Madinah: *No affliction hit but with the permission of God.*
Whoever believes in God, He guides his heart.
And God is Knowing of everything. (64:11)
And obey God and obey the Messenger.
Then, if you turned away,
then, it is only for Our Messenger
the delivering the clear message. (64:12)
God, there is no god but He.
And in God let the ones who believe put their trust. (64:13)
O those who believed!
Truly, there are among your spouses and your children
enemies for you, so beware of them.
And if you would pardon, overlook and forgive,
then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (64:14)
Your wealth and your children are only a test.
And God, with Him is a sublime compensation. (64:15)
So be God-conscious as much as you were able
and hear and obey and spend.
That is good for yourselves, and whoever is protected
from his own stinginess,
then, those, they are the ones who prosper. (64:16)
If you lend to God a fairer loan,
He will multiply it for you and will forgive you.
And God is Ready to Appreciate, Forbearing. (64:17)
One Who Knows the unseen and the visible,
The Almighty, The Wise. (64:18)

COMMENTARY°

Before completing the call to them to believe, the Chapter states

one of the main elements of the Quranic message, which is to believe in God's will and the effect of belief in God on the human heart: *No affliction lit but with the permission of God. Whoever believes in God, He guides his heart. And God is Knowing of everything.* **(64:11)**

Perhaps this fact is stated here only to put it clearly within the context of the faith they are called upon to adopt. It is a belief that attributes everything to God, and whatever good or evil takes place occurs only by God's will. This is an essential fact without which faith is incomplete. It is indeed the basis of all feelings a believer may have when facing life events and situations, good and happy or bad and miserable. On the other hand, this fact is stated here in response to something that took place and was clear in people's minds at the time of the revelation of this Chapter or this sign. Regardless of the exact situation, this fact represents an important aspect of the concept the Quran implants in a believer's consciousness. He thus feels God's hand behind every event and every move. He receives with a calm heart whatever happens to him, whether it brings him happiness or adversity. He expresses his gratitude in the first case and demonstrates patience in the second. Alternatively, he may rise to a higher level, expressing his thanks to God in both cases of happiness and adversity, feeling that both bring him God's blessings. He then sees adversity as a reminder for him or an occasion that may bring him forgiveness of past sins or an increase in his reward.

He guides his heart. **(64:11)** Some commentators explain this as meaning belief in God's will and being resigned to it in the event of facing a calamity. This statement has been taken as indicating complete guidance granted to believing hearts, making them recognize the absolute truth. Thus they attribute all things and all events to God, their source and goal. This provides them with reassurance and comfort. With such a complete and comprehensive vision, they are not encumbered by a partial view that may be deficient or erroneous. Therefore, the comment at the end of the sign: *And God is Knowing of everything.* **(64:11)** It is, then, guidance to a share of God s knowledge. God grants this guidance to a person who truly believes, thus earning the prize of knowing something of what lies beyond this limited human life.

The Chapter continues with its call on people to believe, calling them now to obey God and His Messenger: *And obey God and obey the Messenger. Then, if you turned away, then, it is only for Our Messenger the delivering the clear message.* **(64:12)** The Chapter has already shown them the end suffered by earlier communities who turned away. Now it tells them that the role of God's Messenger is only to deliver His message. When he has done this, he has fulfilled

the trust assigned to him and put the proof before them. What remains is the fate merited by those who are stubborn in disobedience and rejection. They have already been reminded of this.

This next sign restates the truth of God's Oneness, which they persistently deny. It also states the believers' attitude in dealing with God: *God, there is no god but He. And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* **(64:13)** The truth of God's Oneness is the essence of faith. Its practical import is to place ones total trust in God and to rely on Him alone. This sign provides a bridge between these sections of the Chapter and its final one which comes as an address to the believers.

SPOUSES AND CHILDREN AS ENEMIES

In the final section the Chapter addresses the believers, warning them against failure in the test represented in the temptation spouses, children and riches offer. They are required to remain God-conscious, be obedient to Him and give willingly for His cause. They are warned against being stingy. They are further promised the doubling of their provisions, forgiveness of their sins and success. They are finally reminded of God s all-encompassing knowledge, power and wisdom:

O those who believed! Truly, there are among your spouses and your children enemies for you, so beware of them. And if you would pardon, overlook and forgive, then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. Your wealth and your children are only a test. And God, with Him is a sublime compensation. So be God-conscious as much as you were able and hear and obey and spend. That is good for yourselves, and whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then, those, they are the ones who prosper. If you lend to God a fairer loan, He will multiply it for you and will forgive you. And God is Ready to Appreciate, Forbearing, One Who Knows the unseen and the visible, The Almighty, The Wise. **(64:14-64:18)**

The Quranic statement is wider in scope and import than this particular situation represents. For this warning is the same as that in the following sign: *Your wealth and your children are only a test. And God, with Him is a sublime compensation.* **(64:15)** Both caution against the temptation that wives, children and wealth present. The warning that some spouses and children may be one's enemies refers to a true fact in human life. In this way, the signs touch upon some intricate and complex ties in human emotions and how they are influenced by life's circumstances. Spouses and children may divert a person's attention from God's remembrance. They may also make a man fall short of discharging the responsibilities required of his faith; this in order to spare himself the troubles that he may face as a result

of fulfilling such responsibilities. A person who strives for God's cause may be exposed to much loss and may have to sacrifice a great deal. He and his family may have to withstand much hardship. He may be willing to face such hardship himself, but cannot bear that such hardship be suffered by his wife and children. As a result, he may be tight-fisted and cowardly in order to ensure that they are safe, free of trouble and financially secure. Thus, they become his enemies as they turn him away from doing what is good and stop him from fulfilling the ultimate objective of his existence. Indeed, they may even stand in his way, stopping him from fulfilling his duty. In doing so, they may wish to spare themselves what may happen as a result, or they may not share his belief. In this way, a person finds himself unable to separate himself from them and dedicate himself to God's cause. This is also a form of enmity that may vary in degrees. Furthermore, such situations are faced by believers at all times.

This very complex situation merits such a caution from God as to alert believers' hearts so that they do not allow such feelings and pressures to creep into their minds. The caution is stated again, this time as a warning against the temptation presented by wealth and children. The Arabic word used here conveys two meanings. The first is trial, which makes the sign mean that God puts you to trial by giving you riches and children. He tests you in this way, so always be on the alert in order to pass your test and dedicate yourself to God. The second meaning is temptation, and in this sense the sign means that riches and children present temptations for you to indulge in sin. Beware then and do not allow such temptations to distract you from the way that leads to God's acceptance. Both meanings are acceptable.

The believers are admonished to do their best to remain God-fearing and to obey God's orders: *So be God-conscious as much as you were able and hear and obey and spend. That is good for yourselves, and whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then, those, they are the ones who prosper.* **(64:16)** Here we see an aspect of God's care as He restricts what is expected of the believers to that which remains within their power and ability. He knows the limit of what they can do in obedience of Him. Limits cannot be set on obeying an order to do something. Therefore, what is within ones ability and power is sufficient. On the other hand, prohibition cannot be divided. It is required in full.

They are also called upon to be generous in what they donate: *So be God-conscious as much as you were able and hear and obey and spend. That is good for yourselves.* **(64:16)** Normally, they spend their money on their own needs. God instructs them to spend in char-

ity what is good for themselves. Thus, when they are charitable, they are actually spending their money on what is good for themselves. The Chapter also depicts meanness as a plague, one they must try to get rid of. He is happy who manages to achieve this: *And whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then, those, they are the ones who prosper.* **(64:16)**

The Chapter goes on encouraging them to be charitable, making it desirable for them. It describes such charity as a loan given to God. Who would want to lose the opportunity to give his Master a loan? God accepts the loan, repays it many times over, forgives the lender his sins, thanks the lender and forbears with him when he falls short of thanking Him: *If you lend to God a fairer loan, He will multiply it for you and will forgive you. And God is Ready to Appreciate, Forbearing,* **(64:17)** Blessed be God's name: how generous and great He is! It is He who creates the human being, His servant, and then gives him all his provisions. He then asks him to give him as a loan some of what is surplus to his needs. He repays this loan in multiples and thanks His servant and forbears when His servant is not as grateful to Him as he should be.

God thus teaches us how to rise above our weaknesses and shortcomings and how to aspire to the sublime, trying to be like Him, albeit within our limited abilities. God has breathed of His spirit into the human being, so that the human being will always aspire to achieve this ideal, within the scope of his nature and ability. Therefore, the sublime remains open for the human being always to aspire to. He can try to rise step after step so that he can meet God presenting what He likes him to present and what earns him His pleasure.

The section then concludes with a statement of God's knowledge and wisdom: *One Who Knows the unseen and the visible, The Almighty, The Wise.* **(64:18)** Everything is within His knowledge, subject to His power, conducted according to His wisdom. As they go through life, people should realize that they remain under God's watchful eye, are subject to His power, and that everything takes place by His will. When this truth is appreciated by people, they will remain God-fearing and respond to Him only as they should.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful what the result of their denying the signs of God will be. What is the result of the ungrateful's denial of the signs of God? On the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful will wish that they could be returned to this life in order to accept the signs of God. When before their Lord, they would admit that the Quran is stating the Truth. It would be too late to avoid the punishment. Those who deny the Last Day will not be returned to this life to change their ways and even if they were to be returned to this life, they still would not believe. The Day of Judgment is the Day when each person will be judged for what they did. Those who deny the Day of Judgment in this life will be punished in the next life. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

INTERLUDE

THE VISITATION (*UMRA*) TO MAKKAH

After Khaybar, the Messenger stayed in Madinah Rabi 1, Rabi 2, Jumada 1, Jumada 2, Rajab, Shaban, Ramadan and Shawwal. In Dhu al-Qada, he left for the Visitation or Lesser Pilgrimage (*umra*).

One of the articles of the Treaty of Hudaybiah had stated that the Muslims would be allowed to go to Makkah the next year. Thus on Monday 6th Dhu al-Qada 7 AH, the Messenger left Madinah for Makkah with the group that had gone with him the year before.

The Messenger had signed a treaty with the ungrateful that no arms would be carried except those needed by a traveler. Yet, he is not sure of the intentions of the enemy. It could be a trap. In order to prepare for any occurrence, he assigned one of his officers, Muhammad ibn Musaylimah, with 200 cavalry to move ahead of the caravan, to stop near the sacred area and to await the arrival of the Messenger's caravan. The ungrateful spies saw where the armed men stop. They informed their leaders.

A representative of the ungrateful contacted the Messenger and said that what he had done is in opposition to the Peace Treaty. The Messenger says: My Companions and I have not acted against the Treaty. These 200 men will remain here.

The ungrateful realized that this army would wait for the Messenger to return, but if anything happened to the Messenger while in Makkah, they would come to his aid. The ungrateful opened the doors of Makkah to the Messenger. The ungrateful left the city with their families and went to the surrounding mountains so as not to see the Messenger or be influenced by his message.

Astride a camel, the Messenger entered Makkah with 2000 people. The sounds of: Lord! Here I am! Here I am! fill the streets of Makkah. Then the poet Abd Allah ibn Rawahah recited a poem: O children of the ungrateful! Open the way for the Messenger of God. Know that he is the source of goodness and it is good to accept his creed. My Creator believes in him and it is the right of God that you accept his creed. One day we will strike such a blow against you that you will not recover from it.

While astride the camel, the Messenger circumambulated the House of God. He commanded Abd Allah to tell the people to recite the following: There is no god but God. He is One and Self-sufficient. His promise has been fulfilled. He has helped His servants. He has brought victory to his soldiers. The Confederacy of the ungrateful has been defeated.

This prayer of unity is recited by 2000 people on that day which caused the most demoralizing effect upon the soldiers of paganism. They realized that the Quranic message would be most certainly actualized throughout the Hijaz. At noon, Bilal, who had suffered such torture for his beliefs, called out the ritual prayer in a powerful voice. His voice so disconcerted the pagans who were hiding in the mountains that many fell ill. After seven years of being de-

prived of the pilgrimage to God's House, they finally attained their wish and a pilgrimage for the One God, at that. The Messenger commanded 200 people who had performed their shorter pilgrimage to return to where the soldiers were waiting and take over for them so they could come to Makkah for the pilgrimage.

The ungrateful were very unhappy seeing that the Messenger had gained so much by signing the Treaty and that he even threatened them. Because of this, the ungrateful sent men to the Messenger telling him to leave Makkah even before the time they had been given permission to stay had ended.

MARRIAGE TO MAYMUNA BINT AL-HARITH AFTER *UMRA*

In the evening, Abu Rafi, carrying Maymuna with him, reached the same place, and the marriage was there consummated. Early next morning, the march was resumed, and the cortege returned to Madinah. Maymuna is said to have been at this time fifty. She survived thirty years, was buried on the spot on which she had celebrated her marriage with the Prophet. He now had ten wives, besides two POW/slaves or concubines. But Zaynab bint Khuzayma died before him; the number consequently was then reduced to nine, or, including POW/concubines, to eleven.

The Messenger brought with him to Madinah his bride's sister, Salma, a widow, and Umara, her unmarried daughter. Jafar, Ali, and Zayd ibn Harith, each contending for the honor of receiving Umara into his family, the Messenger decided in favor of Jafar, because he was married to her aunt.

Another sister of Maymuna was the mother of Khalid ibn Walid, the famous warrior who had turned the tide of the battle at Uhud against the Muslims. Not long after the marriage of his aunt to the Prophet, Khalid went to Madinah and accepted the Quranic message. Two others followed him. One, his friend Amru (ibn al Aas), whose poetic talents had often been used for the annoyance and injury of the Messenger. He was a man of weight in the councils of the ungrateful, and bad been employed by them in their embassy to Abyssinia. The other was Uthman, son of Talha, a chief of some note, and (as successor to the Hijaz) custodian of the Kabah. He had, no doubt, in that capacity, attended on the late occasion with the keys of his office to give the Messenger admittance to the holy Kabah; and, perhaps, like many others, who gazed from a respectful distance on that memorable scene, was gained over by the earnest devotion of the Messenger to the national shrine, and by the elevation and beauty of the services which he there performed.

The position of the Messenger at Makkah was greatly strengthened by the accession of such leading men. The balance was already

wavering: it required little to throw it entirely on the side of the Quranic message. To what extent persons of less note and influence about this time came over to Madinah, or remaining at Makkah declared in favor of the Messenger, is not told to us. But there can be no doubt that the movement was not confined to Khalid, and Uthman, but was wide and general.

His visit to Makkah enabled the Messenger to see and estimate the growth of his own influence there, upon the one hand, and the waning power and spirit of the ungrateful, upon the other. The citizens of Makkah were weary of intestine war and bloodshed. The advocates of peace and co promise were growing in numbers and in confidence. Among the ungrateful there were no chiefs of marked ability or commanding influence. A bold and rapid stroke of policy might put an end to the struggle which for so many years had depressed and agitated Makkah.

LESSON 109(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 61: THE RANKS (AL-SAFF)

SIGNS 61:1-61:9

Madinah: *Whatever is in the heavens glorified God*
and whatever is in and on the earth.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (61:1)
O those who believed!
Why say you what you accomplish not? (61:2)
It was most troublesome, repugnant to God
that you say what you accomplish not. (61:3)
Truly, God loves those who fight in His way,
ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure. (61:4)
And when Moses said to his folk: O my folk!
Why malign me while, surely, you know
that I am the Messenger of God to you?
So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve.

And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey. (61:5)
And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Jacob!
I am the Messenger of God to you, one who establishes as true
what was in advance of me in the Torah
and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger
to approach after me.
His name will be Ahmad.
But when he brought about the clear portents to them,
they said: This is clear sorcery! (61:6)
And who does greater wrong than he who devised the lie
against God while he is being called to submission to God?
And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust. (61:7)
They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths
but God is One Who Fulfills His light
even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it. (61:8)
He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance
and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it
over all other ways of life
even though the ones who are idol worshipper
disliked it. (61:9)

COMMENTARY°

PROLOGUE

This Chapter seeks to establish two major themes which permeate its entire text. It also includes a number of secondary references which relate to those major themes.

The first aim of the Chapter is to establish in the conscience of every Muslim the fact that his religion is the final version of the divine system God has laid down for humanity. There were earlier versions, each suited for a particular period of human history. There were also experiences in the lives of earlier messengers and past communities that afforded much to reflect upon. All these have paved the way for this final version of the one divine faith. It incorporates God's final message for humanity, which He has willed to prevail over all other religions.

Therefore, the Chapter mentions Moses' message, making it clear that his people caused him much grief and deviated from his message. They had gone astray and were no longer to be trustees of the divine faith: *And when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Why malign me while, surely, you know that I am the Messenger of God to you? So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(61:5)**

The Chapter then mentions Jesus' message to establish that Jesus

was sent to carry on Moses' earlier message, confirming what was revealed before him of the Torah. He was also given the task of paving the way for the final message, giving news of the Messenger who was to carry it, and serving as a link between the first and the last divine religions. *And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Jacob! I am the Messenger of God to you, one who establishes as true what was in advance of me in the Torah and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger to approach after me. His name will be Ahmad. But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery!* (61:6) Therefore, his task was to carry the trust of the divine faith after Moses and then to give it to the Messenger whose coming he announced.

It was always confirmed, according to God's knowledge and by His will, that these steps would eventually lead to a final and permanent version to establish God's faith in human life, and this by the final Messenger: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it over all other ways of life even though the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* (61:9)

This first clear purpose of the Chapter gives rise to its second purpose. When a Muslim is fully aware of this fact, knows the history of the divine faith and is aware of his share of it, he realizes the duties that this trust involves. Therefore, he has a clear and sincere motive for striving to ensure that this faith prevails over all other religions, just as God wants it to do. There is no longer any vacillation in practically carrying out what one verbally has proposed to do. It is inappropriate for a believer to declare his intention to strive for God's cause but then to refrain from doing so. According to some reports, it appears that there were some cases of this sort. Therefore, the Chapter starts with a proclamation that the entire universe and all that is in it unceasingly glorify God. *O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not? It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not. Truly, God loves those who fight in His way, ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.* **(61:2-61:4)**

In the middle of the Chapter, the believers are called upon to take part in the most profitable transaction that they could have in this life and in the life to come: *O those who believed! Shall I point you to a transaction that will rescue you from a painful punishment? You believe in God and His Messenger and struggle in the way of God with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you if you had been knowing. He will forgive you your impieties and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, and into good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden, the winning the sublime triumph.*

And He gives another thing you love, help is from God and victory in the near future, so give good tidings to the ones who believe. **(61:10-61:13)**

The Chapter ends with an appeal to the believers to be the helpers in furthering God's cause, just like Jesus' disciples who supported him when the Children of Jacob continued to deny his message and were hostile towards him: *O those who believed! Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God. Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful. So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies. And they became ones who are prominent.* **(61:14)**

These two purposes are very clear throughout the Chapter, taking up nearly all of its text. There only remains a denunciation of those who reject the final message, which is clearly linked to the two main themes. We see this clearly stated after Jesus gave the news of the impending appearance of the final Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad: *But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery! And who does greater wrong than he who devised the lie against God while he is being called to submission to God? And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust. They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths but God is One Who Fulfills His light even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(61:6-61:8)**

Thus, every Muslim is clear in his mind that his faith is the final version of the religion God wants to be established on earth. He realizes that the trust of this divine faith is given to him, and he knows that he is required to strive for God's cause as God wants. His line is clear, leaving no room for ambiguity, hesitation or faltering. The goal is well defined and the way to achieve it is made clear.

With this goal-defining directive we also have clear pointers to the nature of the moral code a Muslim must follow. A Muslim must demonstrate consistency between his conscience and his action. He cannot say one thing and then do another. His appearance must not fundamentally differ from what he conceals within himself. He must be consistent in all situations, dedicated in his service to God's cause, clear in both his intention and action, moving with steady steps, collaborating with his brothers so that the Muslim community is seen to be solid and firm like a building with strong foundations.

WORDS AND ACTIONS

Whatever is in the heavens glorified God and whatever is in and on the earth. And He is The Almighty, The Wise. **(61:1)** The whole

universe participates in this glorification of God Almighty whose might is combined with His infinite wisdom. This glorification begins this Chapter which declares to Muslims that their religion is the last and final version of the divine faith. They are placed in a position of trustees of this faith based on God's Oneness, denouncing all deviation perpetrated by the ungrateful and idolaters. Muslims are also called upon to strive in support of this faith, which God has willed to prevail over all other religions, hateful as this may be to the ungrateful. This opening, thus, implies that the trust given to Muslims belongs to the entire universe; the faith they strive for is the faith of all creatures in the heavens and the earth. Therefore, this religions prevalence is a universal phenomenon, one that is in line with the whole universe as it turns to God Almighty.

A group of believers are strongly reproached for something they did that was particularly hateful to God. This was inappropriate behavior for believers: *O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not? It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not. Truly, God loves those who fight in His way, ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.* **(61:2-61:4)**

God instructed His Messenger to say that what God loves most is a belief in Him that allows no room for doubt, and striving against deviant people who reject the faith. However, when jihad was made obligatory, a number of believers found it difficult, and they disliked it distasteful. Therefore, the revelation of the verse saying: *O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not? It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not.* **(61:2-61:3)**

The Chapter starts then with a reproach for behavior in one or more actual events: *O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not?* **(61:2)** It then denounces this action and its lack of morality in a doubly powerful way: *It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not.* **(61:3)** What is viewed by God as most loathsome must certainly be very hateful and repugnant. This statement is sufficient then to make believers view this in the vilest of terms, particularly as they are addressed by God as people who have accepted His religion and who believe in Him.

The next sign refers to that particular matter when they did something different to what they used to profess, namely Jihad. It defines what God likes in this question and what earns His pleasure: *Truly, God loves those who fight in His way, ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.* **(61:4)** This is not mere fighting, but fighting for God's cause, in collaboration with the Muslim com-

munity, within its ranks, and with resolve and steadfastness, so that believers remain: *ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.*

MORAL VALUES IN PRACTICE

We have said on several occasions that as it was being revealed, the Quran was carrying on with a process of nation building. Its aim was to build a community that carried the trust of the divine message, implemented its approach and established its system in human life. It was necessary for this purpose that the Quran should undertake the reform of its individuals, establish its bonds as a community, and build it as a living nation in practice. All of this was to be accomplished at the same time. A Muslim is not a Muslim unless he functions within a community. It is inconceivable for the Quranic message to be put into practice unless it functions in a community with well-defined bonds, a system and goal. Its ultimate goal applies to the community as a whole, but it also applies at the same time to each individual. This goal consists of establishing the divine system in people's consciences and practices on earth. To achieve the latter, the Quranic message must live in an actual community that implements it fully.

The Quranic message places much emphasis on the individual's conscience and responsibility, but it is certainly not a religion of individuals who dedicate themselves to worship in their respective little corners. This does not establish the Quranic message within the individuals own conscience, let alone in his whole life. The Quran was not revealed in such isolation. Rather, it was revealed to establish its criteria and standards in human life. It aims to put its mark on every individual and collective activity in every direction. Humanity does not live as individuals, but as groups, communities and nations. And the Quran wants to provide people with its controls as they conduct their lives. Therefore, it is so structured as to cater for people as they live. Its morality, manners, rules and systems are all formulated on this basis. When the Quran directs its attention to the conscience of the individual, it moulds this conscience on the basis that the individual lives in a community. Both the individual and the community turn to God and seek His pleasure. Therefore, a Muslim works within his community to fulfil the religious trust on earth and to establish the Quranic message in life.

Right from the very first day of the Quranic message, a Muslim community was established under the leadership of the Messenger. Its individuals had their commitments towards their community, which also had its special entity distinguishing it from all other com-

munities. It had its values that related to the human conscience but which looked at the same time to the life and welfare of the community. All this took place before the state was established in Madinah. Indeed, the formation of this community was the means by which the state was later established.

When we look at these three signs we find that the morality of the individual is intertwined with the needs of the community, under the authority of religious faith. By its very nature, this faith can function fully in human life only in the form of a system that is properly served and protected.

The first two of the three signs under discussion refer to God's punishment and a strong censure if believers say something that is belied by their deeds. Thus, these two verses delineate the hugely important qualities of truthfulness and consistency in a Muslims personality. A Muslim must reflect the same image in his inner self and in his appearance. His actions must be consistent with his words. This applies in all situations and goes far beyond the call to jihad to which the third verse refers.

A Muslims conscience is reared to such a fine moral standard so as to build the character that can be entrusted with the establishment of the divine system in human life. This is what we see in this Chapter, which provides an important aspect of education for the Muslim community and its preparation to shoulder its great trust.

DENOUNCED ATTITUDE

The Chapter moves on to speak about the history of this divine system and the stages it went through with the messages revealed before the revelation: Now when Moses spoke to his people, he said: *And when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Why malign me while, surely, you know that I am the Messenger of God to you? So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey. And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Jacob! I am the Messenger of God to you, one who establishes as true what was in advance of me in the Torah and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger to approach after me. His name will be Ahmad. But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery!* **(61:5-61:6)**

Moses was the one who saved the Children of Jacob from Pharaoh and his tyranny. He was God's Messenger to them, their leader and teacher. Yet the grief that they caused him was of the extended type, taking many colors and forms. His struggle to put them on the right course was hard, tiring and trying. In the accounts the Quran gives of Moses and his people we read about the different aspects of the grief they caused him and how hard he had to struggle

to reform their belief system. *And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(61:5)** Thus their trusteeship of the divine faith was over. They were no longer fit to carry God's message after they had gone so far astray.

Then Jesus came, saying: *O Children of Jacob! I am the Messenger of God to you.* **(61:6)** He did not say to them that he was God or the son of God or a manifestation of God. He was simply a Messenger sent *one who establishes as true what was in advance of me in the Torah and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger to approach after me. His name will be Ahmad.* **(61:6)** Thus we see how the divine faith moved from one stage to the next, with all the stages interrelated, moving in the same direction, stretching from heaven to the earth: a long chain moving from link to link. This is the proper image, one worthy of God's design and constitution. It is basically the same approach, taking slightly different forms, according to what suits the needs, experience, knowledge and potential of humanity at each particular stage, until it reaches full maturity. Only then does the last stage arrive and the final form of divine faith be given: perfect, complete, addressing a mature mind that has benefited from all past experience. It opens the way so that the human mind works to its full potential within the method set for man and his abilities.

TRYING TO EXTINGUISH GOD'S LIGHT

It seems that the signs that follow are mostly concerned with the way the Jews and the Christians received the Prophet mentioned in their scriptures. They are denounced for the reception they gave Muhammad and for their designs to undermine the new and final message God willed to prevail over all other religions:

But when he came to them with all evidence of the truth, they said: *But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery! And who does greater wrong than he who devised the lie against God while he is being called to submission to God? And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust. They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths but God is One Who Fulfills His light even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(61:6-61:8)**

The idol worshippers' attitude to this new faith was a combination of hostility, evil scheming and misrepresentation. They waged a determined fight against the Quranic message, using all means and resources, and this has continued to the present day. They leveled charges against it: *But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery!* **(61:6)** This echoes the allegations of idolaters who had no scriptures and had no advance news of

the new faith.

They aim to extinguish God's light with their mouths: *They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths but God is One Who Fulfills His light even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(61:8)** This sign expresses a fact and paints a pathetic image of those enemies of the Quranic message. It is true that they used to say about the Messenger and his message: *This is plain sorcery.* It is also true that they continued to scheme against the message, trying to undermine it. It is a pathetic picture we see of them as they try to extinguish God's light with a blow from their mouths. How naive and weak they are!

But God will spread His light in all its fullness: *Even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(61:8)** There is no doubt that God's promise will always come true. He brought His light to fullness during the lifetime of the Messenger, when the Muslim community came into being as a living and practical representation of the system He had chosen for humanity. It was a well-defined religion with clearly delineated features so that future generations could follow in its footsteps. It was a fact of history, not a theory explained in books. He also brought His light to fullness when he perfected the favor He bestowed on Muslims. Thus, they loved their religion and were keen to fight for its cause. Anyone of them would prefer to b thrown in a fire rather than revert to disbelief. Thus the truth of tl faith lived in peoples' hearts and in their world. This truth continue to spring up time after time, showing that it continues to live in spite of all the sustained aggression, repeated scheming and unabated persecution campaigns waged against the Quranic message and its followers. The fact is that God's light cannot be extinguished by peoples mouths, nor can it be stifled by fire and iron-fisted tactics to which some small people resort.

He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it over all other ways of life even though the ones who are polytheists disliked it. **(61:9)**

That God testifies that this Quranic message is: *with guidance and the way of life of The Truth* is the final word. God's will has been fulfilled, and this religion has prevailed over all other religions. It has prevailed by its very nature as a religion. No other religion compares with it in its nature. Pagan and idolatrous religions cannot stand up to it for a moment. Divine religions, on the other hand, find it as their final and complete version. So, in essence, the Quranic message is the perfect and complete version of these faiths, and it will preserve its pure form for the rest of time.

Earlier divine religions were distorted by omissions and addi-

tions. Thus, they became unfit to lead human life in any direction. Even if they had remained free of distortion, they are no more than earlier versions of the divine faith which did not cater for ever-increasing life requirements, because they were intended by God to serve for a limited time only.

This religion will continue to have other roles to fulfil in the life of humanity. It will prevail in fulfilment of God's promise. Human efforts cannot stop God's will, no matter how powerful they may be or how wicked their schemes of misrepresentation are.

These signs served as motivation to the believers to carry the trust for which God has chosen them, after it was abandoned by the Jews and Christians who were not true to it. These signs reassure the believers that they are simply the means of fulfilling God's will. They continue to provide such motivation and reassurance to new believers who are certain that God's promise will always come true. They will give new generations the same motives and reassurance until God's promise comes to be fulfilled in peoples real life once more, God willing.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Quranic Sign 2:260

When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how You shall give life to the dead. He said: Shall you (Abraham) not believe? He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest. He (God) said: Then take four birds and twist them to yourself. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach you coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise. (2:260)

Questions regarding 2:260:

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?

What example does it give?

Is this an example of everyone having to agree?

What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

You can use a number of techniques to learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just finding a definition of a word, try to paraphrase the word or concept to something that you already understand. You can also add examples from your classmates to the list.

Rewrite passages, making them clear to yourself. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

LESSON 109(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. The Quranic message, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[1]

QURANIC CHAPTER 61: THE RANKS (AL-SAFF)
SIGNS 61:10-61:14

Madinah: *O those who believed! Shall I point you to a transaction*
that will rescue you from a painful punishment? (61:10)
You believe in God and His Messenger
and struggle in the way of God with your wealth and your lives.
That is better for you if you had been knowing. (61:11)
He will forgive you your impieties
and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run,
and into good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden,
the winning the sublime triumph. (61:12)
And He gives another thing you love,
help is from God and victory in the near future,
so give good tidings to the ones who believe. (61:13)
O those who believed!
Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples:
Who are my helpers for God?
The disciples said: We are the helpers for God.
Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob
and a section were ungrateful.

So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies.
And they became ones who are prominent. (61:14)

COMMENTARY°

A MOST PROFITABLE BARGAIN

When the history of faith has thus been outlined and the inevitable triumph the final version of the divine faith has been promised, the Quran addresses the believers—those living at the time and those of later generations—offering them the bargain of their lives. This is a transaction in which the merchandise is faith and the means to achieve it is jihad:

O those who believed! Shall I point you to a transaction that will rescue you from a painful punishment? You believe in God and His Messenger and struggle in the way of God with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you if you had been knowing. He will forgive you your impieties and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, and into good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden, the winning the sublime triumph. And He gives another thing you love, help is from God and victory in the near future, so give good tidings to the ones who believe **(61:10-61:13)**

The style employed here uses a variety of forms, such as splitting sentences and reconnecting them, putting forward a question and providing the answer, inversion and transposition all aiming to drive a certain message home. The address starts in the name of faith, *O those who believed! Shall I point you to a transaction that will rescue you from a painful punishment?*

Who would not wish to know what this bargain is and what its terms are! Yet here the sign ends, providing a break between two sentences to add to the expectation. The answer is given when interest in it has been heightened: *You believe in God and His Messenger.* Since they were truly believers in God and His Messenger, they are happy that this part of the answer is already met by them. *And struggle in the way of God with your wealth and your lives.* This is the main theme of the Chapter, and it is given here in this particular fashion to reiterate a message that has already been clarified. God knows that human beings need such repetition and variety of modes and styles in order to rise to the occasion. Realizing this, they will exert their maximum efforts to establish and preserve the divine system.

The Chapter goes further, presenting the bargain in an even more attractive way: *That is better for you if you had been knowing.* Knowledge of the truth will encourage the person who knows it to try to obtain this beneficial matter. But the thing that is referred to as being good for us is given in more detail in the next verse. This again heightens the effect even further; providing the details after a general

statement drives the point home and makes it even more desirable. *He will forgive you your impieties and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, and into good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden, the winning the sublime triumph. And He gives another thing you love, help is from God and victory in the near future, so give good tidings to the ones who believe.* This is the most profitable bargain of all, because all that is needed for this deal to be concluded is that a believer should fight for God's cause during his short life on earth. Even if this means him losing his life in this fight, he will be compensated for it with heaven and these goodly mansions where he lives in permanent bliss: *The winning the sublime triumph.*

God's grace is limitless. He knows that human beings always look for something close, in this world, which fits human nature. Therefore, He gives them the happy news of what He has determined of making this religion of the Quranic message prevails in this world, and making its system and code triumph in the life of that same generation: *And He gives another thing you love, help is from God and victory in the near future, so give good tidings to the ones who believe.* **(61:13)**

At this point, the bargain attains the point of supreme returns which only God, whose stores are endless, and whose grace is interminable, can give. What He gives in return, then, are forgiveness, heaven, goodly dwelling and eternal bliss, but in addition to all such profits He gives a soon-to-happen victory. Who would hold back, hesitate when God tells him of this bargain?

With all this temptation and goodly prospects, a thought may well occur to us. A believer who knows the Quranic concept of life and the universe, and appreciates the great horizons this concept opens up before us, and then looks at life without faith, with its narrow concerns and lowly levels, cannot tolerate life without faith even for a moment. He will not hesitate for a second in joining the struggle for Gods cause in order to establish the great concept of faith in real life, so that he may live with the rest of humanity in its superior reality. It may be that he would not need to have any reward other than such a life, because the struggle for Gods cause is, in itself, a reward, giving us contentment and happiness in this life. Moreover, such a believer cannot live in a world devoid of faith, and cannot sit idle, not striving to establish a world governed by faith. Thus, he is strongly motivated to struggle, no matter what happens to him as a result.

ECHOING JESUS' APPEAL

God, however, knows that people may slacken, and that enthu-

siasm may dampen, efforts may wane and love of safety may lead people to accept the status quo, even though its level is too low. Therefore, the Quran administers this treatment, providing motivation and images to enhance feelings and enthusiasm, making use of every occasion and possible means to appeal to human hearts and souls. It does not rely merely on faith or on one mode of address in the name of this faith. Therefore, the Chapter ends with a new and distinctive address, and one that carries new appeal: *O those who believed! Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God. Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful. So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies. And they became ones who are prominent.* **(61:14)**

The disciples were Jesus Christ's pupils. It is said that they were twelve men who were close to him and who dedicated themselves to learning from him. They continued to spread his message and commandments after his term was over. This verse does not give us a detailed story: it simply outlines an attitude. Therefore, we look at it in the context it is given and for the purpose it serves.

O those who believed! Be helpers of God. **(61:14)** Place yourselves in this noble position to which He elevates you. Is there a position that is higher and more noble than that of being a supporter of God and His cause? This bargain bestows an honor that is greater than heaven and its happiness: be helpers of God: *as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God.* **(61:14)** They were chosen for this task and earned this honor. Jesus came to give the news of the last Prophet and the last religion. It is only fitting that Muhammad's followers should be chosen for this permanent task, just as Christ's disciples were chosen for it during their period of time. This is clearly apparent in the way the dialogue is presented in this verse.

But what was the result then? *Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful.* **(61:14)** This statement may be interpreted in one of two ways: either the believers in Christ's message are all Christians, whether they remained faithful to its original form or they are those whose faith was subject to distortion. God supported them over the Jews who did not believe in Him at all, as known from history. Or the believers were only those who continued to believe in God's Oneness in defiance of those who gave Jesus divine status, those who believed in the Trinity, or those who deviated in some other way. The believers prevailed in argument, giving irrefutable evidence. Alternatively, we may understand the sign as meaning that those who continued to believe in God's

Oneness were supported by the last religion that endorsed their beliefs. God has made the final victory assured to this religion, as happened in history. This last sense is perhaps the most probable.

The aim of this last address is to strengthen the resolve of the believers in the last religion, the heirs of the divine message. They are the ones charged with a great task, namely the implementation of God's system on earth. They are encouraged to come forward to support God's cause: *O those who believed! Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God. Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful. So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies. And they became ones who are prominent.*

Thus, the Chapter concludes with a sign that fits the general context and drift of the Chapter, yet has a special color and effect. It enriches an already rich variety of colors and effects.

Student Assignment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

Lesson 110(1). Critical Thinking Strategy
Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

Quranic Chapter 62: The Congregation (al-Jumu'ah)
Signs 62:1-62:8

Madinah: *Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God*
and whatever is in and on the earth,
The King, The Holy, The Almighty, The Wise. (62:1)
He it is Who raised up among the unlettered a Messenger
from among them who recounts His signs to them
and makes them pure and teaches them the Book
and wisdom even though they had been before
certainly, clearly going astray (62:2)
and to others among them who join them not.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (62:3)
That is the grace of God. He gives it to whom He wills.
And God is Possessor of the Sublime Grace. (62:4)
The parable of those who were entrusted with the Torah,
and, again, carries it not is as the parable of a donkey
who carries writings.
Miserable was the parable of a folk who denied the signs of God!
And God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust. (62:5)
Say: O those who became Jews!
If you claimed that you are the protectors of God
to the exclusion of humanity,
then, covet death if you had been ones who are sincere. (62:6)
But they will not covet it ever
because of what their hands put forward.

And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust. (62:7)
Say: Truly, the death that you run away from,
then, it will be, truly, that which you encounter.
Again, you will be returned to the One Who Knows
of the unseen and the visible and He will tell you
what you had been doing. (62:8)

COMMENTARY°

PROLOGUE

This Chapter aims to drive home to the Muslim community in Madinah that it has been chosen to undertake responsibility for the divine faith. It wants the Muslim community to understand that to be in such a position of trust is a great favor God has bestowed on it. It also wants them to understand that by God choosing His last Messenger from among the Arabs is yet another great favor, one that merits a proper expression of gratitude to God. In this context, the Chapter provides certain duties that must be fulfilled by the people who responded to God's Messenger and who accepted the trust. Both the community and the trust are to continue across generations, without fail, because God has determined that the seed planted by the Prophet will continue to grow. The Muslim community has taken over the trust abandoned and neglected by the Children of Jacob. They severed their relation with heaven so as to carry the Torah in the same way as an ass would carry books.

The Chapter drives this fundamental truth home to Muslims in general, starting in particular with the first Muslim community in Madinah, which was responsible for implementing a practical model of the Quranic system. It also applies to all future Muslim generations, as the Chapter clearly indicates.

At the same time, the Chapter addresses certain situations relevant to that first Muslim community, during its long and elaborate transformation process in accordance with Quranic requirements. This process involved the elimination of a host of hindrances, such as a keenness to make quick material gains and other temptations relating to money. These were to be replaced by proper awareness of the great trust assigned to the Muslim community. The Chapter also refers to a particular incident when the Messenger was once delivering his Friday sermon. A trade caravan had arrived at the same time, and the moment people learned of this, they left the mosque to take part in the music and entertainment that traditionally accompanied a caravan's arrival. According to some reports, only twelve of the Prophets Companions remained listening to his sermon. While these reports may not be very accurate as regards the numbers they men-

tion, nonetheless the departure of some people from the mosque was certain. Therefore, it merited this mention in the Quran.

This incident demonstrates the great effort exerted in the cultivation of that first Muslim community's fine manners and behavior, this until it achieved a lofty standard, making it a unique example in the history of the Quranic message and humanity generally. In this way, the Chapter teaches us to always remain patient when we try to build the Quranic character in any community.

The Chapter also includes an invitation to the Jews to a mutual prayer wishing death for those who advocate falsehood. This comes in reply to their claims that they were God's only friends and His chosen people and that God's Messenger must be one of them. The Chapter confirms their unwillingness to accept such an invitation because they felt that the Muslims' claims were unfounded. The Chapter comments that death, from which such people try to escape, will inevitably catch up with them. They will be returned to God who knows all, and He will tell them the truth of their doings. This statement does not, however, only apply to the Jews. Rather, the Chapter facilitates its appreciation by believers as well. They too must realize this fact in order to be able to discharge the duties assigned to them as advocates of Gods message.

A UNIVERSAL GLORIFICATION

Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God and whatever is in and on the earth, The King, The Holy, The Almighty, The Wise. **(62:1)** The Chapter begins with a statement confirming the fact that everything in the heavens and earth extols God's glory, adding a number of His attributes that have a subtle bearing on the theme of the Chapter. The Chapter is given the name *al-Jumuah*, meaning Friday, and it gives instructions about the special congregational prayer on that day, identifying that its time should be dedicated to remembrance of God. All distractions and business should be abandoned in pursuit of what is with God, which is better than everything else. Therefore, the Chapter mentions God's attribute, the Sovereign, who owns everything. This is relevant to business, since all trade normally seeks profit. The Chapter also states that God is Holy; He who is revered and glorified by all creatures in the universe. This attribute of God's contrasts with the entertainment mortals seek, distracting them from His remembrance. This opening sign also mentions that God is Almighty, which is relevant to the invitation made to the Jews for mutual prayer, and also to the death that is bound to happen to all. The last of God;s attributes mentioned in this opening is His wisdom. Such divine wisdom determined the choice of the unlettered people

from among whom God's last Messenger was selected to declare to them God s revelations, purify them and teach them the scriptures and wisdom.

The Messenger's Terms of Reference

Having started with this sublime glorification of God's limitless glory, the Chapter goes straight to its main theme: *He it is Who raised up among the unlettered a Messenger from among them who recounts His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and wisdom even though they had been before certainly, clearly going astray and to others among them who join them not. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* **(62:2-62:3)**

It is said that the Arabs were called *ummiyyun*, or unlettered, because the great majority of them could neither read nor write. It is reported that the Messenger once defined how many days there are in a month, joining his two hands and pointing with his ten fingers three times, and saying: We are an unlettered community. We neither reckon figures nor write. It is also said that a person who does not write is called *ummi* meaning he is the same as when his mother, or *umm*, gave birth to him. Writing is something that is only learned when a child grows up.

He it is Who raised up among the unlettered a Messenger from among them who recounts His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and wisdom even though they had been before certainly, clearly going astray. **(62:2)** The favor God has granted to these unlettered people is evident. He chose them to hold the trust embodied in His final message and sent them a Messenger from among themselves to elevate them to a noble position. He took them out of their state of ignorance, highlighted in their being unlettered, giving them instructions in God's book and in wisdom. Thus, their situation changed completely, clearly making them distinguished among all other people on earth.

And makes them pure. What the Prophet gave them was far-reaching purification. He purified their feelings and consciences, their actions and behavior, their marital and family lives as also their social lives. Their purification meant that they rose from the depths of idolatrous beliefs to believing in God's Oneness, from erroneous concepts and enigmatic legends to the true and clear faith, from disgraceful immorality to the clean moral values propounded by the Quranic message, from the filthy gains of usury and fraud to clean and legitimate earnings. It was a total purification of the individual and the community, of inner feelings and outward life. Such purification elevates the human being and his concepts, his role and exis-

tence to the high horizon of maintaining his bond with God and with the community on high.

And teaches them the Book and wisdom When they are thus instructed, they become the holders of a divine book. They thus learn how to evaluate matters properly. They can also make accurate judgments and define their course in life in the light of such wisdom. *Even though they had been before certainly, clearly going astray.* **(62:2)** During their pre-Quranic days, they were certainly in manifest error. Their situation is best described by Jafar ibn Abl Talib when he was questioned about the Quranic message by Negus, the King of Abyssinia. A number of Muslims had migrated there when the Prophet wanted to establish a new base for it. The ungrateful, in turn, had also sent a delegation lo request their extradition. Amr tried to paint a distorted picture of the Muslim immigrants to the king, but the Negus wanted to listen to their version. In this context, Jafar said to him: In our recent past we were ignorant people: we worshipped idols, ate carrion, committed all sorts of sins, attached little value to maintaining good relations with our kinsfolk and behaved badly to our neighbors. Our overruling maxim was that might was right. This continued to be our situation until God sent us, from among ourselves, a Messenger whose good name, honesty, sincerity and integrity were well known to us. He called on us to believe in God, th one and only God, and to stop worshipping all idols which we an our forefathers used to worship alongside Him. He commanded us always to speak the truth and be honest, to be good to our relatives and neighbors, to preserve life and shed no blood, to refrain from sin, perjury, robbing the property of orphans entrusted to our care, and making false accusations against honorable women. He also commanded us to devote our worship to God alone, ascribing to Him no partners of any sort. He further commanded us to pray regularly, to give away certain purifying alms and to fast.

WORTHY OF TRUST

Despite all their negative qualities during their pre-Quranic days, God knew that the Arabs were the ones to be entrusted with the new faith and that they would be true to their trust. He was also aware of their great potential once they were put on the right way. They could use all this potential for their new faith, whereas the Children of Jacob no longer had it. The latter had endured humiliation for a long time in Egypt under Pharaonic rule. As a result they portrayed many aspects of deviation and ill feeling. Indeed, they were unable to rid themselves of these negative effects, whether during Moses' lifetime, or later.

In His perfect and absolute knowledge, God knew that the Arabian Peninsula was the best cradle for His new faith. This was a faith that aimed to liberate the whole world from the erroneous ways of ignorance and rid it of the decadence that had eaten deep into the great civilizations, leaving them hollow.

To others among them who join them not. **(62:3)** God's choice of a community or an individual to be responsible for the great truth, to receive the light that emanates from Him, to be the link between the earth and heaven, is a favor of unparalleled proportions. It exceeds by far any sacrifices such an individual or community may give, in wealth, effort and life. It outweighs all the trouble they may undertake, the opposition they have to encounter and the hard struggle they have to endure. God thus reminds the Muslim community in Madinah, as well as those who will come after it, of the great favor He has granted them when He chose them for this task, sending them a Messenger to purify them and instruct them in the divine book and in wisdom. God's Messenger also left a great wealth of wisdom for future generations, whereby they learn from the practical example of that first Muslim community.

ONE ROLE ENDED

The Chapter then adds a statement that implies that any previous trustees of God's message has ended. Their hearts are no longer alert, dedicated and active enough to enable them to live up to the trust they were once given: *The parable of those who were entrusted with the Torah, and, again, carries it not is as the parable of a donkey who carries writings.* **(62:5)**

They had been entrusted with the Torah, and charged with being true to the faith and the divine law, but they failed to do so. The initial duty of this trust is to formulate a thorough and correct understanding of the divine message, and then to implement it both within one's own life and in human life at large.

Miserable was the parable of a folk who denied the signs of God! And God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust. **(62:5)** Likewise are all those who were given the trust of divine faith but who failed to live up to it. Muslims across many generations, as well as those living today, who have Muslim names but who fail to live up to what the Quranic message requires, and particularly those who read the Quran but fall short of what is required of them, are indeed like the ass carrying a load of heavy books. Unfortunately, these are numerous. The question is not that of books being carried: it is a question of understanding the books and putting into practice the teachings they impart.

Say: O those who became Jews! If you claimed that you are the protectors of God to the exclusion of humanity, then, covet death if you had been ones who are sincere. But they will not covet it ever because of what their hands put forward. And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust. Say: Truly, the death that you run away from, then, it will be, truly, that which you encounter. Again, you will be returned to the One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible and He will tell you what you had been doing. **(62:6-63:8)**

What this invitation entails is that the two groups stand together face to face and they all pray to God to inflict punishment on the group upholding falsehood. All groups the Messenger invited to such mutual prayer feared to do so; essentially, they refused to take up the challenge. This indicates that deep inside they realized that what the Messenger said was the truth and that his faith was true.

These signs may only represent a challenge to them, rather than an invitation to mutual prayer. Since they alleged that they were God's only friends among all humanity, why would they fear death, and reveal themselves to be so cowardly? If their claims were true, they would be in a position of favor with God after they die. So why does the prospect of death fill them with fear? This challenge is followed by a statement making it clear that their claims were untrue. They were aware that they had not done enough good deeds to ensure a good position with God or to hope for His reward. A person who has not prepared for his journey will always be in fear of what may happen along the road: *But they will not covet it ever because of what their hands put forward. And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust.* **(62:7)**

A statement follows that establishes the nature of death and what comes after it. It shows them that their attempts to escape from death are of little use. It will inevitably overtake them. After death, all will return to God where they will have their deeds reckoned and where they will face the consequences of the same: *Say: Truly, the death that you run away from, then, it will be, truly, that which you encounter. Again, you will be returned to the One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible and He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(62:8)**

This Quranic statement makes clear to the addressees and to everyone else the truth that people often overlook and prefer not to think about, despite facing it all the time: namely, this life is bound to end. To stay away from God during one's lifetime will not avert a person from returning to Him, for there is no refuge from God except by returning to Him. The reckoning of everyone's deeds will inevitably follow this return. There is simply no escape.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance ... (6:52) the Quranic message tells us. Who is one who drives them away? Those who drive them away are the unjust. It is unjust to drive away anyone who calls on his or her Lord in the morning or evening wanting His Countenance, His Presence. This behavior is the sign of a believer no matter what his social status may be. Their reckoning is not on us and our reckoning is not on them. Therefore, a believer knows the answer to the Quranic question: *Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR LISTENING CRITICALLY ARE:

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying. Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

LESSON 110(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Therefore, I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-

data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[2]

QURANIC CHAPTER 62: THE CONGREGATION (AL-JUMU'AH) SIGNS 62:9-62:11

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
When the formal prayer was proclaimed
on the day of congregation,
then, hasten about to the Remembrance of God
and forsake trading.
That is better for you if you had been knowing. (62:9)
Then, when the formal prayer had ended,
disperse through the earth looking for the grace of God.
And remember God frequently
so that perhaps you will prosper. (62:10)
And when they considered a transaction or a diversion,
they broke away toward it,
and left you as one who is standing up.
Say: What is with God is better than any diversion
or than any transaction.
And God is Best of the ones who provide. (62:11)

COMMENTARY°

THE CONGREGATION ON FRIDAY

The last section of the Chapter provides certain teachings concerning Friday and its congregational prayer. It refers to an event that might have been repeated; given the way it is described suggests such repetition: *O those who believed! When the formal prayer was proclaimed on the day of congregation, then, hasten about to the Remembrance of God and forsake trading. That is better for you if you had been knowing. Then, when the formal prayer had ended, disperse*

through the earth looking for the grace of God. And remember God frequently so that perhaps you will prosper. And when they considered a transaction or a diversion, they broke away toward it, and left you as one who is standing up. Say: What is with God is better than any diversion or than any transaction. And God is Best of the ones who provide.(**62:9-62:11)**

Friday Prayer is a weekly prayer that must be offered in congregation. It cannot be offered by anyone on his own. Muslims meet in Friday Prayer and listen to a sermon that reminds them of their duties towards God. We can say that it is an organizational prayer, following the Quranic method of preparing for this life and the life to come together by the same measures and the same acts of worship.

Friday Prayer gives a clear and specific impression of the nature of the Quranic Message and the Muslim community. The first sign in this section orders Muslims to leave off all business once they hear the call to prayer: *O those who believed! When the formal prayer was proclaimed on the day of congregation, then, hasten about to the Remembrance of God and forsake trading.* **(62:9)** It provides encouragement for so abandoning anything related to the life of this world and its concerns: *That is better for you if you had been knowing.* **(62:9)** This suggests that leaving off trade and business was not easy; it required such encouragement. Moreover, it provides goo and repeated education. Every now and then, people need a perio of time when they free themselves from their preoccupation with earning a living and the attractions of worldly life. They need such periods when they can be in close contact with their Lord, glorifying Him and experiencing the happiness resulting from dedication to His service. They need to fill their hearts and lungs with the pure, clean and refreshing air that comes with such dedication.

When they have done so, they can then return to their business, continuing to remember God: *Then, when the formal prayer had ended, disperse through the earth looking for the grace of God.* **(62:10)** The Quranic system provides a perfect balance between the needs of life on earth, with all that it requires of work and effort, and the need to be away from all this for a short while to attend to worship. Time spent away from the preoccupations of this life is necessary to keep the heart alive. Without it, it cannot live up to the great trust God has given us and nor can it fulfil its duties. It is important to remember God while we are busy earning our living, for such remembrance transforms our work activities into acts of worship. Nevertheless, we need such short periods of complete dedication to worship, as clearly implied in the last two signs.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here contains three "say" verses, messages the Prophet is specifically told to relate regarding faith. What are the three? To worship other than God is to go astray; to follow the desires of another is to go astray; God has sent the Prophet with a clear sign by which He distinguishes truth from falsehood that the ungrateful deny. If the command that the ungrateful wish to hasten to come were to arrive, the command of God would already have been decided. "Say" verses are an important concept in the Quran as a means of Quranic commands—imperatives—to be followed. Knowing the Quran as the first source for information about the Prophet is essential. This will give us a "new view" into his life.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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Laleh Bakhtiar

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The Year 21

of the Revel

(8 AH/629-6

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Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 21 of the Revelation (8 AH/629-630 CE)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 21, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 8 AH/ca. May 1, 629 CE-April 19, 630 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?
2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?
3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.
4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?
5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?
6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: ʿAQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

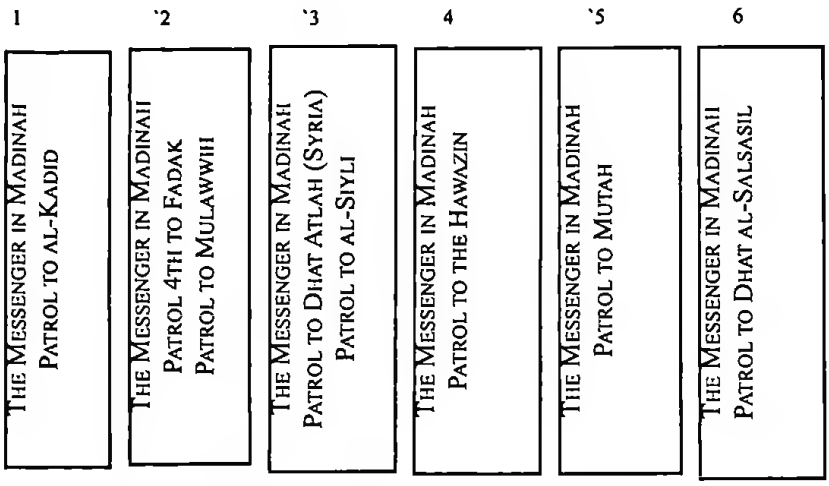
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 21*

TIMELINE

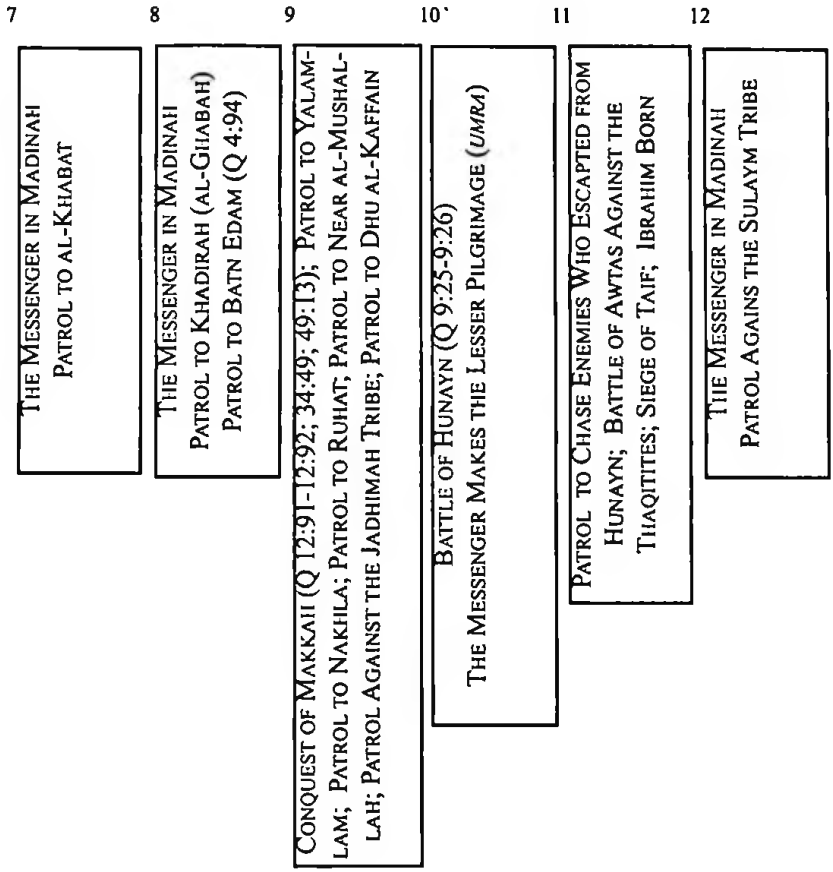


Key
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE, CONQUEST = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 21*

TIMELINE



Key

7 = RAJAB
8 = SHABAN
9 = RAMADAN
10 = SHAWWAL
11 = DHU AL-QADA
12 = DHU AL-HIJJA

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE, CONQUEST = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 21 presented here begins with Lesson 111 and Quranic Chapter 48, the 111th chapter revealed.

LESSON 111(1) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.

Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. In other words, it advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[1]

QURANIC CHAPTER 48: THE VICTORY (AL-FATH)
SIGNS 48:1-48:10

Madinah: *Truly, We gave victory to **you**, a clear victory,* (48:1)
*that God forgive **you** what was former of **your** impiety*
and what remained behind that He fulfill His divine blessing
*on **you** and guide **you** on a straight path* (48:2)
*and that God help **you** with a mighty help.* (48:3)
He it is Who caused the tranquility to descend
into the hearts of the ones who believe
that they add belief to their belief.
And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth.
And God had been Knowing, Wise (48:4)
that He causes to enter the males, ones who believe
and the females, ones who believe
Gardens beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in them forever,
and that He absolve them of their evil deeds.
And that had been with God a winning a sublime triumph. (48:5)

And that He punish the males, ones who are hypocrites
and the females, ones who are hypocrites
and the males, ones who are idol worshippers
and the females, ones who are idol worshippers,
the ones who think an evil thought about God,
a reprehensible thought, for them is
the reprehensible turn of fortune.
And God was angry with them.
And He cursed them and prepared hell for them.
And how evil a Homecoming! (48:6)
And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth.
And God had been Almighty, Wise. (48:7)
*Truly, We sent **you** as one who bears witness*
and one who gives good tidings
and as a warner, (48:8)
so that you believe in God and His Messenger
and that you support him and revere Him
and glorify Him at early morning dawn and eventide. (48:9)
*Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to **you**,*
take the pledge of alliance only to God.
The hand of God is over their hands.
Then, whoever broke his oath,
breaks his oath only to the harm of himself.
And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God,
He will give him a sublime compensation. (48:10)

COMMENTARY°

THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE

Such was the atmosphere in the Muslim community prior to the revelation of Chapter 48. The Messenger was certain of what God had inspired him. Therefore, he allowed himself no say in the drift of events other than what such divine inspiration pointed to. He referred to this inspiration at every point and before taking any step. Neither the ungrateful nor pressure by his Companions, who were infuriated by the hostility of the ungrateful, would make him change his course. Eventually, God put tranquillity in the Muslims' hearts and they were reassured, accepting without hesitation what the Messenger told them, just like their brethren who never entertained any doubt in the first place.

Therefore,the opening of this Chapter gives the Messenger happy news that greatly delights his heart: *Truly, We gave victory to **you**, a clear victory, that God forgive **you** what was former of **your** impiety and what remained behind that He fulfill His divine blessing*

*on **you** and guide **you** on a straight path and that God help **you** with a mighty help.* **(48:1-48:3)** The opening also refers to the tranquillity granted to the believers, acknowledging that they were true believers and promising them forgiveness of sins, reward and support from on high: *And God had been Knowing, Wise that He causes to enter the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, and that He absolve them of their evil deeds. And that had been with God a winning a sublime triumph.* **(48:4-48:5)** By contrast, their enemies, hypocrites and idolaters alike, incur God's displeasure and suffering in the life to come: *And that He punish the males, ones who are hypocrites and the females, ones who are hypocrites and the males, ones who are polytheists and the females, ones who are polytheists, the ones who think an evil **thought** about God, a reprehensible **thought**, for them is the reprehensible turn of fortune. And God was angry with them. And He cursed them and prepared hell for them. And how evil a Homecoming!* **(48:6)**

The Chapter also notes the pledge the believers gave to the Messenger, considering it a pledge to God. Thus, it establishes a direct relation between the believers and their Lord, the Eternal: *Truly, We sent **you** as one who bears witness and one who gives good tidings and as a warner, so that you believe in God and His Messenger and that you support him and revere Him and glorify Him at early morning dawn and eventide. Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to **you**, take the pledge of alliance only to God. The hand of God is over their hands. Then, whoever broke his oath, breaks his oath only to the harm of himself. And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God, He will give him a sublime compensation.* **(48:8-48:10)**

Before completing the discussion of the attitude of the believers at al-Hudaybiyah, the Chapter refers, within the context of unkept pledges, to the desert Arabs who stayed behind and did not join the Messenger on this expedition. It shows their excuses to be unfounded and exposes their ill thoughts about God and their expectation that the Messenger and his Companions would encounter disaster. It directs the Messenger as to the attitude he should adopt towards them in future. The style here emphasizes the strength of the believers and the weakness of those who stayed behind. It makes it clear that the Muslims would soon be able to make rich war gains, all of which would be coveted by those who were too slow to join the Messenger on this expedition: *The ones who are left behind will say to **you** among the nomads: Our property and our people occupied us, so ask forgiveness for us. They say with their tongues what is not in their*

hearts. Say: Who, then, has sway over you against God at all if He wanted to harm you or wanted to bring you profit? Nay! God had been aware of what you do. Nay! You thought that the Messenger would never turn about and the ones who believe to their people ever, and that was made to appear pleasing in your hearts. But you thought a reprehensible thought, and you had been a lost folk. And whoever believes not in God and His Messenger, truly, We made ready a blaze for the ones who are ungrateful. And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. The ones who are left behind will say when you set out to take the gains: Let us follow you. They want to substitute for the assertion of God. Say: You will not follow us. Thus, God said before; then, they will say: Nay! You are jealous of us. Nay! They had not been understanding, but a little. Say to the ones who are left behind among the nomads: You will be called against a folk imbued with severe might. You will fight them or they will submit to God. Then, if you obey, God will give you a fairer compensation. But if you turn away as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment. **(48:11-48:16)**

Within the same context, the Chapter tells us about those who have genuine excuses, justifying their staying behind. These are they who have some disability or illness that prevents their participation in war: *There is neither a fault on the blind, nor a fault on the lame, nor a fault on the sick, and whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will cause him to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run. And whoever turns away, He will punish him with a painful punishment.* **(48:17)**

The Chapter turns again to the believers, their thoughts and attitudes. It refers to them in a way that is full of honor and acceptance, delighting them with good news of what was soon to happen, praising their firm belief and readiness to sacrifice themselves for God's cause. We see here that God puts this select group of people under His direct care, bestowing on them His goodly acceptance and strengthening them in their noble attitude. He tells them in person that He in His glory was a witness with them as they offered their pledges at a particular spot, under the tree. He was certainly aware of their inner thoughts and feelings, was pleased with them and ensured that they would soon achieve victory that would yield great gains, relating this to God's law that operates throughout the universe. This is indeed a great and remarkable event witnessed by the whole universe: *God was well-pleased with the ones who believe (f) when they take the pledge of allegiance to you beneath the tree for*

He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand. 48:18 And they will take much gain. And God had been Almighty, Wise. God promised you much gain that you will take and He quickened this for you. He limited the hands of humanity from you so that perhaps it will be a sign to the ones who believe and that He guide you to a straight path and other gains which are not yet within your power. Surely, God enclosed them. And God had been over everything Powerful. And if those who were ungrateful fought you, they would have turned their backs. Again, they would not have found a protector or a helper. This is a custom of God which was, surely, in force before. You will never find in a custom of God any substitution.* **(48:18-48:23)**

The Chapter reminds the believers of God's grace as He stopped their enemies who were intent upon fighting them, denouncing those same enemies who prevented their entry into the Sacred Mosque, and refusing to allow their sacrificial animals to reach their place of slaughter. It reveals to them God's wisdom as He stopped conflict that year, and His grace in making what happened acceptable to them, bestowing tranquillity on them. All this was for a purpose unknown to them but known to God. It was the much better and greater prospect of bringing Makkah into the Quranic fold and making the Quranic message prevail over all religions. All this was according to God's design and by His will: *And He it is who limited their hands from you and your hands from them in the hollow of Makkah after He made you victors over them. And God had been Seeing of what you do. They were ungrateful, and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram, and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift from reaching its place of sacrifice. If it had not been for men, ones who believe, and for women, ones who believe, whom you know not that you tread on them and guilt should light on you without your knowledge. This was so that God may cause to enter into His mercy whomever He wills. If they were clearly apart, separated, We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them with a painful punishment. Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing. Certainly, God was sincere to the dream of His Messenger with The Truth: You will enter the Masjid al-Haram, if God willed, as ones who are safe, as ones who shaved your heads or as ones whose hair is cut short. You will fear not. He knew what you*

know not and He assigned other than that a victory near at hand. He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth that He uplift it over all of the ways of life. And God sufficed as a witness. **(48:24-48:28)**

The Chapter concludes with an outline highlighting the special characteristics of this select group of humanity, the Messenger's Companions. It refers to their description in the Torah and the Gospel and emphasizes God's promise to them of forgiveness of their sins and granting them rich reward: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. And those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves. You have seen them as ones who bow down as ones who prostrate themselves. They are looking for grace from God and contentment. Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration. This is their parable in the Torah. And their parable in the Gospel is like sown seed that brought out its shoot, energized. It, then, became stout and rose straight on its plant stalk impressing the ones who sow so that He enrage by them the ones who are ungrateful, God promised those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* **(48:29)**

Thus the Chapter gives a full image of the situation that led to its revelation. It does not relate the events in their chronological order, but highlights the lessons that must be learnt, linking individual events to their permanent rules, and special attitudes to the overall universal system. As always in the Quran, it is hearts and minds that are addressed in a highly inspiring way.

A COMMUNITY ATTAINS MATURITY

Looking at the Chapter as a whole and comparing it to the one that precedes it in the Quranic order reveals the profound change in the general attitude of the Muslim community over the three years we believe to have separated the revelation of these two Chapters. We realize the effects the Quran had on that community and how it benefited by the careful education the Messenger imparted to it, enabling it to assume its unique position and play its unparalleled role in human history.

It is clear from the general ambience of this Chapter and the feelings it generates that the Muslim community had attained maturity, achieved a coherently high standard of faith, become reassured about its duties and no longer needed strong incentives in order to discharge such duties that required sacrificing life and property. It now needed a restraining influence so that it could look at things calmly and accept the decision of the Highest Leadership of the Quranic message

to observe a temporary truce in its confrontation with the enemy.

No longer does the Muslim community need a directive of the type: *So be not faint and call for peace while you have the upper hand. God is with you and He will never cheat you out of your actions.* **(47:35)** or an admonition like: *Lo and behold! These are being called to spend in the way of God, yet among you are some who are misers. And whoever is miser, then, he is a miser only to himself. God is Sufficient and you are poor. And if you turn away, He will have a folk other than you in exchange. Again, they will not be the like of you.* **(47:38)** Nor was there any more need to provide incentives to fight for God's cause by speaking about the nobility of martyrdom and the great honor God grants to martyrs. We do not have here any exposition of the purpose of putting the Muslim community to the test by imposing a duty to fight for God's cause, as we have in the Chapter Muhammad: *But if God willed, He Himself would have, certainly, avenged you. But it is to try some of you with some others. As for those who were slain in the way of God, He will never cause their actions to go astray. He will guide them and He will make right their state of mind. And He will cause them to enter the Garden with which He acquainted them.* **(47:4-47:6)**

By contrast, the discourse in the present Chapter highlights the tranquillity God placed in the believers' hearts, or bestowed on them, to restrain them from being over zealous. It also reassures them that what took place was by God's command, referring to the Messenger's wisdom as he opted for a lenient and conciliatory approach. It speaks of God's pleasure with those who offered their pledges to the Messenger under the tree, and paints at the end a bright picture of the Muslim community under the Messenger's leadership.

The Chapter certainly speaks of the need to fulfil the pledges given to the Messenger and threatens those who go back on their pledges: *Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to you, take the pledge of alliance only to God. The hand of God is over their hands. Then, whoever broke his oath, breaks his oath only to the harm of himself. And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God, He will give him a sublime compensation.* **(48:10)** Clearly the reference here is one of honor to those giving their pledges to the Messenger, emphasizing the seriousness of the pledge. Reference to breaking such pledges occurs in respect of the desert Arabs who stayed behind. The same consideration applies to the hypocrites, men and women. This reference in the Chapter is made in passing, indicating the weakness of this group as compared with the entire Muslim community which had purged its ranks and attained maturity. This reference is very quick, unlike what we have in the preceding

Chapter, Muhammad, where the discussion of the hypocrites and their Jewish allies occupies a large part of it. This is yet another development in the external attitude of the Muslim community, one that is in harmony with the developments taking place within it.

There is also in the Chapter clear evidence of the strength of the Muslim community in relation to the strength of the ungrateful. This is evident in the Chapter as a whole and in specific verses. Other verses point out that further victories were to be achieved, making those who stayed behind eager to join the Muslims in order to share the promised war gains. The reference to the fact that the Quranic message would prevail over all other religions is also indicative of the increasing strength of the Muslim community in the period separating the revelation of these two Chapters that occur consecutively in the Quranic order.

There was, then, a clear change in people s hearts, the overall condition of the Muslim community and the situation it was facing. This change can easily be recognized when we follow the events during the Messenger's lifetime as discussed in the Quran. The change reflects the effects of the Quranic approach to the type of education the Muslim community should undergo and the method the Messenger followed in effecting that education. That happy community of the Messenger's Companions was unique in history. However, the change has a telling lesson for those who are in the position of leadership of human communities. They must never become fed up with human weakness, or with what may linger on of past habits, influences of social environment, worldly desire and lack of motivation. All these may have strong effects at first, but persistence, patience and a wise approach ensure steady progress. Moreover, tests and experience are bound to produce their effects when they are utilized to reinforce educational efforts. Gradually, weaknesses dwindle and disappear and believers begin to aspire to higher horizons. They are able to see the superb light emanating from on High. In God's Messenger we have a great shining example to follow. In the Quran we have guidance about the right path to take.

A DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF VICTORY

Truly, We gave victory to you, a clear victory, that God forgive you what was former of your impiety and what remained behind that He fulfill His divine blessing on you and guide you on a straight path and that God help you with a mighty help. **(48:1-48:3)**

The Chapter opens with a statement about the great favors bestowed by God on His Messenger, comprising glorious victory, complete forgiveness, perfect blessing and assured guidance. Together,

these favors are granted as a reward for complete, unshakeable trust in God's inspiration and directive, as well as a willing submission to His guidance. The Messenger demonstrated absolute trust, leaving no room whatsoever for his own judgment. He had a dream and proceeded to take action on its basis. His she-camel refused to move and people cried out that she had refused to go forward. He told them that such a refusal was not in her nature.

Subsequent events confirmed the wisdom of the Messenger's action, which was endorsed by the Quran. These events highlighted the great material, moral, political, military and religious benefits that accrued to the Muslim community as a result of this peace agreement. They were now looked upon as the most important power in Arabia; the desert Arabs who stayed away from the Quranic message came forward apologizing for their earlier stance, while the hypocrites could hardly raise a voice. Arab delegations came to Madinah from distant parts pledging loyalty to the Messenger. Subsequently too, the Messenger was able to smash the strength of the Jews in Khaybar and their other villages on the road to Syria. He was able to send delegations to distant parts, such as Najd, Yemen and al-Balqa. Only two years later, he was able to conquer Makkah peacefully, putting an end to the long drawn out conflict with the ungrateful. It was then that the Quranic message achieved its final victory in Arabia, and people flocked to the Quranic message in large numbers.

Furthermore, the signing of the peace treaty at al-Hudaybiyah was a great victory in a different sense: it was a conquest of hearts and minds, epitomized by the pledge given by the Messenger's Companions that earned them God's pleasure as specifically mentioned in the Chapter. It is this conquest that made them worthy of the image drawn of them in the last verse of the Chapter. In the history of the divine message, this was a great victory that must be given its true value as we look at how it influenced the turn of events in subsequent years.

The Messenger was delighted with the revelation of this Chapter. He was overjoyed with the great favors God bestowed on him and his Companions: the victory, complete forgiveness, perfect blessings, guidance on a straight way and God's acceptance of the believers and His beautiful description of them in the Chapter. He said: A Chapter has been revealed to me tonight, and it is much dearer to me than all that the sun overlooks put together.

A MEDLEY OF EMOTIONS

The first three signs of the Chapter were specifically addressed to the Messenger. The Chapter goes on to describe the great favors

God bestowed on the Muslim community as He gave them such a victory, adding tranquillity to their hearts, and promising further favors in the life to come:

He it is Who caused the tranquility to descend into the hearts of the ones who believe that they add belief to their belief. And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth. And God had been Knowing, Wise that He causes to enter the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, and that He absolve them of their evil deeds. And that had been with God a winning a sublime triumph. **(48:4-48:5)**

Tranquillity, or *sakinah* in Arabic, is a word with pleasant connotations. When a heart is blessed with it, it generates reassurance, trust, comfort, dignity and a ready acceptance of God's will.

The believers experienced conflicting emotions during this encounter. They were looking forward to the fulfilment of the Messenger's dream of entering the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, realizing that a messenger's dream always came true. They had then to endure a stand-off with the ungrateful, followed by the Messenger's acceptance to return without visiting the Sacred Mosque that year, even though they had entered into the state of consecration required for that Mosques entry and had marked their animals for sacrifice following the completion of their worship at the Sacred Mosque.

The believers found other conditions imposed by the ungrateful to be totally unfair. Specifically, they found unacceptable the condition that the Messenger should return to the ungrateful anyone from among them who came to him, declaring himself a Muslim, without being given the prior permission of his father or guardian. They were also totally displeased when the ungrateful delegation objected to the mention of God's name, *al-Rahman*, and with their objection to the Messenger's position as God's Messenger being included in the document.

It is reported that Ali, who was writing the document, refused to erase this reference, as requested by the ungrateful representative, Suhayl ibn Amr. In fact, the Messenger himself rubbed it out, saying: My Lord! You know that I am **Your** Messenger.

The Muslims'dedication and enthusiasm to fight the ungrateful were total, as evidenced by the fact that they all pledged themselves to it. Yet the confrontation ended peacefully, requiring them to turn back and go home. Understandably, this was not easy for them to accept. We sense this in their reluctance to slaughter their sacrifices and shave their heads, indicating the end of their rituals. Indeed, the Messenger had to issue his command to them three times, and this

to those who were always quick to put his every order into effect. Furthermore, Urwah, the fourth emissary of the ungrateful, reported on this to the ungrateful when he returned to give them his advice.

As we have noted already, so great was the feeling among the Muslims that they did not slaughter their sacrifices, nor shave their heads until they saw the Messenger doing so himself. Only his action spurred them to follow suit; such was the state of their bewilderment. The Muslims had travelled from Madinah intending to perform *umra*. The thought of fighting was not in their minds. Neither mentally nor practically were they prepared for war. They were surprised to see the ungrateful taking such an adamant stance against them, and they were greatly upset when they heard the news that Uthman had been killed. To the Muslims, it was totally unexpected for the ungrateful to send some of its men to aim arrows and stone missiles at their camp.

Therefore, when the Messenger, upon hearing of Uthman's assassination, decided to fight the ungrateful and asked his Companions to give him their pledges in support, every single one of them did so. This did not, however, diminish their surprise to find themselves in a situation totally different from what they hoped to do. Such feelings were only a part of what they experienced. Moreover, they were heavily outnumbered, amounting to 1,400 pilgrims, while the ungrateful were in their own city, supported by desert Arabs and other idolaters.

When we consider all these aspects, we better understand the meaning and the effect of the Quranic statement: *He it is Who caused the tranquility to descend into the hearts of the ones who believe that they add belief to their belief.* **(48:4)** We can imagine the situation as though we are present there, and feel the comfort of this tranquillity and the peace it generated in the believers' hearts. God was fully aware that the feelings they experienced were motivated by faith. They were keen to defend their faith and fight for it. They did not look for any personal glory. Therefore, He bestowed His blessings on them, giving them such tranquillity, *that they add belief to their belief.* **(48:4)** Reassurance is of a higher rank than passion and enthusiasm. It carries with it a combination of trust, conviction and absence of worry.

The Chapter also indicates that military victory was in no way difficult. On the contrary, it was easy, had God, in His infinite wisdom, decided to gratify the believers' wishes. At His command there are countless forces that cannot be overcome. They would have ensured victory for the Muslims at His bidding, whenever He wished: *And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth. And*

God had been Knowing, Wise **(48:4)** Indeed everything moves as determined by God in His wisdom. It was through His knowledge and wisdom that: *He it is Who caused the tranquility to descend into the hearts of the ones who believe that they add belief to their belief.* **(48:4)** He will thus bring about what He has decided to give them: victory and blessings: *that He causes to enter the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, and that He absolve them of their evil deeds. And that had been with God a winning a sublime triumph.* **(48:5)**

If in God's sight this is a great triumph, then it is indeed a great one. It was so for those who achieved it, giving it its right measure. The believers were delighted with what God granted them. Having listened to the opening of the Chapter, learning about the favors God bestowed on His Messenger, they were looking forward to their own share, asking about it. When they were told of it, they were delighted and reassured.

The Chapter then tells them of another aspect of God s wisdom in letting events develop in the way they did; namely, requiting the ungrateful and the hypocrites for their actions: *And that He punish the males, ones who are hypocrites and the females, ones who are hypocrites and the males, ones who are polytheists and the females, ones who are polytheists, the ones who think an evil thought about God, a reprehensible thought, for them is the reprehensible turn of fortune. And God was angry with them. And He cursed them and prepared hell for them. And how evil a Homecoming! And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth. And God had been Almighty, Wise. Truly, We sent you as one who bears witness and one who gives good tidings and as a warner,***(48:6-48:7)**

These signs group together the hypocrites and the idolaters, men and women, highlighting their common characteristic of harboring evil thoughts about God, having no trust in His forthcoming help to the believers. The Chapter makes clear that they are all encompassed by evil and cannot depart from its circle. They incur God's anger and, therefore, they are expelled from His mercy. Evil will be their end. In fact, hypocrisy is in no way less than idolatry; indeed it is more contemptible. The harm the hypocrites do to the Muslim community is no less than what the idolaters do, although the two types are different in nature and physical aspects.

The Chapter makes harboring evil thoughts about God the distinctive feature of the hypocrites and the ungrateful. A believer always thinks well of God, expecting what is good in all situations, good and bad. He believes that God will bring him good in both con-

ditions. The fact is that a believer s heart always looks up to God, whose grace and favors never cease. When we establish the bond of faith with God, we realize this fact and appreciate it. The hypocrites and the ungrateful, by contrast, have no bond with God. They have no feeling of this concept, which, in turn, leads them to entertain evil thoughts about Him, casting only a superficial look at things and judging situations by appearances. Thus, they expect only evil to befall them and to befall the believers whenever appearances so suggest. They have no idea of God's power, control of things and events, or His subtle and elaborate planning.

The sign groups together all types of enemies of the Quranic message, describing their position with God and what He has prepared for them, adding a comment pointing to God's power and wisdom: *And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth. And God had been Almighty, Wise.* **(48:7)** Nothing of their situation escapes God, and nothing is too hard for Him.

THE PROMISE AND THE REWARD

Again the Chapter addresses the Messenger, pointing out his role and its objective. It tells the believers about their duty towards God after having received His message. It makes clear to them that the pledges they gave to the Messenger were indeed pledges given to God. Solemn indeed is a pledge made to God. Furthermore, this imparts to the pledge given to the Messenger even greater honor: *Truly, We sent you as one who bears witness and one who gives good tidings and as a warner, so that you believe in God and His Messenger and that you support him and revere Him and glorify Him at early morning dawn and eventide. Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to you, take the pledge of alliance only to God. The hand of God is over their hands. Then, whoever broke his oath, breaks his oath only to the harm of himself. And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God, He will give him a sublime compensation.* **(48:8-48:10)**

God's Messenger is a witness who will testify that he has delivered the message entrusted to him to humanity, and he will speak of the reception people gave him. He will state that some people believed and accepted the faith while others rejected it denying its truth, and others still were hypocrites. Some did well and others did badly. He will give his testimony just as he delivered his message. He bears the good news of forgiveness and acceptance by God, as well as a good reward from Him to the believers. He also warns against the ill fate that awaits the ungrateful, hypocrites and evildoers, as they all incur God's anger.

Such is the Messenger's role. Addressing the believers, the Chapter makes clear to them the purpose of God's message. It is to believe in God and His Messenger, and to fulfil the tasks and duties of faith. Thus, they support God by implementing His law, and they honor Him in their hearts as they feel His majesty. They also extol His glory and praise Him at both ends of the day, which means in effect the whole day. What is meant here is that in their hearts and minds they feel their bond with God at all times. This is the result of faith which the believers will receive because God sent His Messenger and assigned to him his role outlined in the sign: *Truly, We sent **you** as one who bears witness and one who gives good tidings and as a warner.* **(48:8)**

The Messenger came to them to establish their bond with God, and to solemnize a pledge they give to Him that continues even though the Messenger is no longer with them. When he stretches his hand out to accept their pledges, he is doing so on God's behalf: *Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to **you**, take the pledge of alliance only to God. The hand of God is over their hands.* **(48:10)** This is an awesome description. When any of them put his hand in the Messenger's to give his pledge, he realized that God was there present, accepting the pledge, and that His hand also embraced their hands. How awesome and majestic.

This image puts an end to any thought anyone might have had about retracting their pledge. Should the Messenger disappear in person, God Himself will never disappear. It is He who accepts this pledge, watches its fulfilment and gives its reward.*Then, whoever broke his oath, breaks his oath only to the harm of himself.* **(48:10)** Whatever pledge is made between God and any of His servants is richly profitable to God's servant. It is he who will profit by God's favors, while God is in no need of anyone. Therefore, when anyone breaks his pledge with God, he is the loser. Furthermore, he exposes himself to Gods anger and punishment, because God loves those who are true to their promises and dislikes those who deliberately break them. *And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God, He will give him a sublime compensation.* **(48:10)** No details are given here of the reward; it is merely described as rich, or great, as is the literal meaning of the Arabic adjective 'azim used here. This reward is rich by God's measure and value which we who dwell in this limited space of the earth can never imagine.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning

LESSON 111(2) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER 48: THE VICTORY (AL-FATH)
SIGNS 48:11-48:17

Madinah: *The ones who are left behind*
will say to you among the nomads:
Our property and our people occupied us,
so ask forgiveness for us.
They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts.
Say: Who, then, has sway over you against God at all
if He wanted to harm you or wanted to bring you profit?
Nay! God had been aware of what you do. (48:11)
Nay! You thought that the Messenger would never turn about
and the ones who believe to their people ever,
and that was made to appear pleasing in your hearts.
But you thought a reprehensible thought,
and you had been a lost folk. (48:12)
And whoever believes not in God and His Messenger,
truly, We made ready a blaze
for the ones who are ungrateful. (48:13)
And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (48:14)
The ones who are left behind will say
when you set out to take the gains:
Let us follow you.
They want to substitute for the assertion of God.

Say: You will not follow us.
Thus, God said before; then, they will say:
Nay! You are jealous of us.
Nay! They had not been understanding, but a little. (48:15)
Say to the ones who are left behind among the nomads:
You will be called against a folk imbued with severe might.
You will fight them or they will submit to God.
Then, if you obey, God will give you a fairer compensation.
But if you turn away as you turned away before,
He will punish you with a painful punishment. (48:16)
There is neither a fault on the blind, nor a fault on the lame,
nor a fault on the sick, and whoever obeys God and His Messenger,
He will cause him to enter Gardens
beneath which rivers run.
And whoever turns away,
He will punish him with a painful punishment. (48:17)

COMMENTARY°

THE ONES LEFT BEHIND

Having established the true nature of the pledge and referred to thoughts of breaking or honoring it, the Chapter now speaks of the desert Arabs who were left behind. They refused to accompany the Messenger on this expedition, entertaining no good thoughts about God, expecting defeat for the believers who were going to the ungrateful's own land, when it was the ungrateful that had attacked Madinah twice over a short period of time. The fact is that the first, the Battle of Uhud, took place in Shawwal, the 10th month of 3 AH, while the second, the Battle of the Trench, occurred towards the end of 5 AH, which means that two full years separated them.

The Chapter tells the Messenger of what excuses the desert Arabs would employ when they see him returning safely together with his Companions. They would realize that the treaty he had concluded with the ungrateful signified that the latter had climbed down. No matter how harsh its conditions may appear, the ungrateful now treated Muhammad and his followers as its equal, with whom it sought peace rather than confrontation. The Chapter also details the true reasons why these desert Arabs stayed behind, exposing their reality to the Messenger and the believers. It tells the Messenger of the rich war gains the Muslims would shortly achieve, and that these same Arabs would try to accompany them on their next encounter in order to receive a share of those. The Chapter tells the Messenger what he should say to them when this takes place. He must not allow them to be part of that expedition, which was certain to end in his

favor. Only those present at al-Hudaybiyah would be permitted to accompany him. He was also to tell those Arabs left behind that they would be called upon to join the Muslims when they needed to fight other people known for their great war prowess. If they truly wanted to join the Muslim camp, they should join the Muslim army on that day, whatever outcome God may give them. If they obeyed, they would receive rich reward. If they turned away, as they did once before, they would be made to endure a painful suffering:

The desert Arabs who stayed behind will say to **you**: *The ones who are left behind will say to you among the nomads: Our property and our people occupied us, so ask forgiveness for us. They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say: Who, then, has sway over you against God at all if He wanted to harm you or wanted to bring you profit? Nay! God had been aware of what you do. Nay! You thought that the Messenger would never turn about and the ones who believe to their people ever, and that was made to appear pleasing in your hearts. But you thought a reprehensible thought, and you had been a lost folk. And whoever believes not in God and His Messenger, truly, We made ready a blaze for the ones who are ungrateful. And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. The ones who are left behind will say when you set out to take the gains: Let us follow you. They want to substitute for the assertion of God. Say: You will not follow us. Thus, God said before; then, they will say: Nay! You are jealous of us. Nay! They had not been understanding, but a little. Say to the ones who are left behind among the nomads: You will be called against a folk imbued with severe might. You will fight them or they will submit to God. Then, if you obey, God will give you a fairer compensation. But if you turn away as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment.* **(48:11-48:16)**

The Quran does not merely reply to the excuses of those who stayed behind; it uses the occasion to treat minds and souls, identifying the points of weakness and deviation in order to treat them effectively. It then states those values that are true and permanent, as well as the proper basis on which to base attitudes and behavior.

Those Arabs who stayed behind belonged to the tribes of Ghifar, Muzaynah, Ashja, Aslam and others who lived in the area close to Madinah. They tried to excuse themselves, saying: *Our property and our people occupied us.* **(48:11)** This is no excuse. People will always have families and property. If having these is a good excuse to exempt anyone from their duties towards their faith, no one would ever fulfil such duties. They also asked the Messenger: *So ask forgiveness*

for us. **(48:11)** *They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts.* **(48:11)** The reply given them stresses the truth of God's will that cannot be stopped or prevented by bravery in war or its avoidance. They are all subject to God's power, and He is fully aware of all things. His will controls everything as He determines: *Say: Who, then, has sway over you against God at all if He wanted to harm you or wanted to bring you profit? Nay! God had been aware of what you do.* **(48:11)**

The question implies the instruction to submit to God's will and to obey His orders without hesitation. No hesitation will ever prevent harm or delay benefit. Excuses are no use, because nothing escapes God's knowledge and nothing affects the requital He decides on the basis of His perfect knowledge. This is a fitting directive, using the appropriate moment in order to heighten its effect.

Nay! You thought that the Messenger would never turn about and the ones who believe to their people ever, and that was made to appear pleasing in your hearts. **(48:12)** Thus they are shown the truth of their attitude. Their true thoughts and intentions, which they thought were concealed, are placed before their very eyes. They thought that the Messenger and his Companions were going to their death, and that they would never return to their families in Madinah. They said of the Messenger: Is he going to fight those who attacked him in his home city and killed his Companions? They allowed no room for the care God takes of those of His servants who are dedicated to His cause. Moreover, since they lacked motivation based on faith, they could not feel the importance of duty and that a duty must be fulfilled, regardless of the cost. Nor did they realize that obedience to the Messenger must not be based on any thought of gain or loss. It must be fulfilled as a duty, regardless of the outcome.

The thoughts they had seemed pleasing to their hearts. They could not see any other possibility. Their ill thoughts about God derived from the fact that their hearts had always been devoid of goodness. The Chapter uses a single Arabic word for the phrase devoid of goodness. This word is normally used to describe a dead land where no plant can grow. The same applies to these Arab's hearts, as also to them generally. Their hearts are lifeless, yield nothing good. How else would a human heart be when it harbors no good thought of God, having severed its bond with Him? It must be lifeless, heading for nothing good.

THE TRUE BALANCE

Such do people think of the Muslim community. However, it is only people like those desert Arabs who have severed their bond with

God, their hearts devoid of goodness, who view the Muslim community as being on the verge of eradication, heavily outnumbered by the forces of evil and deviation. They look at the limited numbers of the advocates of the Quranic message, or their poor artillery, or their low position in society and conclude that they will inevitably be defeated. Like the desert Arabs of old, such people avoid every association with the believers, looking only for their own safety. God, however, will ensure that such ill thoughts inevitably end in failure, and will change positions as only He knows how, to set the true balance. It is He who holds this balance in His mighty hand, lowering some people and raising others above them. The hypocrites who harbour evil thoughts about God, throughout all places and generations, can never understand how this is done.

The true balance is that of faith. Therefore, those Arabs are referred to it. The Chapter outlines the general rule of rewarding people in accordance with this balance, highlighting the possibility of receiving God's grace. They are thus encouraged to take the opportunity available to them now in order to benefit by God's forgiveness and to enjoy His grace: *And whoever believes not in God and His Messenger, truly, We made ready a blaze for the ones who are ungrateful. And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(48:13-48:14)**

They used to cite their families and property as the reasons why they stayed behind. Of what benefit will their families and property be to them when they are thrown in the blazing fire, which has been prepared for them if they continue to deny God and His Messenger? These signs show such people the two options available to them and they are invited to choose one. Then it is God who issues the promise and the warning to them. To Him belongs the heavens and the earth and all in between them. It is He who can extend forgiveness and inflict punishment, as He chooses.

God rewards people according to their deeds, but His will is free, unrestricted by anything. This truth is established here so that it is accepted by all. There is no conflict between it and the fact that peoples reward is based on their actions, because this is the basis that God has willed to choose. Nevertheless, God's forgiveness and mercy is close at hand. Let anyone who so wishes benefit by it, before the suffering befalls those who refuse to believe in God and His Messenger in accordance with His will.

FINE PROSPECTS

The Chapter then shows a glimpse of the prospects God has in

store for the believers, contrary to all the thoughts of the ungrateful. This is done in such a way that suggests that it is all going to happen soon: *The ones who are left behind will say when you set out to take the gains: Let us follow you. They want to substitute for the assertion of God. Say: You will not follow us. Thus, God said before; then, they will say: Nay! You are jealous of us. Nay! They had not been understanding, but a little.* **(48:15)**

Most commentators on the Quran take this sign to refer to the conquest of Khaybar. This may be so, but the statement also gives clear impressions that do not necessarily relate to Khaybar. It suggests that the Muslims would soon achieve an easy victory. Those who previously stayed behind would realize that it would be so and therefore they ask to join the Muslims. Perhaps what makes Quranic commentators specify Khaybar is that this occurred soon after al-Hudaybiyah. Indeed, it took place in the first month of 7 AH, less than two months after the signing of the treaty, and it brought the Muslims rich war gains. Khaybar was the last Jewish stronghold in the Arabian Peninsula. It was here that some of the Jews of al-Nadir and Qurayzah had sought refuge after they were ordered out of Madinah.

Commentators are almost unanimous that God promised those who give the Messenger their pledges at al-Hudaybiyah would have the war gains achieved at Khaybar, all for themselves, with no share for anyone else. When the Messenger marched on Khaybar, he did not allow anyone to join him other than those who had taken part at al-Hudaybiyah.

God instructed the Messenger to refuse permission to those who had previously stayed behind, assuming that they even offered to join the Muslim army. Specifically, he was to say that their participation would be contrary to God's orders. He also told the Messenger that when they were refused such permission, they would say: You begrudge us and want to deprive us of our legitimate share of any war gains. What they say thus betrays their lack of understanding of God's purpose. It is fitting that those who are eager to share in the booty be deprived of it, while those who are dedicated to God's cause, obeying His orders, should enjoy His grace and be the ones to enjoy the war gains He grants the Muslim community. They were the ones who had obeyed when they expected nothing other than a hard fight.

God further instructed the Messenger to tell them that they would be called upon to fight against people known for their war prowess, and that the fight would continue until this enemy had been subdued. Should those who formerly stayed behind pass this test,

they will still receive their reward, but if they continue to disobey they will have failed what is their final test: *Say to the ones who are left behind among the nomads: You will be called against a folk imbued with severe might. You will fight them or they will submit to God. Then, if you obey, God will give you a fairer compensation. But if you turn away as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment.* **(48:16)**

Reports differ as to the identity of this military might, and to whether this would occur during the Messenger's lifetime or after he passed away. It is most likely, however that it happened during his lifetime so as to further test the Arabs in the surrounding areas of Madinah. What is important here is to note the Quranic method of education, and how hearts and souls are treated by Quranic directives and practical tests. We see this clearly in the way the inner thoughts of those who stayed behind were exposed before their very own eyes to the believers. We also see it in the way true values and the principles of proper behavior are pointed out to them.

Since the test makes it a duty binding on everyone to join the Muslim army, God identifies those with real excuses who are exempt from so joining, without their being subject to any punishment: *There is neither a fault on the blind, nor a fault on the lame, nor a fault on the sick, and whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will cause him to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run. And whoever turns away, He will punish him with a painful punishment.* **(48:17)** A person who is blind or lame has a permanent disability exempting him from military engagement. A person who is sick has a temporary excuse, one that extends until he has recovered full health.

Ultimately, it is all a question of obedience or disobedience. It is a mental attitude, not a technical situation. Those who obey God and His Messenger will be rewarded by admittance into heaven. Those who turn away will receive painful suffering. Anyone can put the hardship of striving for Gods cause in the balance against the comfort of staying behind and what it entails. He may then make his own choice.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

INTERLUDE 1

THE CONQUEST OF MAKKAH

The ungrateful, idol worshippers are the first to break the peace treaty of Hudaybiah by instigating the Bakr tribe to attack the Kuzaah tribe who had formed an alliance with the Muslims. Twenty-three members of the Kuzaah are killed.

With this act, they change the political situation of peace and calm into one of tension. Members of the Kuzaah tribe go to Madinah. After explaining what had happened, they say: O Messenger of God, the idol worshippers attacked us in the middle of the night while some of us were asleep and others were in the middle of their devotions. They killed some and took others as prisoners and then left the area. They added: We have been massacred because we are Muslims.

When the Messenger hears this, he promises to help them. The elderly head of the tribe, Budil, who lives in Makkah, goes to see the Messenger. He explains what had happened to them and that the idol worshippers had supported the Bakr tribe.

The idol worshippers regret their action because they are well aware of the increasing power of the Quranic message. They also know that there will be some reaction to the agreement they had broken. Abu Sufyan, the leader of the idol-worshippers, leaves Makkah for Madinah to renew the Treaty of Hudaybiah. Half way there he meets with the leader of the Khazaah and realizes that he has gone to Madinah and given a report about what had happened to the Messenger.

Upon his arrival in Madinah, Abu Sufyan goes to see the Messenger. He speaks about renewing the Treaty of Hudaybiah, but receives no response. He then joins with the Companions of the Messenger, but they do not accept either. Then he goes to Ali and Fatima's house and asks them to intercede with the Messenger. Ali says: Whenever the Messenger makes a decision, we do not oppose him. Then he turns to the Messenger's daughter and says: Tell your son Hasan to shelter the Makkans and renew the Treaty of Hudaybiah. Fatima says: My child is still very young. He is still not old enough to do what you ask.

Abu Sufyan realizes he had no alternative but to go to the mosque. He stands up among the people and asks them to renew the Treaty of Hudaybiah. He then leaves the mosque, gets on his camel and leaves for Makkah. When he arrives there, he is reproached by the idolaters' leaders for being too simple-minded in thinking that he could make amends for the abrogation of the Treaty in this way.

The Messenger realizes that the time is ripe for a move against the idolater's in Makkah. He commands the people to get ready to move. He does not tell them the destination so the idol worshippers will be taken unaware and agree

to surrender. In this way, Makkah will be taken without any bloodshed. But one of the Companions of the Messenger knows of the destination and he sends a secret letter to three men among the leaders of the idol worshippers. There he speaks of the Messenger's plans to conquer Makkah. He gives the letter to a woman named Sarah to deliver and he gives her ten dinars to do so.

Sarah hides Hatab's letter in her braided hair and travels towards Makkah. The angel of revelation tells the Messenger about the treason. The Messenger assigns Ali and Zubayr to go as quickly as possible to Makkah to prevent Sarah from reaching there and delivering the letter to the Makkan leaders.

The Messenger's followers immediately leave for Makkah. Ali catches up with her and says: The Messenger does not lie. You must give back the letter. At Ali's insistence, she takes the letter from her hair and gives it to Ali. He takes it to the Messenger and the spy fails to get word to the idol worshippers.

The Messenger sends people to the tribes in the area to invite them to join with him. He tells them to be ready the first of Ramadan in Madinah. With this mobilization, 10,000 Muslims are prepared to support the Messenger in the conquest of Makkah.

The Messenger leaves Madinah on the 10th of Ramadan, 8 AH. This time he tells the army he is going to Makkah. He asks everyone to not allow this news to reach the idol worshippers. They stop at a point near Makkah without the idol worshipers being aware of their presence.

The army of the Quranic message, after setting up camp, is told to light fires at night in all areas so that the flames can be seen by the people in Makkah and frighten them.

Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib is a resident of Makkah. At the same time as the Messenger is moving towards Makkah, he has decided to leave Makkah for Madinah and join the Muslims. He accidentally meets up with the Messenger at Juhfah, which is half way between Makkah and Madinah. By the Messenger's command, he joins the Muslims moving towards Makkah.

He thinks to himself that if the idol worshippers are informed about the strength of the Muslims, it might be a positive step towards preventing bloodshed. It will be a conquest without opposition. Thus the very night that the flames can be seen all around Makkah, he gets on the white horse of the Messenger to tell the idol worshippers about the danger they face from the Muslims.

That same night several Makkan leaders leave Makkah with Abu Sufyan, the leader of the idolaters and the strongest opponent of the Quranic message. Suddenly Abbas, the Messenger's uncle, hears the voice of Abu Sufyan as he is saying: I have never seen such flames and such an army. Abbas says: I recognized Abu Sufyan's voice. I called to him and he heard me. He asked: Abbas, what is going on. I said the Messenger had come with this army. He asked: What should I do? I said to him: If the Muslims get their hands on you,

they will kill you. It is best if you come with me to the Messenger so that I can protect you. Abu Sufyan goes with Abbas to the Messenger.

When he approaches the Messenger, some of his Companions ask that Abu Sufyan be killed. But Abbas says: I have given him protection. Abbas protects Abu Sufyan through the night and then takes him to the Messenger at daybreak.

The Messenger says to him: Do you still not believe that there is a God other than gods? In response, Abu Sufyan says: May my mother and father be sacrificed for you. How patient and kind you are. If there had been gods other than the One God, they would have helped me.

Then the Messenger says to him: Do you believe in my mission? Abu Sufyan recalls the kindness of the Messenger but refuses to accept his mission. At the insistence of Abbas, however, he recites the *shahadat:* There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Then the Messenger's uncle asks that at this sensitive point he be given an advantage. The Messenger grants three advantages to this long time enemy of his: Those people would be spared who first of all, seek refuge in Abu Sufyan's house; second, those who stay in their homes behind closed doors; and third, those who seek refuge in the Masjid al-Haram and who sit down there.

After receiving these concessions from the Messenger Abu Sufyan returns to Makkah to tell the idol worshippers about the kindness and affection of the Messenger, but first the Messenger wants him to see the Muslim army on review. He tells Abbas to find the most suitable place for Abu Sufyan to see the full splendor of the army. This will put fear in his heart so that when he returns to the idolaters, he will be able to convince them that resistance is useless. The Messenger's command is carried out and the army marches in review before Abu Sufyan.

That which frightens Abu Sufyan more than anything else is that each group that passes him shouts out: God is Greater, *Allahu Akbar* in such a way that their voices resound in the valley. Abu Sufyan is in great anticipation to see in which group the Messenger participates. With each unit which passes, Abu Sufyan asks Abbas: Is Muhammad among this unit?

Finally a unit which contains more than 4000 soldiers amongst which are 2000 in chain mail and many flags in the hands of the commanders in regular lines catches the attention of Abu Sufyan and Abbas. Only the eyes of the soldiers can be seen. They ride fast Arab horses and reddish haired camels. The power of this unit so overwhelms Abu Sufyan that he says to Abbas: There is no power which can succeed against them. Abbas! The sultanate of your nephew is great indeed. Abbas corrects him by saying: This is not a sultanate; it is prophethood.

When the Green Army passes in front of Abu Sufyan and its great flag bearer, Saad ibn Abadah, sees Abu Sufyan, he cries out: Today is the day of battle. Today weak powers will be destroyed and useless strength will be elim-

inated. Today the gods of the ungrateful are disgraced. Abu Sufyan's body shakes. When the Messenger faces him, he turns to the Messenger and says: Saad ibn Abadah shouts out that today is the day of battle and that today useless forces will be eliminated and today is the disgrace of the gods of the idolaters. In response, the Messenger says: Today is the day of Mercy. The One God has blessed today. He takes the flag from Saad and gives it to his son, Qays.

After seeing this, Abu Sufyan returns to Makkah. He tells the idolaters about what he had seen. He tells them which three groups are given security. Then he cries out in Makkah: Woe be upon you. Muhammad has come with a great army. You do not have the power to resist. He has come here with an army of 10,000 well-equipped men. Some of the leaders try to instigate the people to resist, but this proves to be of no avail. After twelve or thirteen people die, they all disperse.

After the Messenger enters Makkah, in addition to granting security to the three groups he had mentioned, he gives the flag to Abd Allah Khatham and says anyone who gathers under his flag would be safe.

All of the areas of Makkah, in this way, are taken by the Messenger. After a time of rest, a tent is set up for him at the gates to Makkah, he directs himself to Makkah and the Masjid al-Haram in order to circumambulate the House of God. Wearing his military clothes, he passes through the regular ranks of the Muslims and idol worshippers. He enters the Masjid al-Haram and stands before the Black Stone. The Companions of the Messenger shout out the *takbir*. Then, while he is circumambulating the Kabah, he uses the stick in his hand to knock down the idols. He says: Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. 360 idols are destroyed outside of Makkah including the largest, Hubal, which had been placed on top of the Kabah.

The Messenger finishes his circumambulating and while the people gathered around him, he sits in a corner of the mosque. He sends Bilal to find the Keeper of the Keys of the Kabah to come to open the door to the Kabah. The Keeper of the Keys first refuses but finally hands them over. The door of the Kabah is opened. The Messenger enters the House. As he enters he recites: *And say: The Truth drew near and falsehood vanishes! Truly falsehood has been made to vanish away.* (17:81). Then he cleans the walls of any images. He places his hands on the door frame in such a way that all of the people can see his illuminated form. He turns to them and says: Thanks be to God Who has kept His Promise and aided His servant and defeated His enemies.

Suddenly the Messenger breaks the silence of the people and says: What do you say and what do you think? Everyone responds: We only think about goodness. You have been victorious. When the idol worshippers surround the Messenger and ask for forgiveness, the Messenger recites what Prophet Joseph said to his brothers when they had come to him in Egypt: *No blame on you this day. May God forgive you. And He is One Who is Most Merciful of the ones who are most merciful.* (12:92). Then he says: Go. You are all free.

Lesson 111(3) Critical Thinking Strategy
Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

Quranic Chapter 48: The Victory (al-Fath)
Signs 48:18-48:26

Madinah: *God was well-pleased*
with the ones who believe
when they take the pledge of allegiance
*to **you** beneath the tree*
for He knew what was in their hearts
and He caused the tranquility to descend on them
and He repaid them with a victory near at hand. (48:18)
And they will take much gain.
And God had been Almighty, Wise. (48:19)
God promised you much gain
that you will take and He quickened this for you.
He limited the hands of humanity from you
so that perhaps it will be a sign
to the ones who believe
and that He guide you to a straight path (48:20)
and other gains which are not yet within your power.
Surely, God enclosed them.
And God had been over everything Powerful. (48:21)
And if those who were ungrateful fought you,
they would have turned their backs.
Again, they would not have found a protector or a helper. (48:22)
This is a custom of God which was, surely, in force before.
You will never find in a custom of God any substitution. (48:23)

And He it is who limited their hands from you
and your hands from them in the hollow of Makkah
after He made you victors over them.
And God had been Seeing of what you do. (48:24)
They were ungrateful,
and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram,
and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift
from reaching its place of sacrifice.
If it had not been for men, ones who believe,
and for women, ones who believe,
whom you know not that you tread on them
and guilt should light on you without your knowledge.
This was so that God may cause to enter
into His mercy whomever He wills.
If they were clearly apart, separated,
We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them
with a painful punishment. (48:25)
Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry
in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance.
Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger
and on the ones who believe
and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness.
They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it.
And God had been Knowing. (48:26)

COMMENTARY°

PEOPLE S PLEDGES AND GOD'S PROMISES

This part of the Chapter speaks only about and with the believers, with that unique and happy group of them who gave their pledges and commitments to the Messenger under the tree, in the presence of God, the witness who solemnized that pledge placing His hand over theirs. That elite group heard God's words revealed to His Messenger: *God was well-pleased with the ones who believe when they take the pledge of allegiance to you beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* **(48:18)** They also listened to the Messenger as he said to them: You are today the best people on earth.

What we have here is a discourse about this select group as God speaks to His Messenger. We also have God's words to this select group, giving them the happy news of forthcoming war gains and conquests. God also speaks about the care He took of them, protecting them from their enemies, during this trip and what He will do for

them in future, assuring them of victory by means of the laws He has set in operation, which never fail. He strongly condemns the enemies of the Muslim community, explains the wisdom behind choosing peace this time, confirming the truth of the Messenger's dream about visiting the Sacred Mosque. He assures the Muslims that they will enter it in safety, fearing nothing, and that His faith will prevail over all religions on earth.

The Chapter concludes with a sign describing this community of believers, the Messenger's Companions, adding their descriptions to be found in the Torah and the Gospels, as well as His promise of forgiveness of their sins and granting them a great reward.

A UNIQUE EVENT

*God was well-pleased with the ones who believe when they take the pledge of allegiance to **you** beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand. And they will take much gain. And God had been Almighty, Wise.* **(48:18-48:19)**

Today, fourteen hundred years after the event, I am trying to visualize the great moment when the universe witnessed the divine announcement from on high addressed by God Almighty to His trusted Messenger concerning the Muslim community. I want to see the whole universe at that great moment and its conscience as it responds to this most generous announcement, speaking of a group of people at a particular spot in this universe. I want to feel how those extremely happy people felt when they heard, with their own ears, that God was speaking about them, telling them that He was well pleased with them, defining the place where they were and what they had done in order to earn His pleasure: *When they take the pledge of allegiance to **you** beneath the tree* **(48:18)** They heard it all from the Messenger who never said anything but the truth, delivering it as a special message from God Almighty.

O my God! How did they—those happy people—receive that divine communication at that ecstatic moment? It is a communication that points to every single one of them and says: *For He knew what was in their hearts and He sent forth the tranquility on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* **(48:18)**

When we read or hear God's statement: *God is the Protector of those who have believed* (2:257) or, *God is with the ones who remain steadfast.* (2:153) we may feel happy and reassured, hoping that we may be included among such. Those people, however, heard that God was speaking about them personally and individually, telling each of

them that He was well pleased with them, knowing what was in their hearts. That is great indeed!

For He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand. **(48:18)** He knew that the passion they felt in their hearts was for their faith, not for their ego or for personal glory. He knew that their pledges were sincere, and that they were seriously restraining themselves so that they would stand behind the Messenger in all sincerity, obeying his orders, accepting any adversity with patience. Therefore, "He sent down tranquillity upon them? We almost see this tranquillity being lowered calmly and with dignity, pouring an air of peace and reassurance on those hearts that were full of enthusiasm for direct action.

God also said: *He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* **(48:18)** This peace treaty, coupled with the circumstances leading to it, was indeed a victory, heralding many more. The conquest of Khaybar, which most commentators cite as the one promised here, may indeed have been one of these. *And they will take much gain.* **(48:19)** If the victory meant here is that of Khaybar, then the war gains would be with the victory itself. However, if the victory mentioned refers to the peace treaty itself, then the promised war gains would come later. Indeed, the peace treaty left the Muslims free to achieve victory on several fronts.

And God had been Almighty, Wise. **(48:19)** This comment fits well with the preceding verses. God's pleasure, the victory and the promise of war gains are all indicative of God's might, control, elaborate planning and wisdom.

AS GOD SPEAKS

Now the Chapter addresses the believers themselves, speaking to them of the peace treaty, or victory, to which they resigned themselves: God has promised you [people] many war gains that you shall achieve: *God promised you much gain that you will take and He quickened this for you. He limited the hands of humanity from you so that perhaps it will be a sign to the ones who believe and that He guide you to a straight path and other gains which are not yet within your power. Surely, God enclosed them. And God had been over everything Powerful.* **(48:20-48:21)**

This is an announcement of happy things to happen, given by God to the believers who accept it as certain. They realize that God has prepared for them numerous gains and they lived afterwards to see this true promise fulfilled in the best way. God says to them here that He has hastened this one, which may be a reference to al-Hu-

daybiyah to emphasize its being a victory, as indeed it was, or it may be a reference to Khaybar since Khaybar produced the first war gains after al-Hudaybiyah.

God also granted them a favor when He restrained the hands of hostile forces. He indeed held back the hands of the ungrateful, as well as other hostile groups who were waiting for a chance to attack the Muslims. Their opponents outnumbered them by far, but the believers were true to their pledges, fulfilling their duties. Therefore, God rewarded them by restraining and holding back their enemies' hands.

So that perhaps it will be a sign to the ones who believe. **(48:20)** This encounter, which they disliked at first, feeling it to be too much of a demand, is described by God as a great sign, which will enable them to see the results of what He has planned for them and how they will be rewarded for obeying the Messenger and submitting to His will. Thus, they will come to realize that it is great, bringing them much benefit, and they will be doubly reassured.

And that He guide you to a straight path. **(48:20)** This is again a reward for your obedience and true allegiance. Thus, they will have a combination of war gains and guidance on a straight way, giving them all that is good. All this comes about as a result of something they initially disliked. God, thus, teaches them that what He chooses for them is the best thing. This also trains them to show absolute obedience.

God also tells them of other favors He will grant them. There will be more war gains: these they are unable to secure by virtue of their own forces, but which God will let them have by cause of His power and planning: *And other gains which are not yet within your power. Surely, God enclosed them. And God had been over everything Powerful.* **(48:21)**

Again, reports differ as to what these gains refer to: is it to the conquest of Makkah? Or to Khaybar? Or is it the victories secured against the Byzantine and Persian Empires? Or does it refer to all other conquests achieved by the Muslim community after al-Hudaybiyah? Most probably, the Chapter refers here to the conquest of Makkah, which followed the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah and resulted from it. The peace treaty lasted only two years. Thereafter, the ungrateful violated it, and God facilitated Makkah's conquest for the Muslims, with hardly any fighting. It was Makkah that had continued to present great difficulties for the Muslim community in Madinah. It had attacked them twice, and was able to turn them away from the Sacred Mosque when they tried to visit it prior to signing the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah. God, however, overwhelmed Makkah with His

power, handing it over to the Muslims without fighting: *And God had been over everything Powerful.* **(48:21)** This was, then, an implicit piece of happy news. It was left undefined because at the time when the Chapter was revealed, it still belonged to the future, which is part of the realm that lies beyond human perception. Therefore, God gives them this hint to reassure them and help them to look forward to what may be coming their way.

In line with the reference to the present war gains and the future ones they await, the Chapter clearly tells the Muslims that they will be victorious. The signing of the peace treaty was in no way due to their weakness, or because the ungrateful were too strong for them. Instead, it was meant to happen for a definite purpose God wanted to achieve. Had the ungrateful fought them, they would have been crushed. Such is the rule whenever the believers and ungrateful meet in a decisive battle:

Were the ungrateful to fight you, they would have turned their back inflight. *And if those who were ungrateful fought you, they would have turned their backs. Again, they would not have found a protector or a helper. This is a custom of God which was, surely, in force before. You will never find in a custom of God any substitution.* **(48:22-48:23)**

Thus, victory for the believers and defeat of their enemies are part of the universal law God has set in operation. It is unchangeable. This is bound to give the believers immense confidence and reassurance. They know that God's law will never fail to operate. It may be delayed for some time, for reasons that are closely related to the adherence of the believers to the way God wants them to adhere, or for reasons that bring about the conditions that lead to victory for the believers against the ungrateful. There may be other reasons known to God for such delay, but God's law will continue to operate, without fail: *You will never find in a custom of God any substitution.* **(48:23)**

God also reminds them of His favor when he stayed the ungrateful' hands from the Muslims, and stayed the Muslims' hands after they had gained victory over their attackers. This refers to an incident when about forty of the ungrateful tried to launch an offensive. They were taken prisoner, but the Messenger pardoned them: *And He it is who limited their hands from you and your hands from them in the hollow of Makkah after He made you victors over them. And God had been Seeing of what you do.* **(48:24)**

This was an event the addressees witnessed, but God mentions it in this way to refer every move and every happening to His direct planning. They, thus, feel how God's hand directs everything for them, guides their footsteps and their feelings. They will then un-

hesitatingly surrender themselves to Him. They will be absolutely certain that everything is in God's hand, and that His choice is the best. They move according to His will in everything they choose or refuse. He wants only what is best for them. When they surrender to Him, every good thing comes their way easily and without delay. He sees them and knows the ins and outs of their situation. What He chooses for them is based on His perfect knowledge. He will not let anything they deserve escape them: *And God had been Seeing of what you do.* **(48:24)**

EXPOSING THE UNGRATEFUL

The Chapter then tells the believers about their opponents' position in Gods sight. It explains how God considers the ungrateful actions as they turn the believers away from His Sacred House, and how He looks at the believers in a totally different way from these others: *They were ungrateful, and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram, and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift from reaching its place of sacrifice. If it had not been for men, ones who believe, and for women, ones who believe, whom you know not that you tread on them and guilt should light on you without your knowledge. This was so that God may cause to enter into His mercy whomever He wills. If they were clearly apart, separated, We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them with a painful punishment. Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing.* **(48:25-48:26)**

According to Gods measure, they are truly ungrateful, deserving this repugnant description: *They were ungrateful.* **(48:25)** This is recorded against them as if they are the only ones in this class, confirmed in ingratitude. Therefore, they deserve to be disliked by God who hates ingratitude and the ungrateful. Their other obnoxious deed of turning the believers away from the Sacred Mosque and forbidding the sacrificial animals from reaching their destination is also recorded: *They were ungrateful, and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram, and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift from reaching its place of sacrifice.* **(48:25)** This amounted to gross misconduct according to the Quranic message and pre-Quranic traditions; it was gross according to all religions known in the Arabian Peninsula since the time of Abraham, their great ancestor.

Restraining the believers from fighting them was not, then, out

of compassion or because their fault was small. It was for a different purpose which God explains to the believers: *If it had not been for men, ones who believe, and for women, ones who believe, whom you know not that you tread on them and guilt should light on you without your knowledge.* **(48:25)** There were a number of Muslims in Makkah who could not migrate to Madinah because of their weak position, and did not declare their acceptance of the Quranic message for fear of persecution by the ungrateful. Had the Muslims attacked Makkah and a fight taken place, the Muslims might have killed some of these since they did not know who they were. This would have meant Muslims killing Muslims; a situation that must be avoided. Moreover, the Muslims would have had to pay blood money to their families when it became known that they were Muslim.

Besides, God knew that among the ungrateful who prevented the Muslims"entry into the Sacred Mosque were some who would be good believers, and who would earn God's mercy. Had these two groups been separated from the rest of the ungrateful, God would have allowed the Muslims to attack and He would have punished the ungrateful severely: *This was so that God may cause to enter into His mercy whomever He wills. If they were clearly apart, separated, We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them with a painful punishment.* **(48:25)**

The Chapter then provides a further description of the ungrateffuls, showing their inner feelings after it has given an account of their apparent deeds: *Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance.* **(48:26)** This was not a passion for a particular faith or code of living, but rather a fury of arrogance and rigidity. This same fury led them to oppose the entry of the Messenger and his Companions to the Sacred Mosque, as also prevented the sacrificial animals from reaching their place of sacrifice. They were thus in breach of every tradition and religion. That they were prepared to commit such a breach had everything to do with their standing among all the Arab tribes so that it could not be said that Muhammad entered Makkah in spite of them. Because of such ignorant passion, they perpetrated this gross offense against all tradition and all religion. They were prepared to violate the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque, which gave them their own special position in Arabia, as well as the sanctity of the sacred months, which was observed under Quranic and pre-Quranic traditions. Their fury and ignorance was clearly apparent in their harsh response to everyone who suggested that they pursue a line of compromise, criticizing their plan to prevent Muhammad and his Companions from entering the Mosque. This fury again manifested itself in the ungrate-

ful negotiator, Suhayl ibn Amr's objection to include in the treaty God's attributes, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful, or the Messenger s status as God's Messenger. Such a hardened attitude could only have been the result of fury, ignorance and arrogance.

God left them to their fury and ignorance because He knew their adamant refusal to submit to the truth. At the same time, He protected the believers from entertaining such passion, giving them instead feelings of tranquillity and piety: *Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness.* **(48:26)** Calm tranquillity and piety are fine qualities suited to a believing heart which feels its bond with God, reassured by it. A person with such qualities always places his trust in God, and watches God in everything he says or does. Such a person does not behave arrogantly, nor do they let personal anger get the better of them. Instead, they are only motivated to anger in support of their faith and for God's sake. Therefore, if they are ordered to calm down, they willingly obey.

Therefore, the believers were most worthy and deserving of the word of piety. This is yet another point on which they are commended by God, who favored them with the tranquillity He bestowed on them. This is all an honor given to them by the One who knows them well: *And God had been Knowing.* **(48:26)**

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What does the Quranic message say we should do with those who take their way of life (din, religion) as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded? *Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up to destruction for what it earned. Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor. And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (6:70)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.

Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.

Question the relevance of what we are studying.

Probe the evidence for and against what others say.

Question myself and others.

INTERLUDE 2

THE BATTLE OF HUNAYN

The conquest of Makkah, which had been the largest base of idolatry, frightens the tribes who lived at a distance from Makkah. They realize that the power of the Quranic message would soon reach their area. They are afraid the Messenger himself will come to destroy their idols, as the Messenger had sent Khalid to destroy the idol and temple to 'Uzza at Nakhlah, or send forces against them. Thus tribes which live near each other decide to prevent the entrance of the army of the Messenger by banding together and creating a strong military force themselves. They had learned from past experience that if they remain in their homes when an enemy attacks, they will be met by very bitter events. They all decide to move to fight the Messenger. They stop in an area called Hunayn. A report reaches the Messenger that the Hawazan and other tribes are on the move. The Messenger sends a stranger among them to receive a report about the truth of the matter. The report back to him makes him decide to move against the tribes with 12,000 men, 2,000 of whom are the newly converted to the Quranic message from among the Makkan idol worshippers.

The Messenger leaves Makkah on the 6th of Shawwal. He sends Khalid ibn Walid ahead as the commander of the front forces, but the Hawazan and their allies who had previously hidden in the mountains and valleys of Hunayn and had taken up positions, suddenly attack the Muslim forces. The front forces retreat. Others follow them and then disperse.

It is at this time that Abu Sufyan and other idol-worshippers who appear to have accepted the Quranic message begin to speak. Abu Sufyan says: Those who fled will go as far as the sea. Habalah ibn Hanbal says: Today the spell has been broken. Shiybah, whose father had been killed at Uhud, says: I will kill Muhammad today in revenge for the death of my father.

The fleeing of the front forces causes each of the forces which followed to also flee and the army to loose its order. The Messenger is able to give some sense of organization to the army. He turns to those who are fleeing and says: Where are you running? Return for I am the Messenger of God, Muhammad ibn Abd Allah. He then commands his uncle Abbas, who has a loud and clear voice, to cry out: O Companions of the Pledge of Ridwan, pledged to the Messenger under the tree, return to him.

The persistence of the Messenger and cries of Abbas cause one after another of the Muslims to gather around Muhammad and begin the battle again. The Muslim army little by little is reorganized making sure the Messenger is out of range of the enemies arrows.

Eight Muslims are martyred but more than 6000 from the Hawazin and other tribes are taken prisoner. In addition, the spoils include 24,000 camels, more than 40,000 sheep and 582 kilos of silver.

HISTORY

Whether from the rumor of Khalid's sanguinary treatment of the Bani Jadzima, or from fear of the Messenger generally, and jealousy of his aggressive career, the great and warlike tribe of the Hawazin resolved to anticipate any attack upon their liberties, by themselves assuming an offensive front. They appointed a rendezvous at Autas, a valley between Makkah and Taif, where they began rapidly to assemble.

This movement obliged the Messenger to cut short his stay at Makkah. Although the city had cheerfully accepted his leadership, all its inhabitants had not yet embraced the new religion, or formally acknowledged his prophetical claim. Perhaps he intended to follow the course he bad pursued at Madinah, and leave the conversion of the people to be gradually accomplished without compulsion. However this may have been, the threatening intelligence from Taif called him away from Makkah after little more than a fortnight's stay. Muadh ibn Jabal a young citizen of Madinah, well skilled in the Quran and in all questions of religious practice, was left behind to instruct the Makkans in the tenets and requirements of the message; and Attab a youthful man, of the house of Abd Shams, was placed over the secular administration of the city.

Four weeks had just elapsed since he had left Madinah, when the Messenger marched forth from Makkah at the head of all his forces, swelled now, by the addition of two auxiliaries from Makkah, to the large number of twelve thousand men. Safwan at his request made over to him one hundred suits of mail and stand of arms complete, and as many camels. The array of tribes, each with a banner waving at its head, was so imposing, that Abu Bakr broke forth, as the marshaled forces passed, with the exclamation: We shall not this day be worsted by reason of the smallness of our numbers! The Messenger smiled with his assent.

The vainglorious boast was remembered by Prophet afterwards with self-reproach. In three four marches the army arrived near the entrance of the valley of Hunayn.

The greater part of the tribes of the Hawazin Tribe, including the Thaqif Clan, who inhabited Taif, having rallied round their chief, Malik ibn Awf, at Autas, had meanwhile also been advancing upon the valley of Hunayn. The women and children, the property, herds, and flocks, of the Hawazin, followed in their rear. Malik hoped, by the presence of their families, and consciousness of the disastrous results of a defeat, to nerve his troops to victory. Doreid, a very aged warrior, who accompanied the army in his litter, protested against the fatal measure. But the youthful leader derided his advice. During the night, after the Messenger's arrival in the vicinity of Hunayn, Malik drew up his men in a masked position, commanding a steep and narrow defile, which formed the entrance to the valley, and awaited in silence the approach of the enemy.

Very early in the· morning, while the dawn was yet gray, and the sky overcast the army of the Messenger was in motion. Clad in a full panoply, as on the day of Uhud, he rode on his white mule, Duldul, towards the rear of the forces. (10th Shawwal 8 AH) The vanguard, formed of the Sulaym Clan, and led by Khalid, were defiling leisurely up the steep and narrow pass, when suddenly the Hawazin rushed forth from their ambuscade, and charged them with impetuosity. Staggered by the unexpected onslaught, the Sulaym Clan broke and fell back. The shock was communicated from column tc column.

Aggravated by the obscurity of the hour, and the straitness and ruggedness of the road, panic seized the whole army: all turned and fled. As troop by troop they hurried past him, the Messenger called out: Whither away? The Prophet of the Lord is here! Return! return!- but his words had no effect, excepting that a band of devoted friends and followers gathered round him. The confusion increased, the multitude of camels jostled wildly one against another; all was noise and clamor, and the voice of the Messenger was lost amid the confusion.

At last, seeing the column of Madinah troops bearing down in the common flight, he bade his uncle Abbas, who held his mule, to cry aloud: O citizens of Madinah! O men of the Tree of Fealty! Abbas had a stentorian voice and as he shouted these words over and over again at the pitch of his voice, they were heard far and near. At once they touched a chord in the hearts of the men of Madinah. They were arrested in their flight, and, like she-camels when their bowels are stirred towards their young, hastened to the Messenger, crying aloud: *Labayk! Labayk!* One hundred of these devoted followers, disengaged with difficulty from the camels that jammed the narrow pass, threw themselves upon the advancing enemy, and checked his progress.

Relieved from the pressure, the army rallied gradually, and returned to the battle. The conflict was severe: and the issue, from the adverse nature of the ground and the impetuosity of the wild Bedouins, remained for some time doubtful. The Messenger ascended an eminence, and watched the struggle. Excited by the spectacle, he began loudly to exclaim: Now is the furnace heated: I am the Prophet that lies not. I am the son of Abd al-Muttalib! Then bidding Abbas to pick up for him a handful of gravel, he cast it towards the enemy, saying: Ruin seize them!

They had indeed already wavered. They are discomfited, he cried out eagerly: I swear by the Lord of the Kabah! God has cast fear into their hearts. The steadiness of the Madinah band, and the enthusiasm of the rest when once recalled to their duty, had won the day. The enemy fled, and the rout was complete. Many were slain..

Malik, taking his stand with the followers of his army upon a height at the further end of the valley, covered the escape of his broken forces; but he was unable to rescue the women and children. They fell into the hands of the Messenger, with the camp and all that it contained. Six thousand prisoners were taken and the spoil included twenty-four thousand camels, forty thousand sheep and goats, and four thousand ounces of silver. The prisoners and the booty were removed to the valley of Jierrina, and kept there in the shelter of huts and enclosures, awaiting the return of the army from Taif. the Messenger knew that the Bani Hawazin would seek to regain their families, and an opportunity was skilfully left open for negotiation.

The fugitive army was pursued with slaughter as far as Nakhla; from there part fled back to Autas, and part to Taif. The former entrenched themselves in their previous camp. A strong detachment was sent to dislodge them, which they accomplished after severe fighting, and the loss of their leader from the wound of an arrow. The dispersed fragments of the enemy found refuge in the surrounding hills.

The victory was thus complete, but not without some considerable loss on the part of the Messenger. Only five of his immediate followers are named among the slain. But some of the auxiliaries must have suffered greatly; for two tribes are spoken of as almost annihilated. For these the Messenger offered up a special prayer, and said: O Lord! Recompense them because of their calamities.

The reverse sustained at the opening of the day was attributed by the Prophet to the vainglorious confidence with which the believers looked upon their great army. The subsequent success was equally ascribed to the aid of invisible hosts which fought against the enemy. The engagement is thus alluded to in the Quran. (9:26-9:28).

As soon as the detachment had returned from Autas, the Messenger pushed forward his army by way of Nakhla, and laid siege to Taif. But the city was surrounded by strong battlements; it was provisioned for many months, and there was a plentiful supply of water within the walls. The besiegers were received with showers of arrows, so thick and well sustained that they are described as darkening the sky like a swarm of locusts. It was soon discovered that the camp was pitched too near the city. Twelve men were killed, and many wounded, among whom was a son of Abu Bakr. The encampment was speedily withdrawn beyond the range of the enemy's archery. A tent was erected for Umm Salmah, and another for Zaynab. Both had followed the Messenger through all the dangers of the way. Between these tents the Messenger performed the daily prayers; and on this spot the great Mosque of Taif was afterwards erected.

The siege did not advance, for no one dared to expose himself before the galling archery from the walls. This had been anticipated, and a remedy already sought. The Bani Daws, who lived at some distance south of Makkah, were famous for their acquaintance with the use of the testudo and catapult. Tufayl, one of their chiefs, had joined the Messenger at Khaybar with a party of his tribe. He had lately been despatched from Makkah or Hunayn to secure the allegiance of his people, and to seek their aid in the reduction of Taif. They accepted the summons; and Tufayl, having burned their tutelary image, the famous Dhu al-Kaffein, joined the Messenger four day after siege had been laid to Taif. The besieging engines were speedil prepared, and parties pushed forward under cover of them. But th citizens were prepared for the stratagem. They cast down balls of heated iron from the battlements, and set the machines on· fire. The soldiers laboring under their shelter fled in alarm. A discharge of arrows opened upon them; some were killed, and many wounded before they escaped be yond their range. The testudo and catapult were not tried again.

Seeing no other way of bringing the city to terms, the Messenger gave command to cut down and burn the far-famed vineyards which surrounded the place. This order was being carried into effect, as the unfortunate citizens from the wall could descry, with merciless vigor, when they succeeded in conveying to the Messenger an earnest expostulation; they besought for the sake of mercy and of God, that he would desist. He listened to the appeal, and stayed farther destruction. But he caused a proclamation to reach the garrison which grievously displeased them, that if any POW/slaves came forth from the city, they would receive their freedom. Only ten men however were able to avail themselves of the offer.

The siege had now been protracted for half a month without producing the slightest effect. The army was beginning to exhibit symptoms of im patience, and of anxiety for the distribution of the spoils at Jierrana. The Messenger took counsel with the principal men: What do you think, said he to Naufal, the Duilite, what do you think of this stubborn city? A fox in its hole, replied the astute and sententious chief. Remain long enough and you will catch it: leave it alone, and it will not harm you. A dream was seen by the Prophet which ratified this view. It was not the divine will that operations should be continued. The siege was therefore raised, and the army marched back to Madinah, which it reached about the end of February.

Here occurred an interesting incident, already described in the opening chapter of this work, an aged female among the captives, being roughly treated like the rest, warned the rude soldiery to beware. For, said she: I am the foster-sister of your chief. Hearing this, they carried her to the Messenger, who recognized in the complainant the little girl that used to tend and carry him, when he was nurtured by Halima, among the Saad Clan. He seated her affectionately beside him, and offered to take her to Madinah. But she preferred remaining with her tribe. And accordingly he dismissed her with a handsome present.

Encouraged by the kind treatment of their kin woman, a deputation from the various tribes of Hawazm presented themselves before the Prophet. Among them was an aged man who claimed to be his foster-uncle. They professed their submission to the authority of their conqueror, recounted the calamities which bad befallen them, and thus urged their special claims to favor: There, in these huts among the prisoners, are your foster mothers and foster sisters, they that have nursed you and fondled you in their bosoms. We have known you a suckling, a weaned child, a youth generous and noble: and now you have listened to this dignity. Be gracious therefore unto us, even as the Lord has been gracious unto you. The Messenger could not withstand the appeal. Turning kindly to them, he said: Whether of the two, your families or your property, is the dearer to you?

Our women and our children, they replied; we would not give anything in exchange for them. Then, continued the Prophet, whatsoever prisoners fall to my portion and that of my family, I give them up unto you: and I will presently speak unto the people concerning the rest. Come again unto me at the mid-day prayer, when they are assembled, and beg publicly of me to make intercession with them for you.

At the appointed time they appeared and made their petition.

The men of Madinah and of Makkah cheerfully followed the example of the Messenger. But some of the allies, as the Tamim Clan, and the Fazara Clan, with Uyayna at their head, declined to do so. the Messenger urged the claims of his new converts, and promised that such of the allies as were unwilling to part with their share of the prisoners should be recompensed hereafter from the first booty the Lord might give into their hands, at the rate of six camels for every captive. To this they agreed, and the prisoners were all released.

Among the captives were three beautiful women, who were brought to the Messenger. One, named Reeta, was presented by him Umar, to Ali; the second, Zaynab, to Uthman; and the third to Umar. Umar transferred the latter to his son Abd Allah, who returned her uninjured to the tribe, when the prisoners were given up. Whether the other two were restored likewise is not stated: but be this as it may, it throws a strange light on the domestic history of the Messenger, that he should have presented such gifts as captive women to the father of one of his wives, and the husbands of two of his own daughters.

Having arranged for the restoration of the prisoners, the Messenger had already mounted his camel and was proceeding to his tent, when the people, fearing lest the spoil, as well as the prisoners, should slip from their grasp, crowded round him with loud cries: Distribute to us the booty, the camels and the flocks. The crowd thronged him so closely and so rudely, that he was driven to seek for refuge under a tree. While thus pressed on every side, his mantle was torn from his shoulders. Return to me my mantle, O man! cried the Messenger, who had now secured a more free position. Return my mantle: for I swear by the Lord that if the sheep and the camels were as many as the trees of the Tihima in number, I would divide them all amongst you. You have not heretofore found me miserly or false. Then he plucked a hair from his camel's hump, and holding it aloft said: Even to a hair like this, I shall not keep back aught but the fifth, and that, too, I give up unto you. The people were pacified, and the Messenger went on his way.

He took an early opportunity of making good his promise, and at the same time of gaining, by a princely liberality, the hearts of the leading Chiefs of Makkah and of the Bedouin tribes. To those of the greatest influence, he presented each one hundred camels. Among them we find Abu Sufyan, with his two sons, Yazid and Muawiyah; Hakim ibn Hizam, Safwan, Suhayl, Huwaytib, Uyayna, and several others, who but a few weeks before were the Prophet's deadly enemies. To the lesser chiefs he gave fifty camels each. And so liberal was he that, in some instance where discontent was expressed with

the amount, the gift was without hesitation doubled.

Although the largesses were taken from the Prophet's fifth, yet the favor and honor lavished the older followers on these recent and doubtful adherents, gave great umbrage to the old and faithful followers of the Messenger. Thus one complained that such Bedouin chieftains as Aera and Uyayna received each one hundred camels, while a faithful believer like Juayl got nothing at all.

And what of that? replied the Prophet. I swear that Juayl is the best man that ever stepped on earth, but I wished to gain over the hearts of these men to the Quranic message, while Juayl has no need of any such inducement.

A man of the Bani Tamim, who watched the proceeding, openly impugned its equity. The Messenger became angry, and said: Out upon you. If justice and equity be not with me, where will you find them? But what concerned the Messenger the most, were the murmurs of the citizens of Madinah. Truly, thus they spake among themselves, he has now joined his own people and forsaken us. The discontent proceeded so far that Saad ibn Ubaydah thought right to represent it to the Prophet, who bade him call the murmurers together. He then addressed them in these words: You men of Madinah, it has been reported to me that you are disconcerted because I have given unto these chiefs largesses, and have given nothing unto you. Now speak unto me. Did I not come unto you while you were wandering, and the Lord gave you the right direction? needy, and he enriched you; at enmity amongst yourselves, and He has filled your hearts with love and unity?

He paused for a reply. Indeed, it is even as you say, they answered; to the Lord and to his Prophet belong benevolence and grace.

Nay, by the Lord! continued the Messenger. But ye might have answered (and answered truly, for I would have verified it myself,)- You came to Madinah rejected as an impostor, and we bore witness to your veracity:you came a helpless fugitive and we assisted you; an outcast, and we gave you an asylum; destitute, and we solaced you Why are you disturbed in mind because of the things of this life, wherewith I have sought to incline the hearts of these men to the Quranic message, whereas ye are already stedfast in your faith? Are you not satisfied that others should obtain the flocks and the camels, while you carry back the Prophet of the Lord unto your homes? No, I will not leave you forever. If all humanity went one way, and the men of Madinah another way, verily I would go the way of the men of Madinah. The Lord be favorable unto them, and bless them, and their sons and their sons' sons forever! At these words all wept, till the tears ran down upon their beards; and they called out with one

voice: Yea, we are well satisfied, O Prophet, with our lot!

It will be seen that the Messenger made no attempt to hide the motive which dictated these generous gifts. The chiefs who received them are referred to in the Quran as those whose hearts have been gained over; .and they retained the appellation ever after. (9:60-9:62)

Malik, the chief who had led the Hawazin Clan, was still in Taif. The Messenger desired to gain him over also. So he directed his tribe to make known to him that if he embraced the Quranic message, his family and all his property would be restored, and a present of one hundred camels bestowed upon him. He soon joined the Messenger and became an exemplary believer. Being confirmed in his chiefship, he engaged to maintain a constant warfare with the citizens of Tai£ He cut off their cattle whenever they were sent beyond the precincts of the city to graze, and reduced them to great straits.t

The Messenger spent about a fortnight at Jierrina during which period the booty captured at Hunayn was all distributed. Four camels and forty sheep or goats, fell to the lot of each foot soldier, and three times that amount to each horseman.

The distribution being ended, the Messenger took upon him the pilgrim vows, and fulfilled the Lesser Pilgrimage (*umra*) at Makkah. But he made no stay there. He returned to Jierrana that same night; and the following day, striking through the valleys by a direct route, joined at Sarif the main road, and marched homewards to Madinah.

The youthful Attab was confirmed in the Government of Makkah, and an allowance assigned him of one dirhem a day. Attab presided over the annual pilgrimage, which took place in less than a month after the Messenger's departure. Believers and idolaters were still permitted to join promiscuously in its ceremonies. Mudha was left behind by the Prophet to complete the spiritual instruction of the city.

After leaving Jierrana, the Messenger despatched letters to the Chiefs of Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen.

Lesson 111(4) Critical Thinking Strategy
Deep Questioning

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

Quranic Chapter 48: The Victory (al-Fath)
Signs 48:27-48:29

Madinah: *Certainly, God was sincere*
to the dream of His Messenger with The Truth:
You will enter the Masjid al-Haram, if God willed,
as ones who are safe, as ones who shaved your heads
or as ones whose hair is cut short.
You will fear not.
He knew what you know not
and He assigned other than that a victory near at hand. (48:27)
He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance
and the way of life of The Truth
that He uplift it over all of the ways of life.
And God sufficed as a witness. (48:28)
Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
And those who are with him are severe
against the one who is ungrateful,
but compassionate among themselves.
***You** have seen them as ones who bow down*
as ones who prostrate themselves.
They are looking for grace from God and contentment.
Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration.
This is their parable in the Torah.
And their parable in the Gospel is like sown seed
that brought out its shoot, energized.
It, then, became stout and rose straight on its plant stalk
impressing the ones who sow
so that He enrage by them the ones who are ungrateful,
God promised those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation. (48:29)

COMMENTARY°

THE MESSENGERS TRUE VISION

We have already learnt that some of the Messenger's Companions on this trip, who were delighted with his dream knowing that Messengers' dreams always come true, found it hard that his dream should not be fulfilled that year, and that they would be prevented entry to the Sacred Mosque. God assured them, however, that the Messenger's dream was true Muhammad ibn Maslamah went ahead with horses and arms until he arrived at Marr al-Zahran, about one days travel, by camel, from Makkah. There he found a few men from the ungrateful who were greatly worried at what they saw. They thought that he was about to attack Makkah in violation of the peace treaty, which stipulated that there would be no war between the two sides for ten years. When the Messenger encamped at Marr al-Zahran where he could see the idols placed in the Sacred Mosque, he sent all the Muslims' arms, including bows, arrows and spears to a place called Batn Yajuj. He then marched towards Makkah with his Companions having only their swords in their sheaths, as he had promised the people of Makkah.

The ungrateful then sent Mikraz ibn Hafs at the head of a delegation to the Messenger. They said to him: Muhammad, we have never known you to break a promise ever since you were a young child. He asked why they were saying this. They replied: You are trying to enter the city carrying all your arms; spears, bows and arrows. The Messenger said: I am not going to carry arms into the city. We have sent them to Batn Yajuj. Mikraz ibn Hafs then replied: This is more like what we know of your faithfulness.

Many of the ungrateful nobility left Makkah and went into the surrounding mountains; this because they did not wish to look at the Muslims as they arrived at the city for worship. Indeed, the very sight infuriated them. The rest of the Makkans were either out in the streets or on rooftops looking at the Messenger and his Companions as they entered repeating their phrases that declared their submission to God. The Messenger was riding his she-camel, al-Qaswa which he rode the previous year. His Companion, Abd Allah ibn Rawahah, held the she-camel's rein and guided its march.

Thus the Messenger's dream came true and God's promise was fulfilled. *Certainly, God was sincere to the dream of His Messenger with The Truth: You will enter the Masjid al-Haram, if God willed, as ones who are safe, as ones who shaved your heads or as ones whose hair is cut short. You will fear not. He knew what you know not and He assigned other than that a victory near at hand.* **(48:27)** The following year witnessed the fall of Makkah to the Quranic mes-

sage, and the divine faith came to reign in Makkah, then throughout the rest of Arabia. Then God's other promise and the other piece of good news were fulfilled: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth that He uplift it over all of the ways of life.* **(48:28)** The Quranic message of Truth prevailed, and not only in the Arabian Peninsula. Within half a century it prevailed across much of the inhabited parts of the earth. It subdued the entire Persian Empire and took over much of the Byzantine Empire. It marched as far as India and China before moving into Malaysia, southern Asia and Indonesia. In the sixth and seventh centuries, these areas constituted most of the then known world.

This Quranic message continues to prevail over all religions, even after its political retreat from much of the areas it moved into, particularly in Europe and the major islands in the Mediterranean. It prevails even though the power of its people is very weak compared to the new powers that have recently emerged in the East and the West. Indeed, as a religion, the Quranic message prevails over all else. It carries within itself and in its nature the elements of its strength. It moves forward, supported by neither sword nor gun drawn by its people. Its advance is due only to its inherent harmony with human nature and the natural laws of the universe, and to the fact that it satisfies, with perfect ease, the requirements of mind and soul, progress and civilization, regardless of whether people live in tents or in skyscrapers.

Any religious person who looks objectively at the Quranic message is bound to recognize the soundness and inherent strength of this religion. Nor can they help but recognize its ability to lead humanity with wisdom and to answer its progressive needs in an easy and straightforward way: *And God sufficed as a witness.* **(48:28)**

We see, then, that God's promise was fulfilled in the immediate, political form, before one century had elapsed after the Messenger's mission. God's promise continues to be fulfilled in its substantive form, as the Quranic message prevails over all other messages. In fact, it is the only message that continues to act and lead in all situations. Perhaps only the Muslims do not understand this truth. Other people know it and take it into account as they draw up their policies and programmes.

THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

The Chapter concludes with a sign that paints a superb picture of the community of the Messenger's Companions, adding God's commendation of that unique and happy group of people who earned His pleasure and who were also informed of that fact: Muhammad

is God's Messenger; and those who are with him are firm and unyielding towards the ungrateful, full of mercy towards one another. You can see them bowing down, prostrating in prayer, seeking favor with God and His good pleasure. They bear on their faces the marks of their prostrations. This is how they are pictured in the Torah. And in the Gospels, they are like a seed that brings forth its shoot, strengthens it, grows thick and stands firm on its stem, delighting the sowers. Through them God will enrage the ungrateful. *God promised those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* **(48:29)**

This is a remarkable picture drawn by the superior style of the Quran. It includes several snapshots depicting the groups main conditions, both subtle and clearly apparent. One shot portrays their attitude to the ungrateful and to one another. Thus, they are: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. And those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* Another shows them as they are in worship: *You have seen them as ones who bow down as ones who prostrate themselves.* Yet a third image reveals what preoccupies their minds and characterizes their feelings: *They are looking for grace from God and contentment.* A fourth shot focuses on the apparent effect worship has on their faces as they dedicate all to God: *Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration. This is their parable in the Torah.* A number of additional quick images tell us how they are described in the Gospels: *And their parable in the Gospel is like sown seed that brought out its shoot, energized. It, then, became stout and rose straight on its plant stalk impressing the ones who sow so that He enrage by them the ones who are ungrateful,*

The sign begins by confirming the Messenger's status, denied by the ungrateful negotiator, Suhayl ibn Amr, and the ungrateful he represented at the time: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God.* The sign then goes on to paint its beautiful picture in the unique Quranic style.

Needless to say, the believers go through different conditions and situations during their lifetimes. However, the images shown in the verse concentrate on their permanent features, highlighting these so that they serve as the main lines in the overall picture. The selection of these particular images clearly shows that God wants to bestow honor on this happy community. This is reflected right from the very first image that depicts them as: *And those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* They take such a firm and unyielding attitude towards the ungrateful, despite the fact that those ungrateful included

their parents, siblings, kinsfolk and friends. However, they severed all these relations with the ungrateful. They are at the same time full of mercy towards one another, when their only bond is brotherhood in faith. This means that in both conditions of unyielding firmness and flowing mercy the determining factor is faith. There is absolutely no personal consideration. Their feelings, emotions, behavior and bonds are based on faith alone, making them hostile to its opponents, compassionate towards their fellow believers. They discard all selfish thoughts and make their bond with God the only one to which they attach any value.

Again Gods wish to honor this community is clearly apparent in making prominent their condition as they worship: ***You have seen them as ones who bow down as ones who prostrate themselves.*** The way this is portrayed suggests that this is their permanent condition, one that we see whenever we look at them. In fact, bowing and prostration represent the condition of worship, which is the core feature of their personality. Therefore, it is expressed in a way that makes it permanent during their time, as if they spent their whole lives bowing and prostrating.

The same applies to the third image, which concentrates on their inner thoughts and feelings: *They are looking for grace from God and contentment.* Such are their permanent feelings and what always preoccupies them. All they aspire for is God's favor and earning His pleasure.

The fourth image focuses on how apparent worship and inner feelings are reflected in their appearances: *Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration.* Their faces shine with transparent clarity and the warmth that worship imparts. This is not a reference to the dark mark associated with prayer that appears on the foreheads of some people, as people may wrongly think when they hear the words, *the effects of prostration.*. What this expression refers to is the mark of worship, which is symbolized here by prostration as it expresses submission to God in the clearest form. The mark of this submission is seen on their races; in other words there is no trace of pride, arrogance or selfishness. Instead, what is reflected is noble humility, purity and a serenity that adds to the shine on a believers face.

This bright overall picture contains nothing new. It is also painted in the Torah as God gave the world the news of the emergence of this community of the Messenger's Companions.

The Gospels give another picture of Muhammad and his community, describing them as *And their parable in the Gospel is like sown seed that brought out its shoot, energized.* It is a fertile seed

that sends forth its shoot which does not weaken the stalk. On the contrary, it *It, then, became stout* or the shoot may be strengthened by the stalk. Thus the plant is energized, and its stem acquires strength and structure. The plant now *and rose straight on its plant stalk*,, upright, neither bending nor crooked. This is how the plant looks, but what feeling does it give to farmers who can immediately distinguish a fine plant that is bound to yield fruit? It gives them a feeling of pleasure: *impressing the ones who sow.* A variant reading of this phrase puts the delighted onlookers in the singular, *impressing the ones who sow* which in this case refers to the Messenger, as he was the one that looked after the seeds until they harvested a noble and delightful community that was unique in history. The ungrateful experience a different feeling as they look on: *so that He enrage by them the ones who are ungrateful,* Sending such a feeling of rage into the ungrateful' hearts is clearly intended. It suggests that the planting was by God or by His Messenger, so as to yield a harvest that accomplishes God s purpose in enraging His enemies.

Again this picture is nothing new. It was painted before Muhammad and his Companions began to walk the earth, in the Gospels as they herald the happy event of God sending Muhammad with His final message.

Thus does God record in His book the qualities of this sele group of the Messenger's Companions, so that it will be recognize by all creation. It remains the ideal and the role model for future generations, as the standard of faith they should emulate. In addition to all this honor, God gives them a promise of forgiveness for their sins and a supreme reward: *God promised those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* The promise is given in such general terms after highlighting their special features so as to make them the first to whom the general description applies. The honor granted them is more than enough for anyone, but God's favors and bounty are limitless, unending. Therefore, they are granted forgiveness and a rich reward.

Once more I try today, fourteen centuries after the event, to visualize the beaming faces and rejoicing hearts of those people as they received this great honor and promise bestowed on them by God. I try to see them as they look at their own picture painted by God in His Book. I look at them as they are on their way back from al-Hudaybiyah, when some of these signs were revealed and relayed to them; how they reflected on it, and how it touched their hearts and souls. I see them looking at one another, with each one seeing in his brother the mark of the grace he himself feels. I try again and again to live with them a moment of this splendid festival they experienced,

but how can one who was not present there share all that, except from afar? It can only be by a special favor of God's grace, bringing close that which is indeed far. Lord! You know that I aspire to a special gift of this unique favor.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message (6:95-6:100) calls for the deep questioning of our believes. What information are we given about the creation? Can it be interpreted as coming from any other than God? How many concepts of creation can you nae from these verses? Can one assume that God had the jinn as associates in this endeavor? What are the implications of such a belief when God created them?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.

I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.

I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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LALA BAKHTI

CRITICAL THINKING AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL QURAN IN THE LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

THE YEAR 22 OF THE REVELATION (9 AH/630-631 CE)

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 22

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 22 of the Revelation (9 AH/630-631 CE)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 29, 9 AH
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 22, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 9 AH/ca. April 20, 630 CE-April 8, 631 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

The Nine Intellectual Standards

1. Logic (reasonable: 'aqala, 'aql)
2. Definitiveness (to be precise: muhkama)
3. Connectedness (containing complexities and interrelationships: (muqtarin)
4. Appropriateness (to make relevant: sadid)
5. Worthiness (Focusing on the important, not trivial,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)

6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

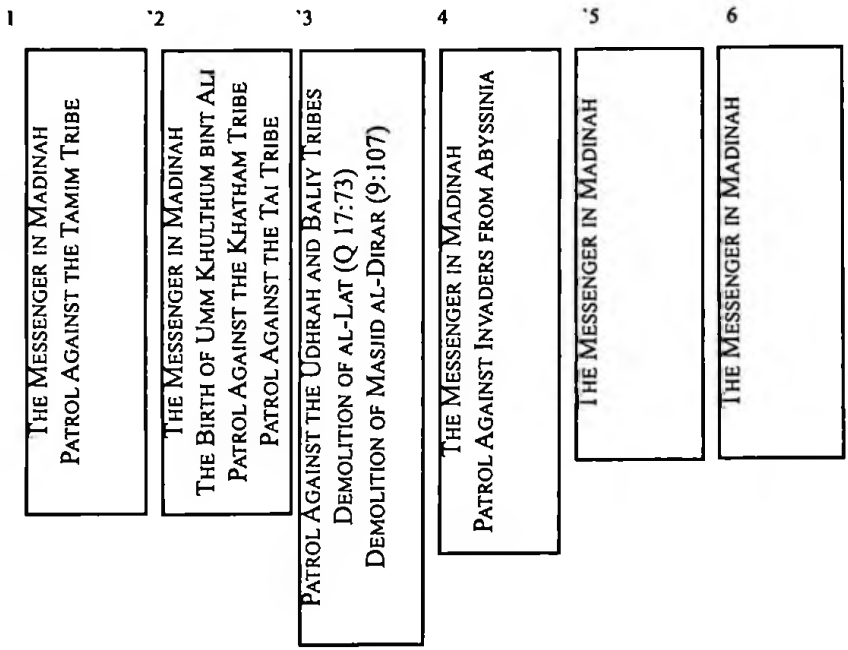
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 22*

TIMELINE

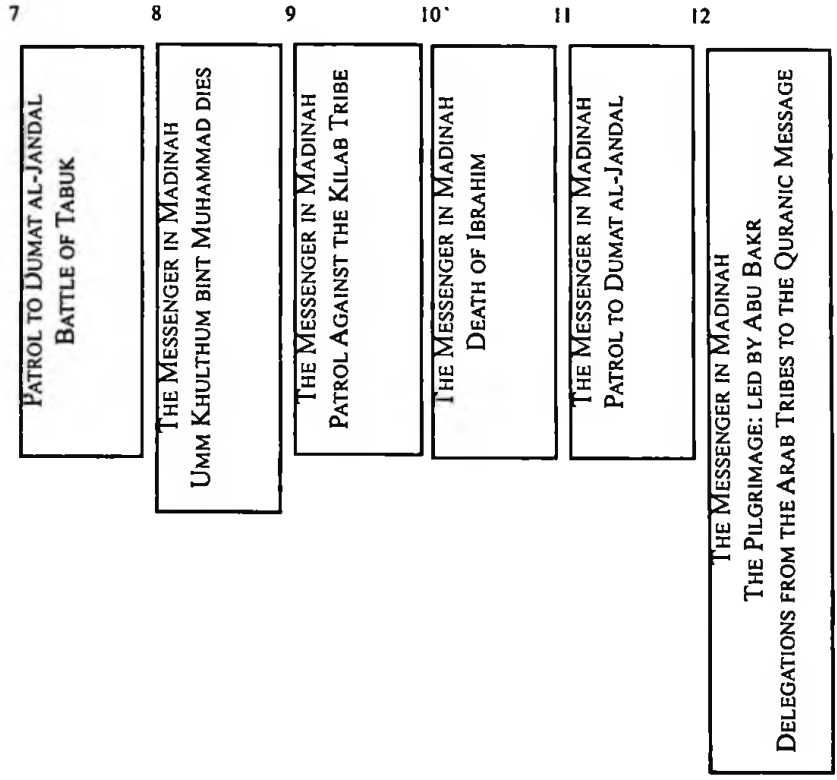


Key
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE SIEGE = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Preview *Book Year 22*

Timeline



Key
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle Siege = Led by the Messenger
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 22 presented here begins with Lesson 112 and Quranic Chapter 5, the 112th chapter revealed.

LESSON 112(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS

OW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
SIGNS 5:1-5:5

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Live up to your agreements.
Flocks of animals were permitted to you,
but what is now recounted to you:
You are not ones who are permitted hunting

while you are in pilgrim sanctity.
Truly, God gives judgment how He wants. (5:1)
O those who believed!
Profane not the waymarks of God nor the Sacred Month
nor the sacrificial gift nor the garlanded
nor ones who are bound for the Sacred House
looking for grace from their Lord and contentment.
And when you left your pilgrim sanctity, then, hunt.
And let not that you detest a folk who barred you
from the Masjid al-Haram drive you into exceeding the limits.
And cooperate with one another in virtuous conduct
and God-consciousness and cooperate not with one another in sin
and deep seated dislike.
And be conscious of God.
Truly, God is Severe in repayment. (5:2)
Carrion was forbidden to you and blood and flesh of swine
and what of it was hallowed to other than God
and the one that is a strangled beast
and the one that is beaten to death and the animal one
fallen to its death and the animal gored to death
or eaten by a beast of prey—but what you slew lawfully—
and what were sacrificed to fetishes and what you partition
by divining arrows.
That is contrary to moral law.
Today, those who were ungrateful gave up hope
because of your way of life.
So dread them not but dread Me.
Today, I perfected your way of life for you
and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you
and I was well-pleased with submission
to the One God for your way of life.
Whoever was driven by necessity due to emptiness—
not one who inclines to sin
then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (5:3)
*They ask **you** what was permitted to them.*
Say: That which is good was permitted to you
and what you taught of hunting creatures,
as one who teaches hunting dogs of what God taught you.
So eat of what they seized for you
and remember the Name of God over it
and be conscious of God.
Truly, God is Swift in reckoning. (5:4)
Today, what is good was permitted to you.

The food of those to whom We gave the Book is allowed to you
and your food is allowed to them.
And the ones who are free, chaste females from the females,
ones who believe and the ones who are free,
chaste females from among those who were given the Book
before you when you were to give them their bridal due,
as males, ones who seek wedlock,
not as ones who are licentious males,
nor as males, ones who take lovers to themselves.
And whoever disbelieves after belief, then, surely,
his actions will be fruitless.
And he in the world to come will be
among the ones who are losers. (5:5)

COMMENTARY°

PROLOGUE

The Quran was bestowed from on high to Muhammad, God's Messenger, so that he might, by means of it, establish a state, bring a community into being, organize a society, cultivate minds and consciences and set moral values. The Quran was also to set the bonds that would operate within the Muslim community, as also define the international relations the Muslim state might have. All these were to be firmly joined together, so that all their parts would form one coherent whole, stemming from a single source and referring to a single authority. This is, in fact, the nature of religion, as defined by God and practiced by Muslims in the days when they were indeed truly Muslims.

Therefore, we find in this Chapter a whole host of topics interlinked by the main goal the Quran was revealed to achieve, namely, social organization on the basis of a well-defined concept formulated by faith. Such a concept looks up to God for all its laws, values, standards and code of living and maintains that all Godhead, Lordship and authority belong to God alone.

We also find in this Chapter 5 a clear effort to formulate concepts of belief, pure, purged of all traces of idolatrous superstition, and distortion perpetrated by followers of earlier divine religions. Moreover, the Muslim community is made fully aware of its true nature, its role, the course it must follow and the difficulties that it involves. It is also alerted to the wicked designs of its enemies who are certainly hostile to its faith. The Chapter also includes rulings concerning some of its worship rituals, specifically those which aim to give the Muslim individual and the Muslim community spiritual purification, consolidating their relations with their Lord. Other legislation included in

the Chapter aims to regulate relations within the Muslim community, as well as inter-community relations. Furthermore, the Chapter includes legislation permitting or prohibiting certain types of food, drink, marriages and other practices. All these form a complete unit, in a single Chapter, confirming the true meaning of religion, as God intended it and as understood by Muslims who are true to their faith.

This Chapter opens with a clear order to fulfil these contracts before it proceeds to explain what is lawful and what is unlawful of slaughtered animals, types of food and drink, and also of family relations. It also explains a large number of legal provisions and rules of worship, as well as the true nature of faith, submission to God and the nature of Godhead. The Chapter also clarifies the type of relations which exist between the nation of the Quranic message and other nations and beliefs. It explains the obligations of the community of believers in remaining true to their faith, bearing witness in all fairness, maintaining a position of leadership among humanity by virtue of their revealed Book. Theirs is the Book that supersedes all earlier revelations, establishing the rule of God as He has revealed it. They must always be on their guard lest they overlook some of what God may have revealed. They must also ensure that their personal feelings of love or hostility are not allowed to influence the way they administer full justice.

That the Chapter follows this pattern after giving a clear opening gives the term "contracts" a much wider sense than what immediately springs to mind. It is evident that "contracts" in this particular context means all the controls God has set up for human life, the most important of which is the contract of believing in God, acknowledging His overall Lordship and submitting to His will. This is the basic contract from which all the other contracts and controls in life are derived.

IMPLEMENTING DIVINE DECREES

Once the address is made to all believers to honor their contracts, some of these are stated in detail: **(5:1-5:3)** Whatever is stated here, either prohibiting or making lawful certain slaughtered animals, or certain species, or restricting places and times, is part of the "contract" believers must fulfil. It is part of the contract of faith that those who are party to it, i.e. the believers, must receive their instructions regarding what is lawful and what is unlawful only from God. In this respect, they recognize no authority other than His. Therefore, they are addressed as believers at the outset of this detailed explanation of what they may and may not have.

Flocks of animals were permitted to you, but what is now re-

counted to you: **(5:1)** Only because of this permission by God, not through any other authority, is it lawful and permissible for you to eat the flesh of whatever is included under the term "flocks", whether slaughtered or hunted, with the exception of the prohibitions that follow. Such prohibitions can either be temporary, restricted to certain places, or are total and applicable at all times and places. The flocks include camels, cows and sheep. Added to these are undomesticated animals like zebra, deer, bull and buffalo.

Thereafter, all other exceptions are detailed. The first pertains to hunting when believers are in the state of consecration: *You are not ones who are permitted hunting while you are in pilgrim sanctity.* **(5:1)** The prohibition here applies to the whole process of hunting. When one enters into the state of consecration as one starts pilgrimage or *umra*, one turns to God with one's whole being, turning one's back to familiar life practices which are a source of entertainment and pleasure. One turns one's face, and one's whole being, to the Sacred House which God has endowed with a feeling of security that applies to all those in it. Therefore, it is necessary that when we are there, we do not stretch our hands to kill any living thing. Thus, one experiences during this time a necessary feeling of the bonds between all living things created by God, the giver of life. All creatures are, thus, safe from human aggression. The necessities of life, for which game and hunting have been allowed for food purposes, are thus reduced in order to impart to the human being a sense of elevation above what is familiar and lawful to him in ordinary days.

Before proceeding to add more details of what is excepted from the initial ruling of general permission, this contract is linked to the overall contract of faith. The believers are also reminded of the source of that covenant: *Truly, God gives judgment how He wants.* **(5:1)** His will is absolute and He gives His commandments as He wishes. No one may have a say in what He decrees and no one can abrogate or overrule His judgment. What He outlines in this Chapter is His verdict on what is lawful and what is forbidden to us.

The address is again made to the believers to emphasize that they are not allowed to violate what God has restricted: **(5:2)** The first thing that springs to mind regarding the meaning of: *Profane not the waymarks of God* is that it is a reference to the rites of pilgrimage and *umra* and the restrictions that apply to everyone who enters into the state of consecration when he starts his pilgrimage or *umra* and which remain in force until the main part of the pilgrimage is over and when animals intended for sacrifice are slaughtered. During the state of consecration, a pilgrim does not offend against these restrictions, because such an offense represents a desecration of the

sanctity imparted to them by God. The Chapter describes these rites as being set up by God in order to emphasize their sanctity and to warn against their desecration.

OTHER RESTRICTIONS

The term "Sacred Month" as it occurs in this Quranic sign refers to the four months of sanctity in the lunar calendar which are: Rajab, Dhu al-Qada, Dhu al-Hijja and al-Muharram. God has forbidden fighting in these four months, which used to be given special sanctity by Arabian tribes prior to the Quranic message. However, they manipulated them as they wished, delaying certain months according to a ruling given by certain monks or a decree issued by the chiefs of powerful tribes. When the Quranic message was revealed, their sanctity was endorsed by God's legislation.

The Quran also states that delaying the sacred months and manipulating them is an indication of compounded ingratitude. Thus, the correct order has been re-established according to God's decree. These months remain sacred unless aggression is waged during them against the Muslims, when they are permitted to repel such aggression, without giving the aggressor a chance to escape, making use of the sanctity of these months which they do not recognize.

The offerings mentioned in the Chapter refer to sacrificial animals which pilgrims slaughter during pilgrimage as part of its rites. This may be a camel, a cow or a sheep. To offend against these is to slaughter them for any reason other than the one for which they have been consecrated. Nor may they be slaughtered until the day of sacrifice during pilgrimage or after the end of *umra*. The major part of any sacrificial animal is distributed to the poor. .

The term *the garlanded* mentioned in the Chapter refers to flocks which are adorned with garlands to denote that they have been pledged for sacrifice. They are then left alone to graze as they wish until the day when the pledge falls due for their sacrifice. Included among these are animals intended for sacrifice during pilgrimage and which are given a special sign to indicate the purpose for which they have been pledged. Once such flocks are adorned with garlands, they are no longer available for ordinary slaughter. They are slaughtered only for the purpose for which they have been pledged.

Similarly, God has given special sanctity to those who go to the Sacred House, seeking a share of God's bounty and grace and aiming to please Him. They come to the House to do some legitimate business and to seek God's pleasure, whether at the time of pilgrimage or at other times. When they come to God's Sacred House, they are given security.

Having explained all these restrictions, this sign makes it clear that once the period of consecration is over, hunting becomes lawful again, provided that it takes place outside the Haram area:. *ones who are bound for the Sacred House looking for grace from their Lord and contentment. And when you left your pilgrim sanctity, then, hunt.* (5:2) This is an area of security which God establishes in His Sacred Mosque, as He has indeed established a time of security during the Sacred Months. People, animals, birds and trees in this area are immune from human aggression. This makes it an area of absolute peace, in response to the prayer of Abraham, the noble father of this nation. This period of peace is extended to the whole planet for four complete months every year, under the guardianship of the Quranic message. People who enjoy the sweetness of this real sense of security will be keen to maintain it according to its provisions and to fulfill their covenants with God. They will try to extend it so that it encompasses human life throughout the year and the whole world over.

JUSTICE FOR FRIEND AND FOE

With the emphasis placed here on sanctity and security, God calls on those who believe in Him to fulfill their contracts with Him and to rise to the level which enables them to assume the leadership of humanity that has been assigned to them. To fulfil this role they must not allow themselves to be influenced by personal feelings, emotions or temporary circumstances. God calls on them not to transgress even against those who debarred them from entering the Sacred Mosque when they sought to visit it in the year known as "the year of al-Hudaybiyyah" and earlier. The actions of those people left deep scars in the Muslims' hearts, which were bound to arouse emotions of hatred. But all this notwithstanding, the actions of the Muslim community must not be guided by such feelings. Its duty fits its great role: *And let not that you detest a folk who barred you from the Masjid al-Haram drive you into exceeding the limits. And cooperate with one another in virtuous conduct and God-consciousness and cooperate not with one another in sin and deep seated dislike. And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Severe in repayment.* (5:2)

How the Quranic message works on people is best illustrated by the spectacular results it achieved in molding the Arabs such that this noble behavior became characteristic of them and, hence, they abided by its requirements. Prior to the Quranic message they were far removed from such lofty standards. Their unchallenged motto was: Support your brother, whether he is the victim or the perpetrator of injustice. Tribal loyalty was of paramount importance. To cooperate

in furthering evil and aggression was more natural to them than co-operation in furthering piety and righteousness. They forged alliances, but their purpose was more to support evil than to support right. Rare were the pacts made in pre- Quranic days which supported what was and is right. This was only natural in an environment where traditions, customs and morals were not derived from God's constitution. Perhaps the best expression of this principle was the motto we have just quoted. A poet of those days has also put it in a nutshell when he says: I am only a the human being of the tribe of Qurazayah: I go with my tribe, whether it follows the right way or the wrong one.

Then the Quranic message was revealed to establish new values and to remold people's way of thinking. the Quranic message tells the believers: *And let not that you detest a folk who barred you from the Masjid al-Haram drive you into exceeding the limits. And cooperate with one another in virtuous conduct and God-consciousness and cooperate not with one another in sin and deep seated dislike. And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Severe in repayment.* **(5:2)** Thus, a new bond linking hearts to God was established. Values and morals were given a new divine standard. The Arabs, and humanity as a whole, were led out of blind fanaticism and the control of personal and tribal feelings in determining who is a friend and who is a foe. The human being was reborn in the Arabian Peninsula. The new the human being derives his moral standards from God. This heralded the rebirth of the human being throughout the world. Prior to this, there was nothing in Arabia but blind loyalties which say: Support your brother, whether he is the victim or the perpetrator of injustice. The same blind loyalties were known throughout the world.

It is a great divide that separates a community governed by such blind loyalty and fanaticism and a community governed by a constitution stating: *And let not that you detest a folk who barred you from the Masjid al-Haram drive you into exceeding the limits. And cooperate with one another in virtuous conduct and God-consciousness and cooperate not with one another in sin and deep seated dislike. And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Severe in repayment.* **(5:2)** That great divide was removed by the only force that could remove it, namely, the Quranic message.

PROHIBITED MEAT

The Chapter now begins to give the details of the exceptions made in the first sign of animal that are lawful to eat: **(5:3)**

The first three types: carrion, blood and the flesh of swine are mentioned as forbidden in sign (2:173). We commented on this pro-

hibition in our discussion of this sign. Whether human knowledge will eventually be able to determine the reasons for this prohibition or not, divine knowledge has made it clear that these types of food are unwholesome. This is all that we need to know, because God only forbids what is evil and what harms human life in one way or another, whether such harm is known to the human being or not. Human knowledge remains limited. It does not know everything that causes harm and all that is useful.

Animals on which a name other than that of God has been invoked are forbidden to eat because such a practice is essentially contrary to faith, which is based on the fact that Godhead belongs to God alone. The first thing that follows from this acknowledgement is that the purpose behind every intention and action must be the pursuit of God's pleasure and that every step is made in His name, which is invoked before every action. Therefore, when the name of anyone other than God is invoked at the slaughtering of an animal, and indeed when no name is mentioned at such slaughter, the flesh of that animal is forbidden to eat because such an action is basically contrary to faith. It is in this moral respect that it is unwholesome and, therefore, added to what is physically unwholesome such as carrion, blood and pork.

Animals strangled in one way or another, or beaten or gored to death, or killed by a fall, or savaged by a beast of prey, are all types of carrion. Unless these are caught when still alive and slaughtered in the proper Quranic manner, they are forbidden meat. These details are given here in order to remove any suspicion that these may have a separate ruling. Scholars have spoken in detail on these and given different rulings with regard to "slaughter", and when an animal is deemed to have been slaughtered. Some scholars consider that if an animal has suffered an injury inevitably leading to its death, it cannot be made lawful even when it is slaughtered before it dies. Other scholars consider that such a slaughter, when the animal is still alive, is appropriate, regardless of the type of injury. These details may be referred to in books of jurisprudence, or *fiqh*.

Before the Quranic message, there were idols in the Kabah where the ungrateful used to slaughter their animals. They also used to throw some of the blood of their slaughtered animals on these idols. Animals slaughtered on such idolatrous altars, wherever they may be, are forbidden because of the place of their slaughter, even though the name of God may have been mentioned at the time of slaughter. The action itself is idolatrous.

Of the types of meat that are made forbidden in this sign there remains the one concerned with the divining of arrows. These arrows

were used in pre-Quranic Arabia in order to decide whether to undertake a certain action or not. Different reports suggest that either three or seven arrows were used, with each indicating a different action. The same arrows were also used in gambling, and to divide the meat of the camel offered for gambling. Every one of the gamblers had an arrow. The arrows were mixed and one is drawn. The person whose name was given to that arrow would take the amount of meat apportioned to it. God has forbidden resorting to arrows for dividing anything and using these arrows for any division because it is just a type of gambling, and all gambling is strictly forbidden. He has also prohibited eating the meat divided in this manner.

Whoever was driven by necessity due to emptiness—not one who inclines to sin—then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. **(5:3)** A person who is so hungry that he fears for his life may eat of any of these forbidden types, as long as he does not intend to do what is forbidden and commit a sin. Scholars have given different rulings on how much one is allowed to eat: is it only what is sufficient for someone to stay alive, or is one allowed to eat one's fill? Alternatively, can people in this predicament save something for other meals if they fear that they may not find food that is permissible? We need not go into these details here. It is sufficient for our purpose to understand that this religion of ours always allows for what is easy, and always gives situations of necessity the sort of rulings ensuring that no affliction is caused to its followers. In the end, matters are left to clear intention and to being conscious of what God requires of us. A person who is driven by an extreme situation to eat of these forbidden types, having no intention to commit a sin, will suffer no punishment. Instead, they will find that God is certainly Forgiving, Merciful.

PERFECTION AT ITS BEST

So far we have discussed the details of forbidden food as detailed in this sign. The sign, however, also includes other statements that require proper discussion. *Today, those who were ungrateful gave up hope because of your way of life. So dread them not but dread Me. Today, I perfected your way of life for you and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you and I was well-pleased with submission to the One God for your way of life.* **(5:3)**

This statement, which comes in the middle of a detailed account of which meat is forbidden to eat, was the last statement of the Quran to be revealed. It declares the completion of the message of the Quranic message and that its blessings have been brought to their full.

Today, those who were ungrateful gave up hope because of your

way of life. **(5:3)** They have reached a point of despair and realized that they cannot distort or detract from this religion or invalidate it when God has made it perfect and guaranteed to preserve it. They may defeat the Muslims in battle or ain mastery over them for a period of time, but they can never vanquish this religion. It is the only religion that has been preserved against all factors of corruption and distortion. Its enemies have tried very hard to distort and to scheme against it, and its people were at times totally ignorant of its truth. But God never allows the earth to be without a group of true believers who recognize the truth of this faith and who dedicate themselves to its advocacy. The Quranic message remains with them fully understood and preserved until they hand it over to the next generation of true believers. God's promise that the ungratefuls' despair of vanquishing this religion will always come true.

The believers are then addressed: *So dread them not but dread Me.* **(5:3)** The ungrateful can never detract from the essence of this message. Nor can they gain the upper hand against its advocates, unless these deviate from it and no longer give, through their action and behavior, a practical translation of its method of living. In other words, they abandon the duties it assigns to them and neglect to fulfil its provisions in their way of life.

Today, I perfected your way of life for you and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you and I was well-pleased with submission to the One God for your way of life. **(5:3)** The day on which God revealed this verse during the Messenger's pilgrimage of farewell was the day when this religion attained its perfection and no room was left for any further improvement. The greatest divine blessings were bestowed on the believers in full measure by giving them this all-embracing and comprehensive code. The Quranic message was chosen for them by God. Therefore, anyone who finds it unacceptable as a way of life actually rejects what God has determined to be the proper faith.

GRACE ABOUNDING

When all this has been established, God tells the believers: *Today, I perfected your way of life for you and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you and I was well-pleased with submission to the One God for your way of life.* **(5:3)** Thus, the faith and the law have been brought to perfection, since the combination of both constitutes religion. No believer may then imagine that religion, in this sense, requires any addition or complement to improve on it, or needs some modification or adaptation to suit local conditions. No one who entertains such thoughts is a true believer; for a believer accepts what

God says and is satisfied with His choice. The law of the particular time in which the Quran was revealed applies to all time because, according to God's own statement, it is the message revealed to humanity to be implemented by all communities for the rest of time. The detailed regulations and laws will remain the same, while the basic principles constitute the framework within which human life develops and progresses. When the framework is broken, the human being abandons faith altogether.

It is from depths of iniquity that the Quranic message rescued the Arabs, molding them into a nation, one capable of assuming the leadership of all humanity. It was the same generation of Arabs which lived in the depths of ignorance and darkness, before it experienced life at the top as envisaged by the Quranic message. Therefore, they were quick to fully appreciate the significance of the Quranic statement: *Today, I perfected your way of life for you and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you and I was well-pleased with submission to the One God for your way of life.* **(5:3)**

NOTHING WHOLESOME IS FORBIDDEN

They ask you what is lawful to them. **(5:4-5:5)** This question from the believers about what is lawful describes the frame of mind the chosen community adopted by virtue of the honor of being addressed by God Himself. It gives us an impression of the sort of reluctance they had in approaching anything that was practiced in pre-Quranic days lest it be unacceptable to the Quranic message. They felt that they needed to ask about everything to make sure that it fitted with their new way of life.

It is in this context that we should read their question to the Messenger about lawful food, after they had heard the signs which outlined what was forbidden to them: *They ask you what was permitted to them. Say: That which is good was permitted to you.* This imparts to them the true feeling that they have not been forbidden anything good or wholesome. Indeed, all the good things of life have been made lawful to them. Only bad or evil things are forbidden. Needless to say, everything that God forbids humanity is either something physically repugnant to uncorrupted human nature, such as carrion, blood and the flesh of swine, or something a believer's heart finds nauseating, such as the flesh of animals on which the name of someone other than God has been invoked, or what has been slaughtered over idolatrous altars, or something that has been divided with the help of arrows, which is a type of gambling.

To the good things mentioned here in general, a special type is also added to emphasize that which is good. These are animals

caught by beasts and birds of prey which have been trained for that very purpose, such as a hawk or a falcon, and hunting dogs and lions which have been trained to overpower game animals: *And what you taught of hunting creatures, as one who teaches hunting dogs of what God taught you. So eat of what they seized for you and remember the Name of God over it and be conscious of God. Truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* **(5:4)**

The condition which makes what is caught by such trained hunting animals lawful to eat is that they should leave their prey for their master. That is, the hunting beast or bird must not eat of the animal it has killed, except when the master has gone away. If they eat of their prey at the time of the catch, they have not been properly trained. They are simply killing other animals for themselves not for their masters. As such, the master may not eat of the game they kill, even if most of it is left, and even if they bring the prey back alive to him. Once they have eaten of it, it cannot be made lawful, not even by proper methods of slaughter.

The believers are finally reminded to continue to fear God and that His reckoning is very swift. Therefore, they should always be on their guard. The question of permissibility or prohibition is thus closely related to the more important feeling of being conscious of God and of fearing Him. It is the pivot round which every intention and every action in the life of a believer turns. Thus, it transforms human life into a relationship with God, a recognition of His greatness and a consciousness of His presence and power in all situations, whether we are alone or with others: *Truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* **(5:4)**

GOOD RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

The Chapter goes on to outline more types of food made permissible for believers, and adds to that what is permissible in marriage. **(5:5)** Again the variety of permissible pleasures are initially described as good: *Today, what is good was permitted to you.* **(5:5)** This emphasizes the meaning we have already stressed, explaining that only evil things have been forbidden to Muslims. Within the framework of making good things lawful, we witness a genuine manifestation of the Quranic tolerance when it comes to dealing with non-Muslim communities living side by side with Muslims in the land of the Quranic message, or perhaps having a relationship based on a peace treaty or one of simple loyalty.

This is clear evidence that the Quranic message provides the only system which allows for the establishment of a world community where Muslims do not live in isolation from the followers of other revealed religions and where barriers are not erected between the followers of different religions which exist side by side in Muslim

lands. This also applies to social relations. As for loyalty and patronage, these are covered by different rules which will be outlined later in this Chapter.

The same conditions apply to lawful marriages with either virtuous Muslim women or virtuous women of the followers of other divine religions: *And the ones who are free, chaste females from the females, ones who believe and the ones who are free, chaste females from among those who were given the Book before you when you were to give them their bridal due, as males, ones who seek wedlock, not as ones who are licentious males, nor as males, ones who take lovers to themselves.* **(5:5)** This means that a dower must be paid for a serious, lawful marriage by which a the human being provides his wife with a home, security and protection. The money paid must never be used for an illegitimate relationship that makes a woman available to any the human being as a prostitute or only to one the human being as a mistress. Both types were known in pre-the Quranic Arabia and recognized by Arabian society prior to its purification by the Quranic message.

These rulings are followed by a comment which carries an added emphasis together with a strong warning against their violation: *And whoever disbelieves after belief, then, surely, his actions will be fruitless. And he in the world to come will be among the ones who are losers.* **(5:5)** All these regulations are related to faith. To implement them as they are is faith, or at least is evidence of faith. A person who abandons them rejects the faith altogether. Therefore, all his actions will be to no avail. Indeed, whatever good he may do will be rejected by God. This state of affairs, i.e. the rejection of the actions of one who denies the faith, is described in the Quran in terms of what may happen to an animal which grazes in a poisonous area. Its belly is greatly swollen and it dies. This is a perfect description of what is rejected of man's actions. It swells, but it comes to nothing. In the life to come, such a person suffers a loss that comes on top of his vain actions.

It is to be noted that this stern warning comes by way of comment on rulings outlining what is permissible and what is forbidden in matters of food and marriage. This is indicative of the fact that all details of this religion of the Quranic message are closely interwoven in one whole. Nothing that is in conflict with its principles and regulations, whether relevant to fundamentals or matters of detail, is at all acceptable.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view

LESSON 112(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

SIGNS 5:6-5:11

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
When you stood up for the formal prayer,
then, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows
and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles.
If you had been defiled, then, cleanse yourselves.
And if you had been sick or on a journey
or one of you drew near from the privy
or you came into sexual contact with your wives
and you find no water,
then, aim at getting wholesome, dry earth
and wipe your faces and hands with it.
God wants not to make any impediment for you
and He wants to purify you and to fulfill
His divine blessing on you,
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (5:6)
And remember the divine blessing of God on you
and His solemn promise that he made as a covenant with you
by it when you said: We heard and we obeyed.
And be God-conscious.
Truly, God is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (5:7)
O those who believed! Be staunch in equity
as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk
drive you into not dealing justly.
Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.

And be conscious of God.
Truly, God is Aware of what you do. (5:8)
And God promised those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
that for them is forgiveness and a sublime compensation. (5:9)
And those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs,
those will be the Companions of Hellfire! (5:10)
O those who believed! Remember the divine blessing of God
on you when they, a folk, were about to extend their hands
against you, but He limited their hands from you.
And be God-conscious.
And in God let the ones who believe put their trust. (5:11)

COMMENTARY°

GETTING READY FOR PRAYER

This discourse about good food and good, virtuous women is followed by a reference to prayer and regulations governing purification in preparation for prayer. **(5:6)**

TOO VALUABLE AN OBLIGATION

O those who believed! When you stood up for the formal prayer. **(5:6)** Formal prayer is a meeting with God. Anyone who is about to offer a formal prayer stands up in front of God Himself, makes his supplication to Him, and addresses Him in a highly intimate manner. Therefore, it is important to prepare for it properly. In this respect, it is necessary to undergo a physical purification to help with the spiritual preparation. Perhaps this is the reason, as we understand it—though God alone knows the truth—for the requirement of ablution, the essential parts of which are detailed in this Quranic sign: *then, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles.* **(5:6)** These requirements are the subject of very minor differences among scholars, perhaps the most important of which is whether they should be done in the order they are mentioned in this sign or done without following any particular order. This type of ablution is required for a minor invalidation of purity, such as going to the toilet or releasing wind. A shower or a bath in which one washes all one's body is required to remove a state of ceremonial impurity which happens as a result of ejaculation whether through a wet dream or when awake, sexual intercourse and also women's menstruation.

Having outlined the requirements of ablution in both ordinary and total situations, the Quranic sign speaks of dry ablution which may replace either type. This is a concession of which Muslims may

avail themselves in the following situations: when water is not available; when a person is ill and needs to have an ordinary ablution, i.e. *wudu*, or when he is required to have a grand ablution, i.e. *ghusl*, but where water may be harmful to him; and when a person is traveling and needs to perform either type of ablution.

This Quranic sign states clearly the divine purpose behind the requirements of ablution, ordinary and total: *God wants not to make any impediment for you and He wants to purify you and to fulfill His divine blessing on you, so that perhaps you will give thanks.* **(5:6)** When we reflect on this statement, we are bound to see the thread of unity and complementarity the Quranic message establishes between worship and other legislation. Washing some parts of our bodies as we do in ablution, *wudu*, or having a full bath, *ghusl*, as we do in total ablution, are not merely meant for physical cleanliness. The spiritual side is certainly stronger because when it is not possible or inadvisable to use water, dry ablution, which fulfils only this stronger aspect, is deemed sufficient. Moreover, this religion of the Quranic message is a complete way of life which addresses all situations in all societies and stages with a unified and consistent system. In this way, its purpose is realized in all situations in one way or another. Let us then make sure that we fully understand the purpose of the Quranic message before passing a judgement that may not be based on sound knowledge or divine guidance. We must also maintain an attitude of propriety when we speak about God and His legislation.

JUSTICE EVEN WHEN DEALING WITH ENEMIES

Remember always the blessings God has bestowed on you and the covenant with which He has bound you when you said: **(5:7-5:8)**

The first generation to be addressed by the Quran were fully aware of the extent of God's blessings bestowed on them by His revealing this religion. They felt the change within themselves, in their lives, community, and in the position they occupied among humanity. A simple reference to this blessing was always sufficient to turn their attentions to a great, undeniable fact of life. Similarly, a reference to the covenant with which God bound them to listen and to obey aroused in them feelings of dignity, since they were the other party in a contract made with God, the Almighty. To a believer who contemplates such a relationship, this is something great indeed. Therefore, it is sufficient to remind them of their duty to remain God-fearing. They were ever conscious of God: *And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* **(5:7)**

A GULF TOO WIDE

Part of the covenant with which God has bound the Muslim community requires it to deal with other people on the basis of absolute justice, which is never affected by feelings of love or hatred, or by feelings, interests, or relations of any kind. It is justice based on the duty of remaining steadfast in devotion to God alone. No influences are ever allowed to tilt the balance of justice, especially when believers are mindful that God watches over them and knows what lies at the bottom of their hearts. They fully understand this address: **(5:8)**

This divine system, which brings out the best in the human being, realizes that this is a very difficult objective. Therefore, it gives a helping introduction: *And be conscious of God.* **(5:8)** The instructions are also concluded with a comment that helps in achieving the objective: **"***And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* **(5:8)**

A PROMISE THAT NEVER FAILS

Moreover, there must be a reward given by God to the believers, who deal with Him alone. This reward is needed to give encouragement to people to fulfil their obligations and to discharge their trust. The end of those who disbelieve and deny God's revelations must be different from that of those who believe and do well: **(5:9-5:10)**

The Chapter continues to cultivate this spirit of justice and tolerance among the Muslim community, and to weaken feelings of hostility, prejudice and revenge. It reminds Muslims of God's grace which manifested itself in restraining the hands of the ungratefuls when they intended to make a determined assault against the Muslims: *O those who believed! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when they, a folk, were about to extend their hands against you, but He limited their hands from you. And be conscious of God. And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* **(5:11)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions::

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?

LESSON 112(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN? CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

SIGNS 5:12-5:19

Madinah: *And, certainly, God took a solemn promise*
from the Children of Jacob
and We raised up among them twelve chieftains.
And God said: Truly, I am with you.
If you performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms
and believed in My Messengers
and you supported them and you lent God a fairer loan,
I would, certainly, absolve you of your evil deeds.
And I would, certainly, cause you to enter Gardens
beneath which rivers run.
Then, whoever among you was ungrateful after this,
then, surely, he went astray from the right way. (5:12)
Then, for their breaking their solemn promise,
We cursed them and We made their hearts ones that harden.

They tamper with the words out of context
and they forgot an allotment of what they were reminded of in it.
You will not cease to peruse the treachery of them,
but a few of them. Then, overlook and pardon them.
Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good. (5:13)
And from those who said: We are Christians,
We took their solemn promise,
but they forgot an allotment of what they were reminded of it
so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them
until the Day of Resurrection.
And God will tell them of what they had been crafting. (5:14)
O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you.
He makes manifest to you much of what you had been concealing
of the Book and pardons much.
Surely, from God drew near you a light and a clear Book. (5:15)
God guides with it whoever followed His contentment
to ways of peace
and He brings them out from the shadows into the light
with His permission and He guides them to a straight path. (5:16)
Certainly, ungrateful were those who said:
Truly, God is the Messiah, the son of Mary.
Say: Who, then, has any sway over God?
If He wanted to He would cause the Messiah son of Mary
and his mother to perish
and whatever is in and on the earth altogether.
To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth
and what is between the two.
He creates what He wills.
And God is Powerful over everything. (5:17)
And the Jews and Christians said:
We are the children of God and His beloved.
Say: Why, then, does He punish you for your impieties?
Nay! You are mortals whom He created.
He forgives whom He wills and He punishes whom He wills.
And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth
and what is even between the two.
And to Him is the Homecoming! (5:18)
O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you.
He makes manifest to you the way of life—
after an interval without Messengers—
so that you say not:
There drew not near us either a bearer of good tidings
or a warner.

Then, surely, drew near to you a bearer of good tidings and a warner.
And God is Powerful over everything. (5:19)

COMMENTARY°

THE TERMS OF COVENANTS MADE WITH GOD

Indeed, God made a covenant with the Children of Jacob and We appointed among them twelve captains. God said: I shall be with you. If you attend to your prayers, practise regular charity, believe in My messengers and support them and offer up to God a generous loan, I shall forgive you your sins and admit you into gardens through which running waters flow. But any of you who, after this, rejects the faith will indeed have strayed from the right path. Then for having broken their covenant, We rejected them and caused their hearts to harden. They now distort the meaning of [revealed] words, taking them out of their context. Moreover, they have forgotten much of what they have been told to bear in mind. From all but a few of them you will always experience treachery. But pardon them, and forbear. God loves those who do good. Likewise, from those who said: **(5:12-5:14)**

The covenant God had accepted from the Children of Jacob stated a specific condition and stipulated certain penalties in case of default. After explaining the circumstances leading to the confirmation of this covenant, the Chapter mentions its terms, conditions and penalties. It was a covenant made with the twelve captains of the Children of Jacob, representing all twelve tribes descending from Jacob (Jacob). Each tribe descended from one of Jacob's sons. The terms of the covenant are outlined as follows: *Truly, I am with you. If you performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms and believed in My Messengers and you supported them and you lent God a fairer loan, I would, certainly, absolve you of your evil deeds. And I would, certainly, cause you to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run. Then, whoever among you was ungrateful after this, then, surely, he went astray from the right way.* **(5:12)**

When God says to any group of people: *Truly, I am with you.*, He gives them a great promise. He who has God on his side suffers no opposition. Whoever and whatever stands against him is of no consequence. Moreover, whoever is with God will not go astray. To be with God is sufficient to ensure the right guidance and the proper support. Anyone who is sure to be on God's side will never suffer worry or misery. He is reassured and blessed with unfailing happiness. He need not ask for anything better than what he already has.

But God does not give this blessing of being with them as a spe-

cial favor or a personal gift. This comes only after its conditions are fulfilled. It is, indeed, a contract that outlines conditions and specifies penalties. The first condition is to attend to prayer. This is more than merely offering prayers. It means that prayers should become a manifestation of a true relationship between the human being and his Lord. This makes prayer an educative element which purifies man's behavior and dissuades him from committing any blatant sin or gross indecency.

Second is charitable payment, in recognition of God's favor for having given us what we have and by way of acknowledgement of the fact that whatever we may own actually belongs to God. The payment of *zakat*, or charity, is a manifestation of our obedience to God with regard to how to dispense with the money He has given us and specified the conditions of our ownership of it. Moreover, a perfect system of social security can thus be implemented in a society established on faith. Thus, the social economy becomes free of the shackles which result from the concentration of national wealth in the hands of a small minority. This leads to a situation where the overwhelming majority of the population is unable to buy its needs while a small minority enjoys all the wealth. This leads to all sorts of social corruption which can he prevented by the *zakat* system which ensures the proper distribution of wealth.

The next condition is to believe in God's Messengers making no distinction between them. Every single one of them was sent by God to preach the same message. Therefore, to deny any single one of them is to deny them all and to disbelieve in God, who had sent them all. Moreover, believing in them must not be a mere mental exercise. To truly believe in them is to be actively involved in supporting them in order to ensure that they succeed in their mission. Believing in the divine faith requires that a believer is always ready to do what is necessary and within his power to support his faith and to see it well established in human life. The divine faith is not confined merely to a set of beliefs or acts of worship. It is a practical system which organizes human life in a certain fashion. Therefore, it requires the support of all its followers to establish and protect it. Otherwise, a believer does not fulfil his covenant with God.

In addition to the purifying alms (*zakat*), giving generously to support God's cause is mentioned as a loan given to God. It should be pointed out here that it is God who owns what we have, but He gracefully describes what we pay to further His cause as a loan given to Him.

These were the conditions of the covenant God accepted from the Children of Jacob. The reward for the fulfilment of these condi-

tions was to forgive them their sins. Human beings will always err, no matter how keen they are to do what is right. Therefore, the forgiveness of sins is a great reward and a manifestation of God's endless grace. The reward also includes admission into Heaven which is described in the Quran as: *And I would, certainly, cause you to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run.* **(5:12)** This is again a reward which God bestows on human beings out of His grace. No the human being can earn this reward through his own actions. God, however, has promised this reward to those who do their utmost to fulfil their pledges to Him.

The penalty for failing to honor one's pledges is specified at the end of this sign: *Then, whoever among you was ungrateful after this, then, surely, he went astray from the right way.* **(5:12)** Therefore, he can have no guidance and no way of return. The pledge had already been made, the guidance already provided, the way shown and the penalty specified. Nothing can be of any benefit any more.

Such was the covenant God accepted from the captains of the Children of Jacob on behalf of their communities. They all accepted it, which made it a covenant applicable to every single individual among them, and one with the whole nation they constituted. How, then, did the Jacobites subsequently fare?

HARDENED HEARTS

They have indeed broken their covenant with God; they killed their prophets for no legitimate reason, and they plotted to kill and crucify Jesus the last of their Messengers. They also distorted their revealed Scriptures, i.e. the Torah, and abandoned its laws. They adopted a hostile attitude towards the last of all Messengers, Muhammad . They schemed against him and betrayed him and adopted an uncompromising attitude of hostility towards his message, not hesitating to violate the treaty they signed with him. As a result, God denied them His guidance and rejected them. Their hearts were caused to harden so that they could no longer be the recipients of divine guidance: **(5:13)**

You will not cease to peruse the treachery of them, but a few of them. **(5:13)** This is an address to the Messenger, describing the attitude of the opponents in Madinah towards the Muslim community in Madinah.

At the time when this Quranic sign was revealed, God instructed His Messenger in these terms: *Then, overlook and pardon them. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* **(5:13)** To pardon their evil act is to do good, and to forgive their treachery is to do good. But a time came when forgiveness and pardon could no longer

be extended. God subsequently instructed the Messenger to evacuate them from Madinah and later from the Arabian Peninsula altogether. These instructions were carried out.

THE ORIGINS OF ENMITY AMONG THE CHRISTIANS

God also relates to His Messenger and to the Muslim community that He accepted a covenant from those who described themselves as Christians, but they, too, were unfaithful to their covenant and suffered the consequences: *And from those who said: We are Christians, We took their solemn promise, but they forgot an allotment of what they were reminded of it so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection. And God will tell them of what they had been crafting.* **(5:14)**

This sign begins with a particularly significant description: *And from those who said: We are Christians, We took their solemn promise.* This mode of expression tells us that they simply professed to be Christians without giving practical credence to their claims. The essence of their covenant was to believe in God's Oneness. **(5:15-5:16)**

A MESSENGER WITH AN UNLIKELY BACKGROUND

In this divine address to the people of earlier Scriptures, it is made clear that they are called upon to accept the Quranic message, believe in Muhammad and support him, as this has been part of their covenant which God accepted from them. They are clearly told that God Himself is a witness that this Messenger who could not read and write was His Messenger to them as well as to the Arabs and to all humanity. There is no denying the fact that his message was given to him by God, and no claim can be admitted that his message was addressed to the Arabs only; it is, indeed, addressed also to the people of earlier revelations: *O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you. He makes manifest to you much of what you had been concealing of the Book and pardons much. Surely, from God drew near you a light and a clear Book.* **(5:15)** He has sent a Messenger to you, and his role is to open things up to you so that you see them in their reality. You can thus see how he brings out into the open what you have conspired to suppress of the basic truth of the revelations given to you.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S FINAL MESSAGE

The nature of what the last Messenger has been given, the role it is destined to play in human life and its practical effect are then explained: *Surely, from God drew near you a light and a clear Book.*

(5:15) Perhaps nothing expresses the nature of the Quran and the divine message of the Quranic message more accurately and comprehensively than stating that it is *a light*. In his heart of hearts, in everything in his life, in his evaluation of things, events and people, a believer realizes as soon as he accepts the truth of faith that he has a light that makes everything clear to him. Everything brightens up in front of him. No longer is he confused about anything; no longer does he suffer any hesitation before taking a serious decision; no longer is he travelling an unmarked road and no longer is he uncertain of his direction. His ultimate goal is clear. His way towards it is straight and he is certain of his footsteps. Two qualities describe the message which was given to the noble Messenger: *a light and a clear Book.*

We can save humanity from the tribulations of ignorance and the war it wages on the human being in all its shapes and forms. But we cannot do so until we save ourselves by turning back to what God has chosen for us and seek His pleasure by following it in order to be included among those whom God guides along the paths of peace and *He brings them out from the shadows into the light* **(5:16)**, by His grace. Everything that results from abandoning the Quranic message adds to the state of darkness. There is the darkness of superstition and ill-conceived beliefs, the darkness of unrestrained desire and caprice, the darkness of worry and confusion, the darkness of confused values and mistaken judgements and standards. Light on the other hand, is the sort of clarity and brightness which lightens up man's conscience, his mind and his whole life.

He guides them to a straight path. **(5:16)** It is in line with human nature and with the universe as well as the laws which govern the existence of both the human being and the universe. It leads straight to God and allows no confusion of issues or blurring of facts or errors of direction.

FALSE CLAIMS LEADING TO DISBELIEF

Unbelievers indeed are they who say: **(5:17)** The message Jesus conveyed as given to him by his Lord was the message of God's absolute Oneness which has been given to every messenger. Total submission to God alone as the only God and the Lord of the universe was the attitude adopted by every messenger. This clear faith, however, later became distorted after pagans adopted Christianity, retaining some traces of their old pagan beliefs which they were keen to introduce into the faith based on God's oneness. As time passed, these deviant beliefs became an integral part of the whole faith.

THE TRUE VERDICT

The final message gives the ultimate ruling on this whole issue, with the final Messenger declaring to the people who received revelations in former times the true nature of the divine faith: *Certainly, ungrateful were those who said: Truly, God is the Messiah, the son of Mary.* **(5:17)** An effort is made here to persuade them to listen to the voice of reason, upright nature and fact: *Say: Who, then, has any sway over God? If He wanted to He would cause the Messiah son of Mary and his mother to perish and whatever is in and on the earth altogether.* **(5:17)** This represents an absolute and undeniable distinction between God, His nature, will and dominion on the one hand and the nature of Jesus; his mother and all beings on the other.

The difference is clear and total. God is single; nothing is like Him; His will is absolute; His authority is total; no one can do anything to reverse His will should He desire to destroy the Christ, son of Mary, his mother and everyone on earth. He, the most glorious owns and creates everything, while all else are created: *To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what is between the two.* **(5:17)**

WISHFUL THINKING THAT COMES TO NOTHING

The Chapter then mentions another claim pressed by the Jews and Christians: *And the Jews and Christians said: We are the children of God and His beloved.* **(5:18)** They allege that some sort of parenthood belongs to God. If this fatherhood is not a physical one, then it is spiritual. Whatever it is, it throws an element of doubt on the concept of God's oneness and detracts from the decisive separation between the position of God and that of His servants. The fact is that this separation is necessary for the clarity of faith and the proper order of human life. It is essential so that all worship is addressed to God by all His creation. They, thus, have a single legislative authority which sets for them their values, standards, laws and systems, with no confusion of authority resulting from a jumble of qualities and positions. It is not merely a question of deviant beliefs, but a question of their consequences that are bound to corrupt life as a whole.

At this point, the Quranic message rejects most decisively such deviant beliefs and their practical consequences which corrupt life. It stresses the fact that God's justice is absolute: *Say: Why, then, does He punish you for your impieties? Nay! You are mortals whom He created. He forgives whom He wills and He punishes whom He wills.* **(5:18)** Their claims of being God's children are, thus, stated to be false. They are no more than other human beings. Forgiveness or punishment is determined by the same rule, based on God's will

which has established certain reasons for forgiveness and different ones for punishment. Neither is determined by any special relationship with God.

We then have a reiteration of the fact that everything belongs to God and returns to Him: *And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what is even between the two. And to Him is the Homecoming!* **(5:18)** It goes without saying that the owner is different from what is owned. Limitless as He is in His glory, His will is absolute and to Him will all return.

A renewed address is then made to the people given earlier revelations in order to allow them no excuse whatsoever. They are made to visualize most clearly their eventual destiny: **(5:19)**

With such decisive clarity, all issues are made plain. No longer can the people of earlier revelations claim that the unlettered Messenger has not been sent to them. God tells them: *O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you. He makes manifest to you the way of life—after an interval without Messengers—so that you say not: There drew not near us either a bearer of good tidings or a warner. Then, surely, drew near to you a bearer of good tidings and a warner.* **(5:19)** No longer can they profess that they have not been warned or given good news for a long period which might have allowed forgetfulness or deviation to creep in. Now someone to warn them and to give them happy news has come to them.

They are reminded that nothing can resist God's power; nothing can defy Him. He can send a Messenger from among the unlettered nation and He can punish the people given revelations earlier for what they may earn: *And God is Powerful over everything.* **(5:19)**

Thus, this round of confrontation with peoples of earlier revelations comes to an end. It has exposed their deviant beliefs which they introduced in the true faith preached by their messengers. It states most clearly the only faith which God accepts from believers and pronounces as false all their excuses which they reiterate in justification of their negative attitude to the unlettered Messenger, Muhammad. It calls on them to follow the divine guidance on the one hand and weakens the effects of their scheming against the Muslim community on the other. Moreover, the way the Muslim community and all those who seek guidance must follow is clearly marked out.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?
What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?
How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Evaluating Reasoning by:•
Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

SIGNS 5:20-5:26

Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:20)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:21)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:22)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:23)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:24)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:25)
Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:26)

LESSON 112(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY TO RELEVANCE

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

SIGNS 5:27-5:34

Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:27)
Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:28)
Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:29)
Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:30)
Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:31)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:32)

The only recompense for those who war against God
and His Messenger and hasten about corrupting
in and on the earth,
is that they be killed or caused to be crucified
or their hands and their feet be cut off on opposite sides
or they be expelled from the region.
That for them is their degradation in the present.

And for them in the world to come,
there is a tremendous punishment, (5:33)
but for those who repented before you have power over them.
So know you that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (5:34)

COMMENTARY°

THE JUST PUNISHMENT FOR REBELLION

The Chapter lays down the punishment for the crime that such wicked elements commit. This is known in the Quranic legal code as the punishment for waging war against the Quranic message: **(5:33-5:34)**

The crime to which this legislative statement refers involves rebellion against a Muslim ruler who implements the laws of the Quranic message. The rebels gather in a group renouncing the ruler's authority. They cause fear among the Muslim community living in the Muslim land and they commit aggression against their lives and property. Some scholars also make it a condition that this should take place away from the areas where the ruler's authority is enforced. Others suggest that the very fact that such rebels begin to gather and use force in aggression against the people of the land of the Quranic message, makes this legal provision applicable to them wherever they are.

Let us consider a situation where an armed group rebels against the authority of a Muslim ruler who is implementing the Quranic law and threatens the lives and properties of Muslims living in the land of the Quranic message. The punishment for those who join such a group is death, or crucifixion, (although some scholars say that they should be crucified after they are put to death, in order to frighten others) or to cut off their right hands and left feet.

And for them in the world to come, there is a tremendous punishment. **(5:33)** This means that their punishment in this life does not waive the punishment of the Hereafter, as it is the case in certain other crimes. This empathizes the gravity of crime and doubles its punishment. The reason being that the Muslim community should live in peace and security in the land of the Quranic message and that the Muslim ruler who implements the Quranic rules should be obeyed. Such a social set up and such a just and perfect system deserves to be protected against any design to undermine it.

If the rebels come to realize their mistake and turn to God in repentance when they still have their strength, then their punishment is waived and the Muslim ruler has no way of punishing them. God will forgive them eventually: *But for those who repented before you have power over them. So know you that God is Forgiving, Compas-*

sionate. **(5:34)**

The wisdom behind discounting the crime and waiving punishment in this case is clear. For one thing, it is an appreciation of their repentance where they still have their power. It is taken as evidence of their good intentions. For another, they are encouraged to repent so that the Muslim nation is spared the need to fight them.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How would you answer the Quranic question?

What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear an other's heavy load?

What issues are the sign addressing?

Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Read a chapter of the Quran with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Share and discuss your lists.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand what a rhetorical question is.

I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.

It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 112(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
SIGNS 5:35-5:43

Madinah: *O those who believed! Be conscious of God*
and look for an approach to Him and struggle in His way
so that perhaps you will prosper. (5:35)
Truly, those who were ungrateful,
if they had whatever is in and on the earth
and the like of it with as much again that they offer it as ransom
from the punishment on the Day of Resurrection,
it would not be received from them
and for them is a painful punishment. (5:36)
They will want to go forth from the fire,
but they will not be ones who go forth from it.
And for them is an abiding punishment. (5:37)
And as for the one who is a male thief
and the one who is a female thief, then,
sever their hands as recompense for what they earned,
an exemplary punishment from God.
And God is Almighty, Wise. (5:38)
But whoever repents after his injustice and made things right,
then, truly, God will turn to him in forgiveness.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (5:39)
Have you not known that to God,
to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth?
He punishes whom He wills and He forgives whom He wills.
And God is Powerful over everything. (5:40)
O Messenger! Let them not dishearten you
—those who compete with one another
in ingratitude among those who said:
We believed with their mouths while their hearts believe not.
And among those who became Jews are ones who hearken to lies,
ones who hearken to folk of others who approach not you.
They tamper with the words out of context.
They say: If you were given this, then, take it,
but if you are not given this, then, beware!

And for whomever God wants to test,
you will never have sway over him against God at all.
Those are whom God wants not to purify their hearts.
For them in the present is degradation.
And for them in the world to come
is a tremendous punishment. (5:41)
They are ones who hearken to lies,
the ones who devour the wrongful.
Then, if they drew near you, then, give you judgment between them
or turn aside from them.
And if you have turned aside from them,
then, they will never injure you at all.
And if you had given judgment,
then, give judgment between them with equity.
Truly, God loves the ones who act justly. (5:42)
And how will they make you their judge
while with them is the Torah wherein is the determination of God?
Yet, again, after that, they turn away.
Those are the ones who believe not. (5:43)

COMMENTARY°

THE HUMAN BEING'S ACTIONS DETERMINE HIS FUTURE

An important feature of the divine method of molding human society is that it does not rely solely on legislative action. It certainly arms itself with legal provisions in order to deter those who only fear the force of the law. Indeed, it relies primarily on educative action which smoothes over the rough edges of people's characters. It provides guidance to the human spirit as it establishes a society that helps the seeds of goodness to grow and gives harmful weeds no fertile soil. The previous signs spoke of very stern punishments for serious crimes. However, once the punishments are outlined, so as to ensure their deterrent effect, the Chapter addresses people's consciences and spirits, aiming to strengthen faith and consciousness of one's obligations towards God. It urges people to seek proper ways of moving nearer to what pleases God and to strive hard in His cause, so that they may be successful. This is coupled with a warning against disbelief and a vivid description of what awaits disbelievers in the Hereafter.. **(5:35-5:37)**

O those who believed! Be conscious of God and look for an approach to Him and struggle in His way so that perhaps you will prosper. **(5:35)** Be conscious of God and seek the proper approaches which bring you nearer to Him. Try always to be in contact with Him.

The Chapter portrays a scene of the ungratefuls who neither fear

God nor seek the means to come to Him. As such, they will never prosper. It is a very vivid description, because the Chapter does not only give a statement outlining a position, but depicts a full scene with movement and interaction. This is, indeed, the Quranic method used in portraying scenes of the Day of Judgment. The Quran uses it for most purposes: **(5:36-5:37)**

A SEVERE PUNISHMENT FOR THEFT

This is followed by a legislation outlining the punishment for theft: **(5:38-5:40)** Where any doubt exists, enforcement of the punishment is blocked. If it is suspected that the person concerned stole food to eat when he was hungry, or to meet a particular need, or if it is suspected that he had a share in the stolen property, then these are reasons which prevent his hands from being cut off. If the theft is proven through personal confession without there being witnesses to give evidence, then withdrawal of the confession is sufficient to prevent enforcement of the punishment. Similarly, if the witnesses recant, punishment is not enforced.

God, who is the Most Compassionate of all those who exercise mercy, says as He makes the punishment for theft so severe: *And as for the one who is a male thief and the one who is a female thief, then, sever their hands as recompense for what they earned, an exemplary punishment from God. And God is Almighty, Wise.* **(5:38)** It is, then, a stern punishment meant to be a deterrent. To deter someone from committing a crime is an act of mercy to that person, because he is prevented from becoming a criminal. It is also an act of grace to the whole community, because it ensures peace and security. No one may claim to be more merciful to people than God who created them except one with a blind mind and a dull soul. Practical evidence shows that this punishment was not enforced except in a handful of cases during a period approaching a whole century at the beginning of the Quranic message. This is because the Quranic society, with its own system and severe punishments and the safeguards it puts in place, did not witness any more crimes.

God then opens the door for anyone who wishes to repent and mend his ways, adding to that a demonstration of positive intent through good action: *But whoever repents after his injustice and made things right, then, truly, God will turn to him in forgiveness. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(5:39)**

Finally the Chapter states the overall principle of punishment in this life and in the Hereafter. God, the Creator and Owner of the universe, can will anything and determine the fate of every creature. It is He who enacts legislation for people to implement in their lives, and it is He who rewards them for their actions both in this life and

in the life to come: *Have you not known that to God, to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whom He wills and He forgives whom He wills. And God is Powerful over everything.* **(5:40)** It is then a single authority of dominion which issues legislation in this life and administers reward and retribution in the life to come. There is no division or multiplicity of authority. Indeed, human life can only be set right when the authority to legislate and to reward is united in both this life and the life to come. *And how will they make you their judge while with them is the Torah wherein is the determination of God? Yet, again, after that, they turn away. Those are the ones who believe not.* **(5:43)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one of the signs in this section based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

LESSON 112(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

SIGNS 5:44-5:50

Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:44)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:45)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:46)
Madinah: Book 28: People of the Gospel (5:47)
And We caused the Book to descend to you with The Truth,
that which establishes as true what was before it of the Book
and that which preserves it.
So give judgment between them by what God caused to descend.
And follow not their desires that drew near you against The Truth.
For each among you We made a divine law and an open road.
And if God willed, He would have made you one community
to try you with what He gave you so be forward in good deeds.
To God is your return altogether.
Then, He will tell you about
what you had been at variance in it. (5:48)
And give judgment between them by what God caused to descend
and follow not their desires and beware of them
so that they tempt you not
from some of what God caused to descend to you.
And if they turned away, then, know that God only wants
that He light on them for some of their impieties.
And, truly, many within humanity are ones who disobey. (5:49)
Look they for a determination of Age of Ignorance?
And who is fairer than God in determination
for a folk who are certain? (5:50)

COMMENTARY°

A BOOK TO SUPERSEDE ALL SCRIPTURES

Having spoken about earlier divine messages and laws, the Chapter now speaks of the final message which embodies the Quranic message in its final a complete form. It is the religion revealed for all humanity, giving a law which supersedes all preceding laws and forms the final arbiter in all affairs and disputes. It outlines

a way of life which regulates all aspects of all human activities and gives a basis for the formulation of a concept of faith, a social system and a code for personal and social behavior. None of this is given as an academic exercise. It must be implemented in full. Nothing of it may be substituted by something else. People either accept this and be true Muslims, or refuse it and follow ignorance and vain desires. No one may justify any deviation by claiming that he is uniting people by being flexible in matters of religion. Had God so willed, He would have made all humanity a single community. What tie He wants of us is to implement His law and let people decide on how they want to conduct their lives. **(5:48-5:50)**

And We caused the Book to descend to you with The Truth, **(5:48)** Since it is revealed by God, the only One who has the authority to enact laws, then it certainly sets forth the truth. Everything that it contains of matters of faith, law, directives and stories are true.

Therefore, it is the Book of the truth. Moreover, it *establishes as true what was before it of the Book and that which preserves it.* **(5:48)** It, thus, provides the final version of the divine faith. It is the final arbiter not only in this regard, but also with regard to the way of life humanity should follow, the legislation that should be implemented and the system that should be established. No modification is admissible. Any disagreement over any of these matters, whether between followers of divine religions or between Muslims themselves, must be referred to this Book. No opinion advanced by any human being has any value unless it is supported by this final authority.

As this is an undeniable fact, it must have its practical implementation: *So give judgment between them by what God caused to descend. And follow not their desires that drew near you against The Truth.* **(5:48)** This command is addressed in the first instance to God's Messenger with respect to those of the followers of earlier religions who came to him for arbitration. But its import is not confined to this particular aspect. It is a general order, applicable till the end of time since there will never be a new messenger or a new message to modify anything in this final version of God's message to humanity.

THE TEMPTATION TO ABANDON GOD'S LAW

It is a false notion to try to unite people at the expense of God's law. Moreover, the attempt is bound to fail. The price asked is too high, since any modification of God's law will lead to corruption on earth, injustice and the subservience of some people to others. This is, indeed, a great evil. If no compromise of God's law is admissible

for pursuing the noble purpose of uniting people, how can it be justified for something which is more petty. Some of those who claim to be Muslims argue that God's law should not be implemented so that we do not lose the tourist trade! Absurdity knows no limit! **(5:49-5:50)**

Again, this principle is stated with greater clarity. In the first statement, the Messenger is instructed in these words: *For each among you We made a divine law and an open road. And if God willed, He would have made you one community to try you with what He gave you so be forward in good deeds. To God is your return altogether. Then, He will tell you about what you had been at variance in it.* **(5:48)** This statement may be construed as meaning abandoning God's law in total and following their vain desires in preference to it. In the second part, the Messenger is warned against compromising even a portion of what has been revealed to him: *And give judgment between them by what God caused to descend and follow not their desires and beware of them so that they tempt you not from some of what God caused to descend to you.* **(5:49)** The warning here is more precise, stricter and stronger. It also states the matter in its true nature. It is a temptation which must be resisted. The choice is either to implement God's law in full, or to follow vain desires.

At that time, they had the choice whether to refer their disputes to God's law, a choice which was later abrogated in the land of the Quranic message. God's law has to be implemented except in those areas where the followers of other religions have specific provisions. These they are allowed to implement. As this was the case, the Messenger is told not to worry about them if they do not like his commitment to every detail of God's law or if they turn away from the Quranic message: *And if they turned away, then, know that God only wants that He light on them for some of their impieties. And, truly, many within humanity are ones who disobey.* **(5:49)** Do not worry about them if they turn away. Do not let their attitude weaken your resolve to implement God's law in full. It is they who will suffer as a result of their turning away because God will then afflict them with their sins. Neither the Messenger, nor the Muslim community, nor indeed God's law will come to any harm as a result of their turning away. Moreover, it is in human nature that many people will transgress. The Messenger is told that he has no say in this state of affairs. Nor is it the fault of God's law. It is they who will not follow the right path.

Having made it absolutely clear to all believers that nothing of the provisions of God's law will be compromised for any purpose and under any circumstances, the Chapter then contrasts the choices

available. It is either God's law or man-made law, based on inadequate knowledge and vain desire. There can be no meeting ground between the two. *Look they for a determination of Age of Ignorance? And who is fairer than God in determination for a folk who are certain?* **(5:50)**

This statement defines the meaning of *jahiliyyah*, rendered here as "pagan ignorance", as the term is used in the Quran. *Jahiliyyah* means that people are ruled by people, because this signifies that they submit to one another. They refuse to submit to God alone and reject His Godhead, acknowledging instead that some human beings have qualities of Godhead and hence they submit to their authority. As such, the term pagan ignorance, or jahiliyyah, does not refer to a particular period of time, but to a certain situation which may come into existence at any time. Whenever it exists, it must be described as jahiliyyah which is in contrast to the Quranic message.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Does this description stick to the facts?
Or, is reasoning or response included?
Is this something that can be directly seen?
Or would you have to interpret what you saw to arrive at this statement?
Is this how anyone would describe the situation?
Or would someone else see it differently?
What alternative descriptions or explanations are there?

Students could then examine the assumptions and inferences underlying the alternatives.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

LESSON 112(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
SIGNS 5:51-5:56

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Take not to yourselves the Jews and the Christians as protectors.
Some of them are protectors of one another.
And whoever among you turns away to them,
then, he is of them.
Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust. (5:51)
And you have seen those who in their hearts is a sickness.
They compete with one another.
They say: We dread that a turn of fortune should light on us.
Then, perhaps God brings a victory or a command from Him?
Then, they will become—from what they kept secret
within themselves—ones who are remorseful. (5:52)
And those who believed will say:
Are these they who swore an oath by God—
the most earnest of sworn oaths—
that they were with you?
Their actions were fruitless.
They became ones who are losers. (5:53)
O those who believed!
Whoever of you goes back on his way of life,
God will bring the folk whom He loves and whom love Him,
humble-spirited towards the ones who believe,
disdainful towards the ones who are ungrateful.
They struggle in the way of God and they fear not the reproach
of one who is reproached.
That is the grace of God. He gives it to whom He wills.
And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. (5:54)
Your protector is only God and His Messenger
and those who believed and those who perform the formal prayer
and give the purifying alms
and they are ones who bow down. (5:55)
And whoever turns in friendship to God and His Messenger
and those who believed, then, behold the Party of God.
They are the ones who are victors. (5:56)

COMMENTARY°

ALLIANCES THAT CANNOT SURVIVE

It is most important to begin by defining the meaning of the alliance the believers are forbidden by God to maintain with the Jews

and Christians. **(5:51-5:53)** It is to establish a relationship of mutual support so as to forge one block with them. It has nothing to do with following their faith. It is extremely unlikely that we find among Muslims anyone who may be inclined to follow the Jewish or Christian faith. It is rather the type of alliance involving mutual help that was unclear to some Muslims who initially thought it permissible. It was a fact of life that there were mutual ties and interests between the Arabs in Madinah and groups of Jews. These developed into alliances between the two prior to the Quranic message and continued in the early days after most Arabs in Madinah adopted the Quranic message. Later, God ordered the Muslims not to enter into such alliances with the Jews of Madinah.

The naive among us tend to overlook this truth when we think that we can establish an alliance with the people of earlier revelations, i.e. the Christians and Jews, in order to check the advance of materialism and atheism, since we are all people of faith. We forget the teachings of the Quran and the lessons of history. Those very people of earlier revelations used to say to the pagan Arabs that: *Some of them are protectors of one another.* **(4:51)** It is they who stirred the ungrateful and mobilized them into launching a determined attack against the Muslim community in Madinah. Those people of earlier revelations were the ones who launched the Crusades against the land of the Quranic message, which extended over a period of 200 years. It is they who organized the Spanish Inquisition. In recent history, they turned the Muslim Arabs of Palestine out of their land in order to give it to the Jews. In doing so, they were in alliance with atheism and materialism. The same people of earlier revelations persecuted the Muslims in Abyssinia, Somalia, Eritrea, and Algeria. They further collaborated with atheism, materialism and polytheism in the persecution of Muslims in Yugoslavia, China, Turkistan, India and in many other places.

Nevertheless, totally oblivious to such definitive Quranic statements, some of us may entertain thoughts that we can establish a relationship of alliance or patronage with these people of earlier revelations in order to repel the attacks of atheist materialism on religion. Such people do not read the Quran. If they do, they confuse the Quranic message's attitude of tolerance with the forging of an alliance with such people. It is against this that the Quranic message warns the Muslims. Such people do not actually live the Quranic message as the only faith acceptable to God or as an active movement seeking to establish a new order on earth. This new order will inevitably stand up to the hostility of today's people of earlier revelations, just as it repelled it in the past. This positive attitude cannot

change since it is the only natural one. We, therefore, leave such people in their confusion to reflect on this clear Quranic directive: *O those who believed! Take not to yourselves the Jews and the Christians as protectors. Some of them are protectors of one another. And whoever among you turns away to them, then, he is of them. Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* **(5:51)**

DISTINCTIVE VALUES OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

In the first instance, this sign is an address to the Muslim community in Madinah. It is at the same time directed to every Muslim community which comes into existence in any part of the world at any point in time. Its message is meant for every group that may be described as "believers". The particular occasion which necessitated this address was the need for the Muslims in Madinah to have a clearer view of the ties of allegiance which would mold them into a distinct community, totally separate from the people of earlier revelations. There were ties of alliance, financial dealings, neighborlinesss, friendship, etc. All this was natural in the light of the historical, economical, and social conditions which prevailed in Madinah prior to the advent of the Quranic message.

As Muslims engage in a fight to establish their new system as a living reality, the Quran provides them with the necessary concept to create, in their subconscious, a sense of distinction between them and all those who do not belong to their community. This distinction does not preclude tolerance and kind treatment; for these come naturally to a Muslim. It only precludes a relationship of alliance, of the sort a Muslim owes only to God, His Messenger and the community of believers. All Muslims, in all generations, have this awareness and feel this distinction: *O those who believed! Take not to yourselves the Jews and the Christians as protectors. Some of them are protectors of one another.* **(5:51)**

As this is a permanent fact, its consequences are clearly stated. Since the Jews and the Christians are allies of one another, they can only be patronized by someone of their own kind. If someone from the Quranic camp establishes an alliance with them, he actually removes himself from the Muslim camp, abandons the basic quality of the Quranic message and joins the other camp. For this is the natural and practical result: *And whoever among you turns away to them, then, he is of them.* **(5:51)** He, thus, wrongs himself and wrongs the divine faith of the Muslim community. Because of his wrongdoing, God puts him in the same group with the Jews and Christians to whom he has pledged his support and made himself an ally. God neither guides him to the truth nor returns him to the Muslim ranks:

Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust. **(5:51)**

THE BEST INSURANCE FOR THE FUTURE

The Quran describes the conditions which prevailed in Madinah, and against which it warns the Muslims: *They say: We dread that a turn of fortune should light on us.* **(5:52)**

We develop a clear idea of the situation in the Muslim community of Madinah, the relations inherited from pre-the Quranic days and the concepts that were totally clarified about the sort of ties which may and may not exist between the Muslim community and the Jews. It is noteworthy that all these reports speak of the Jews and none of them mention the Christians. Nevertheless, the Quranic sign speaks of both Jews and Christians because it seeks to establish a permanent concept about the ties and situations which could prevail between the Muslim community and other communities, whether they followed earlier revelations or were non-believers, as will be mentioned later in this passage.

The Quranic message and those who claim to be its followers, highly questionable as their claim may be, continue to be at the receiving end of an unabating war launched against them and their faith by Jews and Christians all over the globe. This is the practical confirmation of what God says: *Some of them are protectors of one another.* **(5:51)** Any Muslim who respects his intelligence, should pay heed to His Lord's advice, or indeed His clear command, implementing His final decision to establish a complete distinction between those who are in alliance with God and His Messenger and those who raise a different banner.

WHEN HYPOCRISY IS LAID BARE

The Quran threatens those who seek the support of the enemies of their religion, the hypocrites, by bringing about victory for the believers or by revealing the truth about the hypocrites: *Then, perhaps God brings a victory or a command from Him? Then, they will become —from what they kept secret within themselves—ones who are remorseful.* **(5:52)** At this point of victory, whether it is here a reference to the conquest of Makkah, or to passing judgement over unclear issues, or to the accomplishment of God's will, those who have disease in their hearts will experience terrible regret over their past attitudes. The believers will wonder at the state of affairs which befalls the hypocrites: *And those who believed will say: Are these they who swore an oath by God—the most earnest of sworn oaths—that they were with you? Their actions were fruitless. They became ones who are losers.* **(5:53)**

THE QUALITIES OF GOD'S BELOVED PEOPLE

This passage now completes its first address to the believers, requiring them not to seek an alliance with the Jews and Christians and warning them against such relationships because they may lead them to an unintentional renunciation of the faith of the Quranic message. The second address made in this passage goes on to add a new warning to anyone who renounces his faith, either through making such an alliance or otherwise. Such a person has no position with God, even though he cannot get away from God, and he cannot cause harm to His faith. This faith has its own supporters who are well known to God. If the present group turn away from God's faith, He will bring forth others who will take their place. The Chapter describes the main features of this selected group of supporters in pleasant and reassuring terms. It points out the only way to which a Muslim directs his allegiance and it concludes with stating the inevitable outcome of the battle between God's party and other parties. **(5:54-5:56)**

This warning, coming in this fashion at this particular point to those who turn away from faith, is taken to refer, in the first instance, to an equation which places on one side the maintenance of an alliance with the Jews and Christians, and, on the other, turning away from the Quranic message altogether. This is highlighted by what has been said earlier of classifying anyone who seeks to be in alliance with them as one of them, having broken away from the Muslim community: *O those who believed! Take not to yourselves the Jews and the Christians as protectors. Some of them are protectors of one another. And whoever among you turns away to them, then, he is of them. Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* **(5:51)** In this light, this second address serves to emphasize the first one. This is further supported by another address which follows later in this Chapter. This third address forbids alliances with the people of earlier revelations and ungratefuls, classifying them all in one group. This means that seeking an alliance with the Christians and Jews is the same as seeking it with ungratefuls. Where the Quranic message provides for extending different treatment to the people of earlier revelations from that extended to ungratefuls does not relate to having an alliance with them. Rather, it concerns different matters altogether. **(5:54)**

TO LOVE GOD AND BE LOVED BY HIM

The description of the chosen community of believers is remarkable: *God will bring the folk whom He loves and whom love Him.* **(5:54)** This mutual love is indeed remarkable, generating as it does a feeling of strength the believer needs to fulfil his difficult task. He

feels that it is a great honor to have been chosen for this task through which he earns his position of favor, close to God, the Beneficent, the Almighty.

The Chapter gives further details of this community which is dedicated to the service of God's cause: *Humble-spirited towards the ones who believe.* **(5:54)** This humility means that they are affable, gentle, and tolerant. When they deal with other believers, they do not adopt a difficult attitude or show any stubbornness. They are approachable, responsive, friendly. To adopt such an attitude towards believers does not mean any self-humiliation. Indeed, it is an aspect of brotherhood which removes barriers and formalities. One does not feel that one has anything to withhold from one's fellow brothers. It is self-consciousness that makes someone difficult and unamenable. On the other hand, when he feels himself belonging to the group of believers, he has nothing to withhold or begrudge. What can he retain for himself when they have all been united by faith, loving God and being loved by Him, and feeling this sublime love spreading over them?

Disdainful towards the ones who are ungrateful. **(5:54)** When they have to deal with ungrateful, they show their dignity and high status. This is the attitude to adopt in such a situation. There is no trace of arrogance or conceit. It is being proud of the faith they have chosen and being honored to fight ungrateful under the banner of faith. It is their unshakable trust in what they have, which is goodness itself, and their knowledge that their role is to make others submit to this goodness. It is not a personal submission by one group of people to another. It is rather a matter of complete trust that the divine faith, God's party, will eventually triumph over all creeds based on personal prejudice and also over ignorance. It is they who will eventually triumph though they may be defeated in certain battles along the way.

They struggle in the way of God and they fear not the reproach of one who is reproached. **(5:54)** To strive hard in order to establish the divine system and implement it in human life so as to achieve all that is good for humanity is a distinctive characteristic of the community of believers chosen by God to accomplish His will on earth. They strive hard for God's cause not to serve their own interests, nor the interests of their people, country or race, but rather to establish God's authority through the implementation of His law and to achieve all that is good for humanity. Personally, they gain nothing for themselves from such hard striving. It is all for God's sake.

It is for these reasons that the community of believers strives hard for God's cause without fearing to be criticized or censured by

anyone. This is the mark of the chosen believers. Moreover, that those believers are chosen by God, that there is mutual love between Him and them, that they have their own distinctive characteristic and the reassurance they have to conduct their affairs on the basis of divine guidance are all favors bestowed on them by God: *That is the grace of God. He gives it to whom He wills. And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing.* **(5:54)** He gives in abundance and He chooses the ones to whom He grants His favous on the basis of perfect knowledge. His grace is abundant, limitless.

God defines for the believers the only group with whom they may have a relationship of patronage and the ones to patronize: *Your protector is only God and His Messenger and those who believed and those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and they are ones who bow down.* **(5:55)** The definition is made here in away which leaves no way for liberal interpretation or confusion. Matters have to be so clearly defined because the central issue here is that of faith and its implementation through a movement. Therefore, submission to God must be complete, trust in Him must be absolute, and self-surrender is the only religion. The question is, then, one of a complete distinction between the Muslim camp and all other camps which do not adopt submission to God as a faith and the Quranic law as a way of life. The Quranic movement must be serious in its organization so that it admits no allegiance except to its own leadership. Thus, loyalty and support can exist only between members of the community of believers, because such loyalty and support are based on faith.

THE PARTY ASSURED OF TRIUMPH

The Quranic message is not a mere title, slogan or verbal claim nor is it a hereditary relationship or a description of people who live in a certain area. The Chapter mentions here some essential characteristics of believers: *Your protector is only God and His Messenger and those who believed and those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and they are ones who bow down.* **(5:55)**

Zakat, on the other hand, has a specific significance which is indicated by its very name, which means "purifying alms". First and foremost, zakat is purification and growth. It purifies a person's conscience because it is an act of worship and it is paid willingly with a feeling of love towards those who need it, because as a worship its payer expects to be well rewarded for it in the life to come and hopes that his wealth in this life will increase through the implementation of the blessed economic system of the Quranic message. There is also a healthy feeling generated by it among the poor who receive it

because they feel that it is part of God's grace that He has determined its payment to them by the rich. They entertain no grudge against the rich. (It is useful to remind ourselves here that under the Quranic system, the rich earn their money through legitimate means and do not usurp the right of anyone as they earn their income.) Needless to say, *zakat* also achieves the objective of financial taxes in a healthy and satisfactory atmosphere characterized by purity and growth.

The payment of *zakat* is a characteristic of the believers confirming that they implement God's law in their lives. Its very payment is an acknowledgement that God has the authority over all their affairs. This is exactly what is meant by the Quranic message, which is based on total submission to God.

And they are ones who bow down. **(5:55)** The way this phrase is expressed in the Arabic original indicates that bowing down in worship is their normal and essential condition. The Quranic sign has already stated that they attend to their prayer, but this second description is even more comprehensive because it makes it appear as if worship is the most prominent characteristic by which they are known. In such contexts, Quranic expressions are very powerful indeed.

In return for having complete trust in Him, and seeking only His support and maintaining a tie of patronage with Him only and, in consequence, with His Messenger and the believers, and in return for a complete split between them and all other camps that do not submit to Him, God promises the believers victory: *And whoever turns in friendship to God and His Messenger and those who believed, then, behold the Party of God. They are the ones who are victors.* **(5:56)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?

What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

Lesson 112(8). Critical Thinking Strategy
Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
The Middle Community—Islamic Moderation:[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of Islam that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of Islam, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts of Islam include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the *umma* throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts of Islam include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of Islam set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*umma*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

Quranic Chapter 5: The Table Spread with Food (al-Maidah)
Signs 5:57-5:66

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Take not to yourselves those who took to themselves
your way of life in mockery and as a pastime
from among those who were given the Book before you
and the ones who are ungrateful, as protectors.
And be conscious of God
if you had been ones who believe. (5:57)

And when you cried out for formal prayer
they took it to themselves in mockery and as a pastime.
That is because they are a folk who are not reasonable. (5:58)
Say: O People of the Book!
Seek you revenge on us because we believed in God
and what was caused to descend to us
and what was caused to descend before,
while, truly, most of you are ones who disobey? (5:59)
Say: Will I tell you of worse than that as a reward from God?
He whom God cursed and with whom He was angry
and He made some of them into apes and swine
who worshiped the false deities.
Those are worse placed and ones who go astray
from the right way. (5:60)
And when they drew near you they said:
We believed. And, surely, they entered with ingratitude
and they, surely, went forth with it.
And God is greater in knowledge
of what they had been keeping back. (5:61)
And you have seen many of them competing with one another
in sin and deep seated dislike and in consuming the wrongful.
What they had been doing was miserable. (5:62)
Why prohibit not the rabbis and learned Jewish scholars
their sayings of sin and their consuming the wrongful?
Miserable was what they had been crafting. (5:63)
And the Jews said: The hand of God is one that is restricted!
Restricted were their hands!
And they were cursed for what they said.
Nay! His hands are ones that are stretched out:
He spends how He wills.
And, certainly, many of them increase
by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord
in defiance and in ingratitude.
And We cast among them enmity and hatred
until the Day of Resurrection.
Whenever they kindled a fire of war,
God extinguished it.
And they hasten about corrupting in and on the earth.
And God loves not the ones who make corruption. (5:64)
And if the People of the Book believed
and were God-conscious, certainly,
We would have absolved them from their evil deeds
and caused them to enter into Gardens of Bliss. (5:65)

And if they adhered to the Torah and the Gospel—
what was caused to descend to them from their Lord,
they would, certainly, have eaten in abundance
from above them and from beneath their feet.
Among them is a community
of ones who halt between two opinions.
But many of them, how evil is what they do! (5:66)

COMMENTARY°

WHEN FAITH AND PRAYERS ARE MOCKED

The approach utilised in this Chapter adopts several ways to impress on the believers the prohibition of taking as allies those who follow a faith different to their own, be they followers of earlier revelations or ungratefuls associating partners with God. The aim of using such different methods is to make this rule of faith well established in their minds and consciences. This, in turn, indicates how important this rule is in the overall the Quranic concept and the methods adopted by the Quranic movement.

In the first address, as we have seen, a straightforward prohibition has been emphasized, coupled with a warning that God may well bring about victory for the believers or bring about some other event of His own making, and thus the reality which the hypocrites try hard to cover up will be laid bare. In the second address, a warning is given against the renunciation of faith through the establishment of an alliance with the enemies of God, His Messenger and the believers. This is coupled with raising the far better prospect of belonging to the selected group who love God and are loved by Him, with the additional promise of victory to God's party.

Now this passage adds a third address to the believers, appealing to them to defend their faith, worship and prayers which are mocked at and made a jest of by their enemies. Alliances with the people of earlier revelations or with ungratefuls is forbidden in the same way. This prohibition is made directly relevant to fearing God. Belonging to the community of believers is made conditional on compliance with it. The actions of the ungratefuls and the people of earlier revelations are shown in their true light and they are described as having no reason: **(5:57-5:58)**

FINDING FAULT WITH DEDICATED BELIEVERS

When all these addresses to the believers have been completed, the Chapter instructs the Messenger to put a direct question to the people of the Scriptures: What fault do they find with the Muslim community? Do they take anything against it other than the fact that

Muslims believe in God and in His past revelations, as well as His revelations to the Messenger of the Quranic message? In other words, the only fault they find with the Muslims is that the Muslims are believers, while they, i.e. the people of earlier revelations, are mostly transgressors. It is a confrontation that is embarrassing and decisive at the same time, because it points out the true cause of hostility. **(5:59-5:60)**

In this Chapter, God tells the Prophet that it is time to confront the people of earlier revelations with the truth which shapes their motives and provides the logic behind their attitude: *Say: O People of the Book! Seek you revenge on us because we believed in God and what was caused to descend to us and what was caused to descend before, while, truly, most of you are ones who disobey?* **(5:59)**

THOSE IN THE WORST POSITION OF ALL

The Chapter then refers to some events pertaining to the history of the people of earlier revelations, their past attitude towards their Lord and the painful punishment awaiting them: *Say: Will I tell you of worse than that as a reward from God? He whom God cursed and with whom He was angry and He made some of them into apes and swine who worshiped the false deities. Those are worse placed and ones who go astray from the right way.* **(5:60)**

Here we are face to face with the Jews and their history. It is they whom God has rejected and who have incurred His anger, and whom He has turned into apes and pigs for worshipping false gods. The first three points to which reference is made here are mentioned elsewhere in the Quran. Their worship of false gods needs to be explained here because it has particular significance in the context of this Chapter.

The expression "false gods" refers in the Quranic context to every authority that is not derived from God's own authority, every system of government that does not have God's law as its basis, and to every aggression exceeding the boundaries of what is right. The worst type of aggression which the Arabic term *taghut*, rendered here as "false gods", relates is that made against God's authority, and His Godhead. The people of earlier revelations did not worship rabbis and monks, but they followed their rule in preference to that of God's. Therefore, God describes them as their worshippers and terms them polytheists. It is to this fine point that reference is made here. They worshipped false gods in the sense that they obeyed tyrannical authorities in so far as they exceeded their rightful limits. They worshipped them not in the sense of bowing and prostrating themselves before them, but by simply obeying and following them. This is, indeed, a type of worship which removes its perpetrator from the ranks of God's worshippers who follow His faith.

God directs His Messenger to confront the people of earlier revelations with this history and the punishment they have incurred, as if they are one generation, since they all share the same deviant nature. The Messenger is directed to tell them that the result of such an attitude is much worse: *Say: Will I tell you of worse than that as a reward from God?* **(5:60)** This means that they incur something much worse than those people of earlier revelations who preceded them. Incomparable indeed is God's anger and His retribution. Here, we have His verdict that those people of earlier revelations have turned away from the right path: *He whom God cursed and with whom He was angry and He made some of them into apes and swine who worshiped the false deities. Those are worse placed and ones who go astray from the right way.* **(5:60)**

THE EXPOSURE OF A HORRID NATURE

The Chapter continues to warn the Muslims against fraternizing with them, by exposing their qualities and features, after having referred briefly to their history and punishment. Their schemes are exposed in order that the Muslims be warned against them. The Jews feature prominently here because the Chapter speaks of actual events, most of which were perpetrated by them:

When they come to you, they say: "We believe," whereas, in fact, they come ungratefuls and depart ungratefuls. God is fully aware of all that they would conceal. You see many of them rushing into sin and transgression and in devouring the fruits of unlawful gain. Evil indeed is that which they do. Why do not their divines and their rabbis forbid them to make sinful assertions and to devour the fruits of unlawful gain? Evil indeed is that which they contrive. The Jews say: **(5:61-5:64)**

With these words, the Chapter draws moving pictures and living scenes in front of our eyes. Despite the passage of centuries, the reader of these signs visualizes the Jewish people to whom the Quran most probably refers. Although the context applies to the Jews, it is possible, however, that it also refers to some of the hypocrites in Madinah. Those hypocrites would go to the Muslims claiming to be believers. Nevertheless, they held on to their disbelief in all situations, whether coming or going, yet all the while their tongues stated something altogether different.

And God is greater in knowledge of what they had been keeping back. **(5:61)** God makes this statement of truth in order to reassure the believers that their Lord will look after them and will not abandon them to the schemes of their enemies. He is fully aware of their

scheming. Therefore, He warns its perpetrators, calling on them to abandon their nefarious ways.

A Confirmed Attitude of Ingratitude

The Chapter moves on to draw a vivid picture of what these people do, as if we see their movements and actions through the words. *And you have seen many of them competing with one another in sin and deep seated dislike and in consuming the wrongful.* **(5:62)** They are depicted as if they are racing at full speed towards sin and aggression, devouring all that is unlawful. Although this picture is drawn here to denounce those people and to show how ugly they appear, it depicts a certain condition of individuals and communities when they become infested with corruption, lose their values, and give in to evil. When we look at communities that have so degenerated, it appears to us as if all these people race towards evil, plunge into sin and aggression. The strong and the weak among them are alike in such actions. In corrupt societies, sin and aggression are not the monopoly of the powerful. Even the weak move with the tide of sin. It is true that they cannot assault the strong, but some of them can assault others and violate what God has sanctified. In corrupt societies, what God has restricted has become subject to violation, because neither the ruler nor the ruled are ready to honor God's action. When a society becomes corrupt, sin and aggression feature high among its characteristics. *What they had been doing was miserable.* **(5:62)**

The Chapter points out another characteristic of corrupt societies, as it denounces the silence adopted by divines and rabbis, supposedly those scholars who guard the implementation of divine law. Instead, they remain silent when they see their people plunging into sin and aggression and devouring what is unlawful, when they should be condemning such practices: *Why prohibit not the rabbis and learned Jewish scholars their sayings of sin and their consuming the wrongful? Miserable was what they had been crafting.* **(5:63)** This is, indeed, a feature of societies that are on the verge of collapse, after becoming corrupt. As described in the Quran, the Children of Jacob used not to counsel each other against committing evil.

As an example of their most ghastly and sinful assertions, the Quran tells us of the following statement made by the Jews: *And the Jews said: The hand of God is one that is restricted!* **(5:64)** Such a statement is the outcome of the Jews' wrong concept of God, limitless is He in His glory. The Quran has given us many examples of the results of this wrong concept. When they were told to give money in charity they said: God is poor and we are rich.

The answer to them asserts that they are the ones to be described in such terms, and furthermore that they are cursed and deprived of

God's mercy: *Restricted were their hands! And they were cursed for what they said.* **(5:64)** This is indeed an apt description, for they are the most stingy and miserly people on earth. Then, God is described by His most appropriate attribute, whereby He bestows His limitless bounty on His servants: *Nay! His hands are ones that are stretched out: He spends how He wills.* **(5:64)** His inexhaustible bounty is apparent to everyone. It gives irrefutable proof of His limitless grace, giving testimony to His outstretched hands. It speaks in every language, but the Jews do not hear it, because they are preoccupied with gathering as much gain as they can, using obscene language even when they speak of God Himself.

God tells His Messenger about what those people will do and what will happen to them because of the grudge they harbour against him. He further describes the hostility they show the Messenger because God has chosen him to be His Messenger and because his message exposes their attitude, both past and present: *And, certainly, many of them increase by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord in defiance and in ingratitude.* **(5:64)** Having refused to accept the faith, it was inevitable that they should go to the other extreme and remain entrenched in their arrogance and disbelief. Therefore, God's Messenger will bring mercy to believers and divine punishment to ungratefuls.

God then tells His Messenger of the inevitability of His will to cause enmity and hatred among them, and to render their schemes futile even when they are at their strongest. Therefore, their war against the Muslim community will end in defeat: *And We cast among them enmity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection.* **(5:64)**

When the Muslim nation returns to the Quranic message, truly believes in it and conducts its whole life in accordance with the Quranic law and constitution, God's warning to His most evil creatures will come true. The Jews know this and they use all their power and wicked scheming against the advocates of the Quranic revival throughout the world. They level at them, through their puppets and stooges, brutal blows in total disregard of all laws and values. God, will, however, accomplish His will. His promise will certainly come true: *Whenever they kindled a fire of war, God extinguished it.* **(5:64)**

The evil and corruption which the Jews represent will inevitably be smashed by God's will. For God does not like corruption to spread on earth. What God does not like will certainly be removed and uprooted by some of His servants, whom He entrusts with this task: *And they hasten about corrupting in and on the earth. And God loves not the ones who make corruption.* **(5:64)**

ADVANCE RESULTS OF IMPLEMENTING DIVINE LAW

The passage is concluded with a statement of a basic rule that people's implementation of faith in their lives ensures the achievement of goodness and prosperity in the life of believers in this world as well as the next. Faith provides a single code of living which looks after the material and the spiritual aspects of life. This rule is stated in connection with the discussion of the deviation of the people of earlier revelations from proper divine faith, to their devouring unlawful gains, and their distortion of God's words in order to achieve immediate gain. Had they followed the divine faith, they would have benefited in this world as well as in the world to come. **(5:65-5:66)**

These two signs then tell us that to believe and to be God-conscious, to implement God's law in human life ensures more than the reward of the Hereafter, which is certainly the better and longer-lasting reward. To take such a course also ensures a healthy type of life and a good reward in this present world in the shape of prosperity and affluence. This is described in a tangible form, bringing the meaning of affluence before our eyes: *they would, certainly, have eaten in abundance from above them and from beneath their feet. Among them is a community of ones who halt between two opinions. But many of them, how evil is what they do!* **(5:66)** This shows that ensuring a good reward in the Hereafter does not have a special way, separate or independent from that which ensures a good, prosperous life in this world. It is the same way, giving the best results in both this life and the life to come. If it is abandoned, then life in this world becomes corrupt and the life to come is lost. This single way is that of faith, being God-conscious and implementing divine law.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life

LESSON 112(9). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Even though many of us may believe in the Day of Resurrection, when our words expressing belief are not consistent with our actions, this is a sign of a contradiction. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what you get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them.

Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views such as being a Muslim, but not believing or practicing his or her faith with an eye to the Day of Resurrection.

When discussing conflicting lines of reasoning, inconsistent versions of the same story, or egocentric reasoning or behavior, Quranic critical thinkers can be encouraged to bring out both views and practice recognizing contradictions as the example to follow shows.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. Discuss your views on the two different versions and if you interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, ***The Study Quran***)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty,

Great. (4:34, ***The Sublime Quran***)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, ***The Study Quran***)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be conscious of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, ***The Sublime Quran***)

After this study in possible contradictions created through interpretation of Quranic signs, we turn to the Quranic chapter for this lesson where we find a contradiction between thought and deed of those who want to act immorally and yet ask: *When is this Day of Resurrection?* The Quran explains what will happen that Day. It says that those who wanted to act immorally will face the contradiction between their words and deeds by asking: *Where is the place to run to?* The Quran says: *There is no refuge from it so follow the Recitation (al_Quran).*

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
SIGNS 5:67-5:77

Arafat: *O Messenger!*
State what was caused to descend to you from your Lord,
for if you have not accomplished it,
then, you will not have stated His message.
And God will save you from the harm of humanity.
Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (5:67)
Madinah: *Say: O People of the Book!*
You are not based on anything until you adhere to the Torah
and the Gospel and what was caused to descend to you
from your Lord.
And, certainly, many of them increase
by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord

in defiance and ingratitude.
So grieve not for folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (5:68)
Truly, those who believed, those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse. (5:69)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:70)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:71)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:72)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:73)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:74)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:75)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:76)
Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:77)

COMMENTARY°

A VITAL PROCLAMATION TO DELIVER GOD'S MESSAGE

The Messenger is given clear instructions **(5:67-5:69)** to convey all that has been revealed to him by His Lord, allowing no room for any reservations as he declares the truth. Otherwise, he would not be fulfilling his duty as a Messenger entrusted with conveying God's message. It is God who will protect him against all humanity. Whoever enjoys God's protection has nothing to fear from other humans, powerless as they are.

Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful. **(5:67)** If so, let the word of truth be clear, decisive, and final. The truth is accepted by a heart which is open, responsive. It is not accepted as a result of patting the shoulders of those who do not possess such qualities.

In this Chapter, his duty is stated clearly: *O Messenger! State what was caused to descend to **you** from **your** Lord, for if **you** have not accomplished it, then, **you** will not have stated His message.* **(5:67)**

It appears from the general context that what is meant here is that the Messenger would confront the people of the Scriptures with what they truly were. He would, thus, be telling them that they had no faith and indeed had nothing to stand on until they implemented the Torah and the Gospel and what had been revealed to them by their Lord. As such, their claims that they followed Scriptures and that they had a faith were false. *Say: O People of the Book! You are not based on anything until you adhere to the Torah and the Gospel and what was caused to descend to you from your Lord.* **(5:68)**

God was certainly aware that to confront them with this decisive

truth would make many of them grow in their arrogance and disbelief. That, however, did not prevent the Messenger from making such a confrontation, feeling no sorrow at their increased arrogance and deviation. It was divine wisdom that he should proclaim the word of the truth, and allow it to produce its effect on people's hearts. This would provide anyone who follows right guidance with the truth. *And, certainly, many of them increase by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord in defiance and ingratitude. So grieve not for folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* **(5:68)**

THE TRUTH VERSUS PEOPLE'S FANCIES

This first part of the present passage concludes with a clear statement of the faith which God accepts from people, regardless of what they were called before the message of the last Messenger. It was the faith which united people of all creeds and doctrines in ancient history. *Truly, those who believed, those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* **(5:69)**

This sign states that whatever their creed was, those who believe in God and the Last Day and do what is right — and it is implicitly understood here and explicitly elsewhere in the Quran that they have done that in accordance with the final Messenger's message — will attain salvation: *there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* **(5:69)** They need not worry about what they used to do or under what title they were classified. The most important title is the last one.

All people, regardless of their religion, creed, belief, race, and nationality, are called upon to believe in his message as he preached it in essence and detail. Anyone who does not believe in him as a Messenger and does not believe in the totality and the details of his message remains in error. God does not accept from him the religion he followed prior to the revelation of the Quranic message. Nor is he included among those described by God as people who *will have neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* **(5:69)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran guides to what is what is honest, honorable, worthy, moral, conscientious, good, virtuous. What does the Quran give to those who are guided? Good tidings to the ones who believe and who act in accord with morality. It is those who believe and who are moral people who will have a great compensation. Following God's guidance is to act morally. Acting in accord with morality results in a great compensation from God. Human beings have been created with a moral compass.

Questions to Ask the Students•

What do the different signs say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other?
When arguing opposing views, you should find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

Questions to Ask the Students•

What does each sign (4:23 and 2:231) say? Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agreer?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?
The class can explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

LESSON 112(10). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how we experience, how we describe, how we categorize, and how we reason about things. We become more careful and discriminating in our use of words and phrases.

Quranic signs often call on us to compare and contrast two or more things—objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. To merely list similarities and differences has little value in itself. Rather than making such lists, these activities should be proposed in a context which narrows the range of pertinent comparisons and requires some use be made of them in pursuit of some specific goal. For example, if comparing and contrasting two social practices (marriage and divorce), we should use our understanding to illuminate the relationship between them. Thus, only those points which shed light on the particular problem need be mentioned, and each point has implications to be drawn out and integrated into a broader picture.

Here are the two examples of different translations of two Quranic signs we studied in the previous lesson in regard to contradictions. Now we look at them in terms fo similarities and differences to compare and discuss in relationship to the Quranic views on marriage and divorce:

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran*)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. Be conscious of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

The Quran warns those who do not accept the message from Prophet Muhammad. They are similar in that God created both from a *sperm-drop, a clot,* but unlike the blessed Prophet, they walk *arrogantly* upon the earth and they do not believe that the One who created them and shaped them has Power to give life to the dead.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
SIGNS 5:78-5:86

Madinah: *Those who were ungrateful*
were cursed among the Children of Jacob by the tongue of David
and that of Jesus son of Mary.
That was because they would rebel
and they had been exceeding the limits. (5:78)
They had not been forbidding one another
from that which is unlawful that they committed.
Miserable was what they had been committing! (5:79)
You have seen many of them turning away
to those who were ungrateful.
Miserable was what was put forward for them themselves
so that God was displeased with them
and in their punishment they are
ones who will dwell in it forever. (5:80)
If they had been believing in God and the Prophet
and what was caused to descend to him,

they would not have taken them to themselves protectors,
but many of them are ones who disobey. (5:81)
*Truly, **you** will find the hardest of humanity in enmity*
to those who believed are the Jews
and those who have ascribed partners with God.
*And, certainly, **you** will find the nearest of them in affection*
to those who believed are those who said:
We are Christians. That is because among them are priests
and monks and they grow not arrogant. (5:82)
And when they heard what was caused to descend
*to the Messenger, **you** have seen their eyes overflow with tears*
because they recognized The Truth.
They say: Our Lord! We believed so write us down
with the ones who bear witness. (5:83)
And why believe we not in God
and in what drew near us of The Truth?
And we are desirous that Our Lord would cause us to enter
the Garden among the folk—
the ones in accord with morality. (5:84)
Then, God repaid them for what they said—
Gardens beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in them forever.
And that is the recompense
of the ones who are doers of good. (5:85)
But those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs,
those will be the Companions of Hellfire. (5:86)

COMMENTARY°

WHEN WRONGDOING IS CONDONED

These signs make a definitive statement of the Jewish Messengers' attitude towards the ungratefuls from among the Children of Jacob. It is represented by the attitude of the Messengers David and Jesus. Both of them cursed the ungratefuls among the Children of Jacob and their prayers were answered because of the aggression of those ungratefuls, the spread of immorality among them, their turning a blind eye to the spread of evil among themselves, and their patronizing of other ungratefuls. The outcome of all this was that they incurred God's displeasure and were cursed. Their punishment will be everlasting. **(5:78-5:81)**

The ungratefuls among the Children of Jacob were the ones who distorted their revealed Scriptures and refused to abide by the rulings of the divine Code, as we are told in several Quranic Chapters. They violated their covenant with God in which they pledged themselves

to support and follow every messenger He sent: *That was because they would rebel and they had been exceeding the limits.* **(5:78)**

Jewish history is full of examples of such rebellion and aggression. These were not mere individual actions in the Jewish community. Indeed, they were so frequent they became characteristic of the whole community, and even those who did not perpetrate such crimes either turned a blind eye to them or did not speak out against them: *They had not been forbidding one another from that which is unlawful that they committed. Miserable was what they had been committing!* **(5:79)**

It should be explained that this is not a negative attitude to wrong, as may be thought. The fact that the Messenger describes it as "changing" what is wrong suggests that it is a positive action. To object to what is wrong, even in one's thoughts, means maintaining a positive attitude towards that wrong. It suggests that the person concerned rejects that wrong and tries to eradicate it and replace it with what is right at the first opportunity. A Muslim is required to maintain at least the weakest degree of faith which is to object to wrong in private. To submit to wrong, on the other hand, simply because it can exert enormous pressure, is to abandon even the weakest degree of faith. In such a situation, the same curse that has been incurred by the Children of Jacob applies.

Those who were ungrateful were cursed among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and that of Jesus son of Mary. That was because they would rebel and they had been exceeding the limits. They had not been forbidding one another from that which is unlawful that they committed. Miserable was what they had been committing! **(5:78-5:79)**

AN ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT OF FAITH

The real reason for this attitude of the Jews, despite their having received revelations from God, is that they do not really believe in God and His Messenger. They have not embraced God's final message. Therefore, they are ungratefuls. Had they believed, they would not have allied themselves to ungratefuls: **(5:80-5:81)**

As for the other people of earlier revelations, they ally themselves with materialist atheism whenever they have to deal with Muslims. They even cooperate with people of pagan and idolatrous religions when they have to fight Muslims, even though those Muslims do not represent the Quranic message in any way, except through being descendants of past Muslim generations. All this goes to show how deeply rooted is the grudge against this faith and those who belong to it, though their claims of belonging to it may be false.

God indeed tells the truth. He says: *You have seen many of them turning away to those who were ungrateful. Miserable was what was put forward for them themselves so that God was displeased with them and in their punishment they are ones who will dwell in it forever.* **(5:80)** This is the net result of what they have done for themselves. Evil indeed is such an outcome. Bitter indeed are the fruits they reap from allying themselves with ungratefuls.

Who of us reads or listens to God's description of those people and still takes decisions that cannot be sanctioned by God, concerning alliances and mutual support between the followers of this religion and its enemies who are allied with ungratefuls? What motive could there be for those people to seek an alliance with ungratefuls, unless it is lack of faith in God and His Messenger: *If they had been believing in God and the Prophet and what was caused to descend to him, they would not have taken them to themselves protectors, but many of them are ones who disobey.* **(5:81)** This is indeed the reason they do not believe in God and the Messenger, and the majority of them are evildoers. They share the same feelings and directions with ungratefuls. Therefore, they prefer to be allied with them rather than with those who believe in God and His Messenger.

This Quranic comment highlights three important facts. Firstly, that all the people of the Scriptures, with the exception of a few who believe in Muhammad, God's Messenger , do not believe in God because they do not believe in His last Messenger. The Quran does not describe them as people who do not believe in the Messenger only, but describes them as non-believers in God as well: *If they had been believing in God and the Prophet and what was caused to descend to him, they would not have taken them to themselves protectors, but many of them are ones who disobey.* **(5:81)** This is a clear statement from God which does not admit any ambiguity or differing interpretation. No matter how strongly they claim that they believe in God, they are ungratefuls, particularly when we take into consideration their deviant concepts of God as these have been outlined in this and other Chapters.

Secondly, all the people of earlier revelations are required to embrace the divine faith, as they have been called upon to do so by the Messenger Muhammad . If they respond, then they are believers and they follow a divine faith. If they reject this call, God's description of them remains true.

Thirdly, there can be no bond of alliance or mutual support between them and Muslims in any matter, because all matters are, according to the Quranic message subject to faith.

This short passage **(5:82-5:86)** complements the discussion which has already taken place in this Chapter about the attitudes of the Jews, the Christians and those who associate partners with God

towards His Messenger and the Muslim community.

WHO HATES THE BELIEVERS MOST?

The divine directives included in the Quran continue to be operative. The advocates of the Quranic message today and tomorrow will do well if they listen to these directives and statements as if they are addressed to them now in order to determine on their basis their attitudes towards all groups of people and towards different beliefs and creeds, situations and systems, values and standards.

Truly, you will find the hardest of humanity in enmity to those who believed are the Jews and those who have ascribed partners with God. And, certainly, you will find the nearest of them in affection to those who believed are those who said: We are Christians. That is because among them are priests and monks and they grow not arrogant. **(5:82)** The way this statement is phrased makes it addressed either to the Messenger or to all believers because it states something that can be recognized by everyone. Arabic style admits both possibilities. In either case, it provides the same meaning. What is noteworthy about the phrasing of this statement is the fact that the Jews are mentioned ahead of the idolaters in being most hostile to the believers, and that their hostility is open and easily recognized by anyone who cares to pay attention.

AN ATTITUDE BRINGING RICH REWARDS

And you will certainly find that the nearest of them in affection to the believers are those who say, We are Christians.' This is so because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not given to arrogance. **(5:82)** This sign and the four signs that follow it describe a certain condition and make a judgement concerning it. The description applies to a group of the followers of Jesus who describe themselves as Christians, and it states that these are the nearest of all people in their affection to the believers.

Although these signs leave us in no doubt that they describe a particular case to which the whole statement applies, many are those who are mistaken in their understanding of it. Their mistake causes a serious error in determining the Muslims' attitude towards other camps. Therefore, it is important to carefully study these signs and understand the particular case to which they apply.

That particular case applied to a certain group of Christians. They were closest in their affection to the believers, *And, certainly, you will find the nearest of them in affection to those who believed are those who said: We are Christians. That is because among them are priests and monks and they grow not arrogant.* **(5:82)** Among

them were people who were fully aware of the true Christian faith, and were prepared to acknowledge the truth whenever they realized it.

The Quran clarifies the fact that this description does not apply to all those who claim to be Christians. It provides more details of the attitude of this particular group: **(5:83-5:84)**

This is a very vivid description of this group. They are so deeply touched when they listen to the Quran that tears spring to their eyes in recognition of the truth they hear. In the first instance, they cannot express this recognition in any way better than allowing their eyes to overflow with tears. No words are adequate to describe their feelings. Such a response, indicative of profound effect, is a well-known human reaction.

Tearful eyes, however, are not enough. They do not wish to adopt a negative attitude to the truth they have recognized as a result of listening to the Quran and its evident authoritativeness. They take a clear, positive attitude which accepts this truth, believes in it and submits to its authority. They declare their acceptance in a profound and frank manner, saying: **(5:83-5:84)**

Firstly, they declare to their Lord that they believe in this truth they have recognized and pray to Him in His glory to include them among those who bear witness to this truth and with the community that seeks to implement it. That is the community of Muslims, which gives credence to its belief in this truth both by verbal declaration and by action to establish it in human life. Those new witnesses thus join the Muslim community that submits to the truth and they pray to God to witness their belief. Furthermore, they cannot accept that any obstacle should impede them from believing in God or submitting to the truth as they listen to it. After all, they hope that as a result of their acceptance of the faith, their Lord will be pleased with them, assign to them a higher rank and include them among the righteous: *And why believe we not in God and in what drew near us of The Truth? And we are desirous that Our Lord would cause us to enter the Garden among the folk—the ones in accord with morality.* **(5:84)**

ON RECOGNIZING THE TRUTH OF THE QURANIC MESSAGE

Having described their frank, positive attitude towards the truth revealed to God's Messenger and their declaration of their acceptance of the Quranic message and their willingness to bear witness to it by sacrificing their wealth and lives for its cause, praying all the time that God may accept them as witnesses and admit them among the righteous, the Chapter describes their destiny: *God repaid them for what they said—Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will*

dwell in them forever. And that is the recompense of the ones who are doers of good. **(5:85)**

The Chapter has given us a very clear description of this group of people who are "nearest in affection to the believers", giving prominence to the fact that they are far from arrogant and that they respond to the truth once they recognize it. Moreover, they are honest, serious and willing to fulfil the requirements of faith. But the Chapter does not stop at that in identifying this group. It goes on to distinguish them from the rest of those who say, "We are Christians". This latter group listen to the truth, but they deny it, turn away from it and have no interest in bearing witness to its truthfulness. Indeed, they claim it to be false: *But those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs, those will be the Companions of Hellfire.* **(5:86)**
who do good, while the other will end up in Hell.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the translations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic? How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What conclusions am I coming to?
Is my inference logical?
Are there other conclusions I should consider?
Does this interpretation make sense?
Does our solution necessarily follow from the facts?
How did you reach that conclusion?
What are you basing your reasoning on?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. :

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

Lesson 112(11). Critical Thinking Strategy Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Vocabulary

What is a concept?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

Quranic Chapter 5: The Table Spread with Food (al-Maidah)

Signs 5:87-5:93

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Forbid not what is good that God permitted to you
and exceed not the limits.
Truly, God loves not the ones who exceed the limits. (5:87)
And eat of what God provided you, the lawful, what is good.
And be conscious of God
in Whom you are ones who believe. (5:88)
God will not take you to task for what is idle talk in your oaths,
but He will take you to task for oaths you made as an agreement.
Then, its expiation is the feeding of ten needy people
of the average of what you feed your own people
or clothing them or letting go of a bondsperson.
But whoever finds not the means,
then, formal fasting for three days.
That is the expiation for your oaths when you swore them.
And keep your oaths safe.
Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (5:89)
O those who believed! Truly, intoxicants and gambling
and fetishes and divining arrows are of the disgraceful actions
of Satan. Then, avoid them so that perhaps you will prosper. (5:90)
But Satan only wants that he precipitate
enmity and hatred between you through intoxicants and gambling
and bar you from the remembrance of God
and from formal prayer.

Then, will you be ones who desist? (5:91)
And obey God and obey the Messenger and beware.
Then, truly, if you turned away, then, know
that only on Our Messenger
is the delivering of Our clear message. (5:92)
There is not for those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
blame for what they tasted
when they were God-conscious and believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
and, again, they were God-conscious and believed.
And, again, they were God-conscious and did good.
And God loves the ones who are doers of good. (5:93)

COMMENTARY°

PROHIBITING WHAT IS LAWFUL

The first address in this passage to the believers reminds them that they may not exercise any of God's attributes, since these belong totally to God. As such, they may not forbid themselves any of the wholesome and good things that God has made lawful to them. It is not open to them to make a demonstration of self-imposed prohibition, refusing to eat of such good food God has given them. They must remember that it is God who has provided them with such lawful and wholesome sustenance. It is only He who may designate things as permissible or forbidden: **(5:87-5:88)**

ATONEMENT FOR BREAKING AN OATH

The sign that follows, which refers to oaths and their atonement, appears to have been revealed in order to deal with such cases when people make an oath in order to solemnize their abstention from something permissible, as was done by those Companions of the Messenger. The Quran also makes it clear that it is not up to human beings to declare things forbidden or permissible. That authority belongs to God, in whom those Companions of the Messenger believed. This Quranic sign also deals with all vows of abstention from doing something good or vows to undertake something evil. Whenever it is clear to a person who has made an oath that breaking it is better and more conducive to earning God's pleasure, he should break it and atone for it in one of the methods defined by this Quranic sign.

An oath made solemnly and deliberately requires an atonement if it is to be broken. The atonement is given in detail in this Quranic sign: **(5:89)** The Arabic term which is used to describe the type of food which should be offered to the ten needy persons means literally

either "the average" or "the best" food a person gives to his own family. However, we can combine both aspects of the meaning because the average is normally preferred in the Quranic message. It also applies to clothing the ten needy persons which means giving them some of the average type of clothes one gives to one's family.

An alternative is to free a person from slavery, but it is not specified here whether that slave should be a believer. Therefore, scholars have different views concerning this point, but we will not discuss the details of these views. *But whoever finds not the means, then, formal fasting for three days.* **(5:89)** It is only when a person is unable to meet the requirements of any of the above types of atonement that he may atone for his broken oath by fasting. Again, scholars have varying views with regard to whether these three days must be consecutive or not. Our own approach in this commentary is not to discuss such varying views or to evaluate them. Anyone who wishes to study them may do so by referring to books of fiqh which discuss them in detail. All views of scholars are in agreement on the essential purpose of the atonement, namely, attaching proper value to the breached contract and giving proper respect to oaths which are pledges or forms of contracts which God has ordered to be honored. Therefore, if anyone of us makes an oath and finds out subsequently that it is better, from the Quranic point of view, to do otherwise, he both breaks his oath and atones for it. The same applies if he makes an oath which he has no authority to make, such as an oath of prohibition or permissibility of a particular thing. In this case, he breaks the oath and atones for it.

A CATEGORICAL PROHIBITION OF INTOXICANTS

It is within the context of legislation, permissibility and prohibition, as well as the molding of the Muslim community in Madinah, purging it from all remaining traces of past tradition of the dark days, that a clear and decisive verdict is given on intoxicating drinks and gambling, coupled with practices of associating partners with God. **(5:90-5:91)**

Drinking, gambling, idols and divining arrows were important aspects of pre- the Quranic Arabia. They were closely related in both practice and tradition. The Arabs used to drink to the point of extravagance. They considered that drinking afforded people distinction. They often mention drinking in their poetry as a practice to be proud of or to praise others with. In social gatherings, drinking was coupled with the slaughter of animals which were immediately cooked to provide food to those who took part in these drinking bouts, those who served wine and those who frequented such gatherings. The animals

were slaughtered at the feet of idols which were sprayed with the blood of their sacrifice. In such social events, the act of divining arrows was practised in order to determine the sharing out of the sacrificial meat. Everyone's share was determined by his arrow, with the highest arrow giving the largest share, and the lowest giving no share whatsoever, even though it might have been the arrow of the person who provided the animal for slaughter. This gives us an idea of how traditions were intertwined with ignorant ideological concepts.

OBEDIENCE: A MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF MUSLIM SOCIETY

This address awakens the hearts of believers on the one hand and reminds them, on the other, of the basic requirement of faith, namely, obedience and submission.

This is followed by a decisive statement on the nature of those practices which admit no counter argument: **(5:90)** These are, then, foul practices and cannot be included among good and wholesome things which God has permitted. Moreover, they have been devised by Satan, man's old enemy. It is sufficient for a believer to know that something is devised by Satan to make it totally repugnant to him.

At this point, the prohibition is issued, but is combined with the prospect of attaining success, which itself has its profound effect on the human mind: **(5:91)** Satan's aim and the purpose of his scheming are thus exposed before every Muslim. Satan seeks nothing except the stirring up of enmity and hatred among believers so as to turn them away from their worship. What a wicked scheme!

Satan's aims can easily be recognized in our practical life after we have accepted them as true, since God has stated them so. It does not take anyone with an open mind long to recognize how Satan actually stirs up enmity and hatred, utilising for this purpose intoxicants and gambling. Intoxicants weaken one's consciousness and self-control, heighten tempers and stir up whims and impulses. Gambling and all games of chance leave people with a sense of loss and grudges. It is natural that a losing gambler nurses a strong grudge against the winner who takes away his money from under his nose and leaves him empty handed. It is only natural that such matters stir up enmity and hatred, regardless of the impression of happiness they initially give off.

The fact that intoxicants and gambling do turn people away from their remembrance of God and from prayer is too clear to require elaboration. Drinking makes people forget and gambling makes them oblivious to everything else. Indeed, games of chance keep gamblers in a state of intoxication which is not dissimilar to that produced by

drink. The world of a gambler is akin to that of a drunk: tables, glasses and a strike of fortune or misfortune. The Chapter goes on to put the whole matter in its proper perspective: *And obey God and obey the Messenger and beware.* **(5:92)**

This is the basic rule to which all matters are referred: obedience to God and His Messenger, i.e. submission which leaves no room except for absolute obedience and total compliance. There is also an implicit warning in this statement: *Then, truly, if you turned away, then, know that only on Our Messenger is the delivering of Our clear message.* **(5:92)** He has certainly conveyed God's message with absolute clarity. Anyone who disobeys bears full responsibility for his disobedience. This warning, implicitly as it is expressed, is indeed very strong. The believers are made aware that should they slip into disobedience they only harm themselves. God's Messenger has fulfilled his trust and conveyed his message. Therefore, he is no longer responsible for them. Nor will he shield them from punishment, since they have disobeyed him. Their faith is in the hands of God, who is able to punish those who disobey. Thus does the Quranic method open up our hearts and penetrate our depths.

SELF-SURRENDER AND OBEDIENCE

When these signs were revealed totally prohibiting all intoxicants, and describing them as an abomination devised by Satan, two groups of people raised a query in the same wording but for totally different reasons. A few of the Messenger's Companions who were very scrupulous said: "What about our Companions who died when intoxicants were still lawful to drink?" Some of them said: "What about those killed in the Battle of Uhud, with intoxicants in their bellies?" i.e. before they were forbidden to drink. Another group who were keen to seize every chance to sow the seeds of doubt among the Muslim community said similar things. Their aim was to try to weaken the Muslims' trust in the reasoning behind the Quranic legislation. They also wanted to convey the feeling that those who died before the prohibition of intoxicants were totally lost, since they died with this abomination in their bodies. Therefore, the purpose behind the following sign: **(5:93)**

This sign states that what has not been forbidden is lawful and that prohibition begins with its statement, not at any moment prior to this.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

CONCEPT MAPPING:

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

PRE-QUESTIONS:

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

DEFINITION:

What is....?
Where does ... fit?
What group does ... belong to?

CHARACTERISTICS:

How would I describe...?
What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

EXAMPLES

What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

EXPERIENCE

What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

LESSON 112(12). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

> The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.
>
> The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.
>
> The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.
>
> He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.
>
> Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (*Quranic Sunnah*) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[1]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
SIGNS 5:94-5:100

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Certainly, God will try you with something
of the game that your hands and your lances attain
so that God knows who fears Him in the unseen.
Then, whoever exceeded the limits after that,
for him is a painful punishment. (5:94)
O those who believed! Kill not game
when you are in pilgrim sanctity.
And whoever of you killed as one who is willful,
then, the recompense is like what he killed of flocks
by two possessors of justice who give judgment.
Among you will be a sacrificial gift—

that which reaches the Kabah—
or the expiation of food for the needy or the equivalent of that
in formal fasting so that he, certainly, experiences
the mischief of his conduct.
God pardoned what is past.
And whoever reverted to it, then, God will requite him.
And God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital. (5:95)
The game of the sea was permitted to you
and the food of it as sustenance for you
and for a company of travelers,
but the game of dry land was forbidden to you
as long as you continued in pilgrim sanctity.
And be conscious of God
to Whom you will be assembled. (5:96)
God made the Kabah the Sacred House,
maintaining it for humanity and the Sacred Month
and the sacrificial gift and the garlanded.
That is so that you will know that God knows
whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth
and that God is Knowing of everything. (5:97)
Know that God is Severe in repaymen
and that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (5:9
What is with the Messenger is not b
the delivering of the message.
And God knows whatever you show
and whatever you keep back. (5:99)
Say: Not on the same level are the bad
and what is good even if the prevalence
of the bad impressed you.
So be God-conscious,
O those imbued with intuition,
so that perhaps you will prosper. (5:100)

COMMENTARY°

CONSECRATION AND GAME KILLING

The Chapter continues to elaborate on further prohibitions, speaking about game when one is in the state of consecration, or ihram, and what compensates for its killing. It further speaks of the purpose of the sanctity of the House of Worship in Makkah, the sacred months, dedicated and garlanded cattle which must not be touched as the Chapter makes clear in its opening signs. This part concludes with the establishment of a clear standard of values for Muslim individuals and Muslim society. According to this standard,

a small amount of good is far more valuable than evil, plentiful as it may be. **(5:94-5:99)**

THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIAL

Then, whoever exceeded the limits after that, for him is a painful punishment. **(5:94)** People are thus told of the trial to which he is being put. He is informed of its purpose and warned against yielding to temptation. All means of success have been given to him. Therefore, should he transgress after all this, it is only fair that he should be made to endure grievous suffering. This is his own choice.

Details of the atonement for violation are then given. This starts with a firm prohibition and ends with a second warning: **(5:95)**

The prohibition applies to killing game deliberately when a person is in the state of consecration, or ihram. If a game animal is killed by accident, the person in consecration neither incurs a sin nor has to give any compensation. For deliberate killing, the compensation is an offering of cattle or other animals equivalent to the game he has killed. Thus, if a person in consecration kills a deer, the compensation may be an offering of a sheep or a goat; for a camel, a cow or an ox is appropriate; for an ostrich or a giraffe or a similarly large animal, a camel may be offered; for a rabbit or a cat the offering may be a rabbit. What has no equivalent among animals however, an offering of its cash value is acceptable in compensation.

All this applies to hunting on land. Fishing, on the other hand, is permissible in all situations: "Lawful to you is all water game, and whatever food the sea brings forth, as a provision for you and for travellers." (5:96) This means that all types of water animals are permissible to catch and use for food whether a person is in the state of consecration or not. With this mention of the permissibility of water-game and food from the sea, the sign restates the prohibition of killing game on land during consecration: *The game of the sea was permitted to you and the food of it as sustenance for you and for a company of travelers, but the game of dry land was forbidden to you as long as you continued in pilgrim sanctity.* **(5:96)**

These rules of permissibility and prohibition are concluded with a statement that appeals to the believers' sense of fearing God and reminds us of the Day of Judgement and the reckoning We will then have to face: *And be conscious of God to Whom you will be assembled.* **(5:96)**

THE REASON FOR PROHIBITION

It is perhaps pertinent to ask here about the purpose behind these prohibition rules. Well, God wishes to provide a security zone for

humanity, where they seek refuge from life's worries. This zone is represented by the Kabah, the Inviolable House of Worship, and the sacred months. They offer a haven of peace in the midst of the raging battle between those in combat through life, regardless of their race and ethnic origin. Their desires, ambitions and needs continue to fuel their struggle, but this security zone beckons to them so that it may substitute reassurance for their worries, love for conflict, brotherhood and security for hostility and fear. What is more is that such concepts are not confined to the realm of theories and ideals; people are given practical training in real life to grab such feelings and maintain them. Thus, they are seen as a reality, not mere words and visions that have no bearing on real life. **(5:97-5:99)**

That is so that you will know that God knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth and that God is Knowing of everything. **(5:97)** This may sound a rather strange comment at this particular juncture, but it is perfectly understandable. God has laid down this faith and established this sanctuary so that people may know that He knows everything that is in the heavens and the earth and that He is fully aware of all things. Thus, they know that God is fully cognizant of human nature, as well as people's aspirations, needs and spiritual longings. He enacts legislation in order to satisfy natures, meet needs, fulfil aspirations and answer longings. When people feel in their hearts how God's compassion is evident in His law and appreciate the harmony between their nature and God's law. they realize that God is fully aware of all that is in the heavens anc the earth and that His perfect knowledge encompasses everything.

The discussion of the permissible and the prohibited, both in consecration and at other times, is brought to its conclusion with a clear warning against incurring punishment, while at the same time offering the prospect of forgiveness and mercy: *Know that God is Severe in repayment and that God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(5:98)** The warning is coupled with pointing out that responsibility lies clearly with the one who breaches sanctities and does not regret or repent: *What is with the Messenger is not but the delivering of the message. And God knows whatever you show and whatever you keep back.* **(5:99)**

FOUL AND WHOLESOME

At the concluding part of this passage God provides us with a standard so that we may give correct judgement of all things. In these scales, only what is good and wholesome is weighty, while that which is foul and evil carries no weight. This prevents a Muslim from being deceived when he finds that the foul is plentiful and the evil

too numerous. *Say: Not on the same level are the bad and what is good even if the prevalence of the bad impressed you.* **(5:100)**

Evil and good are mentioned here within the context of elaborating which food and game are permissible and which are forbidden. What is forbidden is evil, while everything that is permissible is good. Certainly the good and the evil cannot be equal, even though the evil may come in such plenty that it attracts and tempts people. That which is good provides enjoyment that is not followed by foul consequences, such as regret, waste, pain or disease. The pleasure gained out of evil things cannot be matched even by a modicum of the good things in life. What is more is that with the good things, the human being enjoys safety in this life and in the life to come. When the human mind is free of the shackles of desire as a result of its being God-conscious and when it has attained a keen watchfulness, it will inevitably prefer good to evil. This is bound to end in success and triumph, both in this world and in the Hereafter: *So be conscious of God, O those imbued with intuition, so that perhaps you will prosper.* **(5:100)**

This sign especially suits the present occasion, but it has a much wider implication. It looks to a broad horizon, encompassing life in its totality.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them-out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains.

LESSON 112(13). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
SIGNS 5:101-5:108

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Ask not about things that if they are shown to you
would raise anger in you.
Yet if you ask about them at the time
when the Quran is being sent down,
they will be shown to you.
God pardoned that which is past.
And God is Forgiving, Forbearing. (5:101)
Surely, the folk asked about them before you.
Again, they became ones who are ungrateful for it. (5:102)
God made not the thing called Bahirah nor Saiba
nor Wasilah nor Hami, but those who were ungrateful,
they devise lies against God
and most of them are not reasonable. (5:103)
And when it was said to them: Approach now to what God
caused to descend and to the Messenger, they said:
Enough is what we found our fathers upon.
Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing
nor are they truly guided? (5:104)
O those who believed! Upon you is the charge of your souls.
He who went astray injures you not if you were truly guided.
To God is the return of you all.
Then, He will tell you what you had been doing. (5:105)

O those who believed! Have testimony between you
when death attended anyone of you.
At the time of bequeathing, have two possessors of justice
from among yourselves or two others from among others
if you traveled through the region
and the affliction of death lit on you.
You will detain them both after the formal prayer.
And they will swear by God.
If you were in doubt about them, have them say:
We will not exchange it for a price
even if he had been possessing kinship.
And we will not keep back testimony of God.
Truly, we, then, would be among
the ones who are perverted. (5:106)
Then, if it was ascertained that the two merited
an accusation of sin, then, two others will stand up
in their station from among those who are the most deserving,
nearest in kinship,
and they both swear an oath by God saying:
Our testimony has a better right than the testimony
of the other two. And we exceeded not the limits, for,
truly, we, then, would be among the ones who are unjust. (5:107
That is likelier that they bring testimony in proper form,
or they fear that their oaths will be repelled after the others' oaths.
So be conscious of God and hear.
And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey. (5:108)

COMMENTARY°

POLITENESS IN DEALING WITH THE MESSENGER

The Chapter moves on to draw the attention of the early Muslims to the standard of politeness they must adopt with the Messenger. They are told not to ask him about matters on which he remains silent, particularly such matters which, should they be tackled, may cause hardship or embarrassment to the person raising the question, or may impose on him heavy tasks or restrictions that God, out of His mercy, has chosen not to impose on the Muslims. **(5:101-5:102)**

CHOOSING THE HARD WAY

God has kept certain matters unknown to man, or He might have expressed certain matters in general terms. It does not harm people to leave such matters in the form God has left them. To question these at the time of the Messenger might have provided them with distressing answers, or might have overburdened both them and future gen-

erations. Therefore, God tells the believers not to ask about certain matters which if revealed might be harmful. He also warns them that should they ask about these during the Messenger's lifetime, when the Quran was being revealed, for then they would have their answers, but these would impose on them obligations that God did not originally make binding: **(5:101)** The sign carries a clear instruction not to inquire about matters which God has left out or stated without details in order to keep duties lighter, as in the case of pilgrimage.

God then gives the example of former communities that were given revelations. Some of them made things harder for themselves by numerous questions about rulings and duties. When, as a result, God made new obligations binding on them, they failed to perform these, thus rejecting them. Had they left matters as God stated them originally, they would have been able to benefit by the easier tasks God wanted to assign to them. They would not have had to cope with their failure to fulfil their responsibilities.

FREEDOM FOR THE HUMAN MIND

We have already mentioned a report in which Mujahid quotes Ibn Abbas and Said ibn Jubayr's comments on the immediate reason for revealing the sign instructing the believers not to put questions concerning certain matters which would cause them difficulty or distress should they be stated in detail. The same report mentions that their questions included things and practices known in pre- the Quranic days.

We have not been able to determine which particular things and practices were referred to, but the fact that the Chapter mentions the dedication of certain types of cattle immediately after the instruction not to ask unnecessary questions of detail suggests that the two are somehow linked. This is all that we need to say before discussing the sign that refers to such idolatrous practices.

It was not God who instituted [superstitions like those of] a slit-ear she camel, or a she-camel let loose for free pasture, or idol sacrifices for twin-births in animals, or stallion-camels freed from work. It is ungratefuls who attribute their own lying inventions to God. Most of them never use their reason. When they are told: **(5:103-5:104)**

At this point, the Chapter pays attention to one aspect of idolatry in pre-the Quranic , pagan Arabia. It brings it into focus so as to refute all legends surrounding it. It states the basic principles of rational thinking, as well as the principles of law and faith at the same time: *God made not the thing called Bahirah nor Saibah nor Wasilah nor*

Hami, but those who were ungrateful, they devise lies against God and most of them are not reasonable. **(5:103)**

CONTRADICTION IN TERMS

As the Quran deals with these aspects, it states first of all that God has not initiated those practices of consecrating cattle. Who, then, has set those practices for the ungratefuls? *God made not the thing called Bahirah nor Saibah nor Wasilah nor Hami, but those who were ungrateful, they devise lies against God and most of them are not reasonable.* **(5:103)** Those who follow any code or doctrine other than the one God has laid down are ungratefuls, making false claims against God. They may enact their own laws and claim that these are God's law. Or they may claim for themselves the right to promulgate their own laws, allowing no room for God's law in their system, but at the same time, they claim that they do not disobey God. All this is no more than fabricating lies against God. *They devise lies against God and most of them are not reasonable.* **(5:103)**

The irony of what they say and do is made even clearer: *And when it was said to them: Approach now to what God caused to descend and to the Messenger, they said: Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* **(5:104)**

In response to such an attitude the Quran makes this reproachful comment: *They said: Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* **(5:104)** This denunciation of their following their forefathers, even though they were devoid of all knowledge, does not mean that had their forefathers had a wealth of knowledge, they would be right to follow them in abandoning what God has revealed. The sign merely makes a statement of fact, describing their situation and that of their predecessors. Yet surely no one would take up his own laws or those of his father, when he has access to God's law and the Sunnah of God's Messenger unless he is totally devoid of all knowledge and all guidance. Let such a person claim what he may about his knowledge and enlightenment. God's statement expresses the truth, which is further confirmed by reality. Only an ignorant, deviant ungrateful prefers human law to God's law.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

When the situation of the ungratefuls was explained, the Chapter makes a statement showing the believers as a separate group, distinguished by the duties and obligations they have to fulfil. It defines for them what attitude they should take to other people. It tells them

that they may look forward to no reward other than that of God. They should aspire to no reward in this life. *O those who believed! Upon you is the charge of your souls. He who went astray injures you not if you were truly guided. To God is the return of you all. Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(5:105)**

It is a case of a complete break between them and those who are hostile to their cause. Moreover, they should have a relationship of mutual support among themselves, since they form one community: *O those who believed! Upon you is the charge of your souls. He who went astray injures you not if you were truly guided. To God is the return of you all. Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(5:105)**

What this sign says to the believers is that they should take care of themselves, purifying their souls and committing themselves wholly to their community, paying no attention to what others may say or do, even though they may go far astray. As believers, they are a separate unit, independent of all others. In this unit, they take care of one another, in complete mutual solidarity. Other than this, they have no need for any bonds or ties of loyalty with anyone.

For certain, this religion cannot establish its roots without effort and struggle. It needs followers who spare no effort to guide people to it in order to liberate them from subservience to other people so that they may submit to God alone. Such followers will do their utmost to establish the right concept of Godhead and to repel those who usurp God's authority so that God's law is seen to be implemented in human life. Such efforts are peaceful when the misguided ones are individuals in need of direction. However, force will be needed when there is a tyrannical power turning people away from God's guidance, and standing in the way of establishing the Quranic faith and implementing God's law. It is only then that the believers will have fulfilled their responsibility and those who persist in error are punished by God: *To God is the return of you all. Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(5:105)**

WITNESSES AT THE TIME OF DEATH

The passage is concluded with an outline of the rulings applicable to witnesses to a will, when the testator is away from home and from his society. These are the final rulings given in this Chapter on certain transactions in the Quranic society. They provide guarantees to ensure that people receive what is rightly theirs. **(5:106-5:108)**

The process outlined in these three signs indicates that a person who feels the end to be near and wants to make bequests assigning any money he has to his relatives should call in two Muslim wit-

nesses of probity and give them what property he has so that they may give it to his relatives who are not present. This applies when the person concerned is in his hometown. If he is travelling and does not find two Muslim witnesses to entrust his property to, then it is permissible to have two non-Muslim witnesses.

The Quranic signs state that these procedures ensure that witnesses remain true in their testimony, fearing that the first witnesses are rejected. Therefore, they try hard to be true to their trust. *That is likelier that they bring testimony in proper form or they fear that their oaths will be repelled after the others' oaths.* **(5:108)** These signs are concluded with a reminder to all people to remain God-conscious, and to watch God and obey His commandments. They are further reminded that God will not give His guidance to anyone who turns away from His path. *So be conscious of God and hear. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(5:108)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully. Try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Have you tried the strategy below? How would your rate yourself?

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will

also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.:

LESSON 112(14). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[2]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taugh by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listenin to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and in-

sights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[3]

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

SIGNS 5:109-5:115

Madinah: *On a Day when God will gather the Messengers*
and will say: What was your answer?
They will say: We have no knowledge.
*Truly, **You**, **You** alone are Knower of the unseen.* (5:109)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:110)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:111)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:112)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:113)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:114)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:115)

COMMENTARY°

WHEN ALL MESSENGERS ARE GATHERED TOGETHER

On the day when God will gather all [His] messengers and ask them: *On a Day when God will gather the Messengers and will say: What was your answer? They will say: We have no knowledge. Truly, **You**, **You** alone are Knower of the unseen.* **(5:109)**

Those messengers were sent at different times to their respective people, each going his own way to his city or village, and belonging to different races and nations, all preaching the same message to their communities. Then, the last of them, Muhammad, is given a single message addressed to all people of all races in all generations. Those messengers are gathered together by the One who sent them individually, and as they come together they bring with them the different responses they received. Now, in this scene, those messengers, representing humanity throughout its life span on earth, come together and stand before God, the Lord of all humanity on an awesome day.

The scene is full of life: *On a Day when God will gather the Messengers and will say: What was your answer?* **(5:109)** Today, everything is brought together, and messengers account for their messages. The results are declared before all humanity.

"What response did you receive?" Messengers are human. They know what they see and feel with their senses, but they have no

knowledge of what lies beyond. They had called on their peoples to follow divine guidance. Some responded positively while others turned away. A messenger does not know the full truth about a person responding positively, even though he may know the truth of the one turning away. He can only tell by appearances; it is God who knows the full truth and what is concealed. Those messengers are now in the presence of God and, among all human beings, they know God best, fear Him most and are too modest to speak out, in His presence, on the basis of their limited knowledge when He knows all.

This is an awesome interrogation, on the day when all creatures are gathered, the Supreme Company is present and all humanity is looking on. This is a confrontation, when all humanity is put face to face with the Messengers, and especially the ungratefuls who are now arrayed before those Messengers to whom they used to lie. Then the declaration is made that those noble messengers simply preached the divine faith, and that they are now in His presence stating what happened to their messages and giving an account of the reaction of their communities which denied them. Those messengers declare that true knowledge belongs to God alone. Whatever they knew should not, in all modesty and humility, be stated by them to God whose knowledge is perfect, absolute. *They will say: We have no knowledge. Truly, You, You alone are Knower of the unseen.* **(5:109)**

Those messengers who were sent before the time of Jesus were believed by some people and denied by others. Their account is thus completed with this general answer that they give, leaving all knowledge to God and putting the whole matter into His hands. Therefore, the Chapter adds nothing here about them. The address is made to Jesus alone, who was a total wonder to his people. It was Jesus who was surrounded with mystery and around whom all sorts of myth and superstition have circulated. A great deal of confusion has been made about his qualities, nature, birth and end.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

LESSON 112(15). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*umma* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
SIGNS 5:116-5:120

Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:116)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:117)
Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:118)
God would say: This Day the ones who are sincere will profit from their sincerity. For them are Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. God was well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him. That is the winning the sublime triumph. (5:119)
To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in and on them. And He is Powerful over everything. (5:120)

COMMENTARY°

But where are those who invented such grave falsehood about Jesus in this whole scene? The Chapter does not mention them once. They may be feeling their ignominy and wish not to show themselves. We, therefore, leave them where the Chapter has left them. We will only look now at the final part in that remarkable scene: **(5:119)** The appropriate comment on the falsehood fabricated by liars against the noble Messenger Jesus, concerning the most serious issue of all, i.e. the issue of Godhead, is to state that truth will be of great benefit to its upholders on that awesome day. "This is the day when their truthfulness shall benefit all who have been truthful."

This is God's word at the end of that interrogation beheld by all creatures. It is the final and decisive word. It is coupled with the reward that befits truthfulness and those who are truthful: *For them are Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. God was well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him.* **(5:119)** Each of these phrases represents a grade above the previous one: the gardens with running waters, the ever-

lasting abode there, the fact that God is pleased with them, and their pleasure with what they receive from Him. Therefore the description: *That is the winning the sublime triumph.* **(5:119)**

THE FINAL NOTE

At the end of this passage and in contrast to the greatest falsehood ever perpetrated by the followers of any messenger, i.e. the falsehood of Christ's divine nature, which he himself denounces and leaves all decision about which to God alone, a statement of truth is made. It provides the final note in the Chapter, declaring that dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that they contain belongs to God, the Lord of the universe who has full control over all things. Nothing limits His power: *o God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in and on them. And He is Powerful over everything.* **(5:120)**

This is the finale that suits the great question around which that terrible fallacy has been woven. It is an ending that fits that majestic scene where God is seen to be the One who has all knowledge, Godhead and all power. To Him alone all messengers turn, putting all matters in His hands. Indeed, to Him Jesus son of Mary assigns judgement in his own and his people's affair. He is Almighty, Wise, the Sovereign over the heavens, the earth and all they contain. It is a fitting conclusion to the Chapter which discusses the meaning of religion, showing it to be the implementation of only God's law, receiving guidance from Him alone and judging only on the basis of His revelations.

It is all one and the same issue: Godhead, the Oneness of God, and judgment on the basis of His guidance.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading

it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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CRITICAL THINKING AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL QURAN IN THE LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

THE YEAR 23 OF THE REVELATION (10 AH/631-632 CE)

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 23

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Messenger Muhammad

The Year 23 of the Revelation (10 AH/631-632 CE)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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YEAR 23 OF THE REVELATION

MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 30, 10 AH
CA. APRIL 9, 631 CE-MARCH 28, 632 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 23, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 10 AH/ca. April 9, 631 CE-March 28, 632 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
DEEP QUESTIONING

4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: ʿAQSATA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

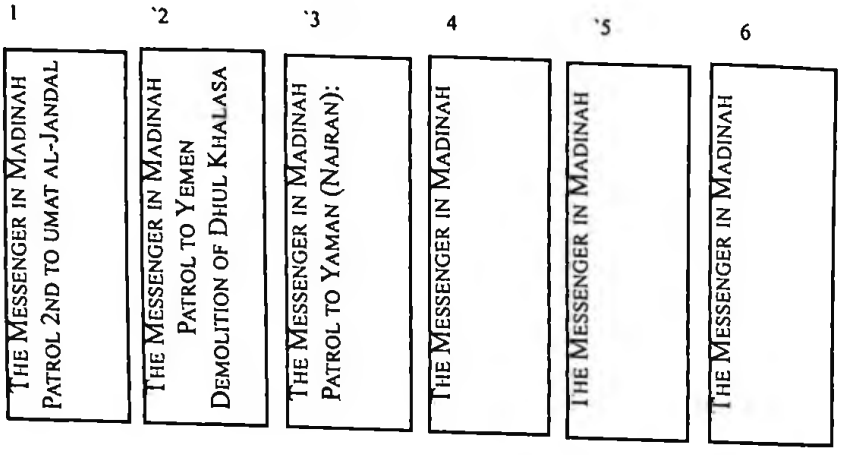
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 23*

TIMELINE

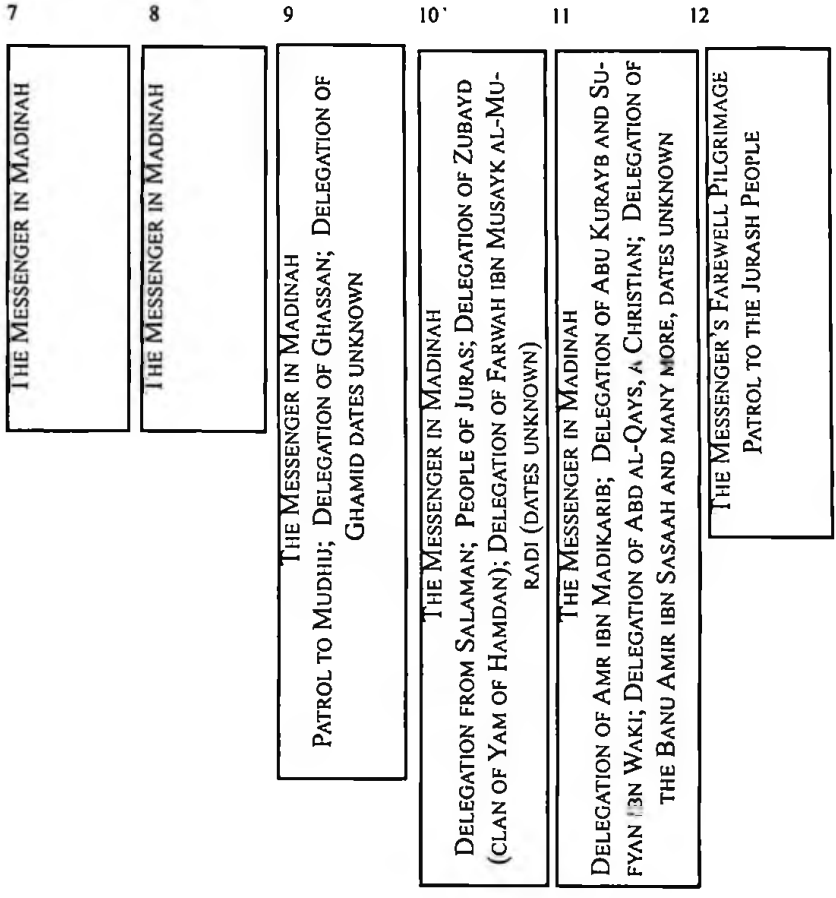


Key
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q= QURANIC SIGNS/ VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 23*

TIMELINE



Key

7 = RAJAB
8 = SHABAN
9 = RAMADAN
10 = SHAWWAL
11 = DHU AL-QADA
12 = DHU AL-HIJJA

Q= QURANIC SIGNS/ VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 23 presented here begins with Lesson 113 and Quranic Chapter 9, the 113th chapter revealed.

LESSON 113(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

U

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (meta-cognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though*

their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided. (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)

SIGNS 9:1-9:6

Madinah: *God and His Messenger declare disassociation*
from those with whom you made a contract
among the ones who were idol worshippers who violated it: (9:1)
Roam about on the earth for four months
and know that you will not be ones who frustrate God
and that God is One Who Covers with shame
the ones who are ungrateful. (9:2)
And the announcement from God and His Messenger
to humanity on the day of the greater pilgrimage to Makkah
is that God is free from the ones who are idol worshippers

and so is His Messenger.
Then, it will be better for you if you repented.
But if you turned away,
then, know that you are not ones who frustrate God.
And give ***you*** *tidings to those who were ungrateful*
of a painful punishment. (9:3)
But those with whom you made a contract
—among the ones who are idol worshippers—
and again, they reduce you not at all
nor do they back anyone against you,
then, fulfill their compact with them
until their term of contract expires.
Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious. (9:4)
When the months of pilgrim sanctity were drawn away,
then, kill the ones who are polytheists wherever you found them
and take them and besiege them and sit in every place of ambush.
Then, if they repented and performed the formal prayer
and gave the purifying alms, then, let them go their way.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (9:5)
And if anyone of the ones who are idol worshippers
sought asylum with ***you***
then, grant him protection
so that he hears the assertions of God.
Again, convey thou him to a place of safety.
That is because they are a folk who know not. (9:6)

COMMENTARY°

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

God and His Messenger declare disassociation from those with whom you made a contract among the ones who were polytheists who violated it: **(9:1)** This is a general declaration, carrying a sharp rhythm, which outlines the basic principles that governed relations between the Muslims and the idolaters at the time, throughout the Arabian Peninsula. The treaties to which it refers were those that the Messenger had concluded with the idolaters in Arabia. The disavowal of these treaties by God and His Messenger defines the attitude of every Muslim. It generates a very strong impression on Muslim minds to leave no room whatsoever for hesitation or second thought.

This general statement is followed by qualifications and explanations: *Roam about on the earth for four months and know that you will not be ones who frustrate God and that God is One Who Covers with shame the ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:2)** This statement clarifies the terms now given to the ungrateful. They are given a period

of four months during which they can move about freely to carry out business transactions, fulfil their commitments and modify their situations in peace.

With this four-month notice period, the idolaters are reminded of God's will which in turn sends fear into their hearts. They are meant to open their eyes to the fact that they can never escape God's judgement. They cannot seek refuge against what God has determined for them, which was certain disgrace and humiliation: *You will not be ones who frustrate God and that God is One Who Covers with shame the ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:2)** How could they escape God's judgment and what refuge could they seek when they, and the whole world, were in His grasp? He has predetermined to inflict misery and disgrace on the ungrateful. No power can ever stop God's will.

This is followed by specifying the time when this disavowal was to be announced to the ungrateful, so that they would be fully aware of the time limits it included: "And a proclamation from God and His Messenger is hereby made to all humanity on this day of the greater pilgrimage: *And the announcement from God and His Messenger to humanity on the day of the greater pilgrimage to Makkah is that God is free from the ones who are polytheists and so is His Messenger. Then, it will be better for you if you repented. But if you turned away, then, know that you are not ones who frustrate God. And give you tidings to those who were ungrateful of a painful punishment.* **(9:3)**

The Arabic term used in this passage for proclamation signifies an assurance that those to whom the proclamation is made have received it. This properly took place during the pilgrimage, when the disavowal by God and His Messenger of all treaties with all idolaters was made. An exception was then added in the next sign which allowed certain treaties to run their term. This is most appropriate. First the general principle is outlined because it is the one which constitutes the permanent situation. Then the exception is made because it applied to specific cases that would end once the term specified had been reached.

The believers are also reassured while the ungrateful are threatened with misery and humiliation. Those who turn away are warned that they cannot escape God's judgement: **(9:2-9:3)**

With the termination of all treaties and the proclamation of absolute disavowal, the ungrateful are encouraged once again to seek and follow divine guidance and warned against the consequences of remaining in error: *Then, it will be better for you if you repented. But if you turned away, then, know that you are not ones who frustrate*

God. And give you tidings to those who were ungrateful of a painful punishment. **(9:3)**

This warning and encouragement to the ungrateful to mend their ways, coming as they do in this particular context of disavowal of treaties, are indicative of the Quranic approach. It is first and foremost an approach seeking to give guidance to people. The idolaters are given this four-month grace period not only because the Quranic message does not like to take them by surprise but also because it does not want to inflict on them unnecessary humiliation. These have always been the essence of power relations, except under the Quranic message. The truce also gives the idolaters a chance to reflect and reconsider their options. Therefore, they are encouraged to choose divine guidance and turn back to God in submission. They are warned against turning away and shown that it will inevitably lead them to a position of grievous suffering in the hereafter, which compounds their humiliation in this life.

It is important to reflect on the comment which concludes the sign that requires the Muslims to remain true to their obligations: *Then, fulfill their compact with them until their term of contract expires. Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:4)** It relates the fulfilment of obligations to righteousness and to God's love of the righteous. Thus, God makes the fulfilment of obligations to people an act of worship addressed to Him and an aspect of the piety He loves. This is the basis of the Quranic ethics. the Quranic message does not act on the basis of gain and interest, or on the basis of constantly changing traditions. All the Quranic ethics are based on worshipping God and being conscious of Him, which is the essence of righteousness. A Muslim brings his behavior in line with that which he knows to please God. His aim is to win God's pleasure and to ensure that He is not displeased with him. This is the essence of the strong hold the Quranic ethics have on Muslims. These ethics also serve people's interests and work for their benefit. They establish a society in which friction and contradiction are reduced as much as possible. They also help human beings in their continuous march to a higher standard of humanity.

HONORING COMMITMENTS

The exception is then made in the case of treaties specifying a term of validity. These were allowed to remain in force for the rest of their term: *But those with whom you made a contract—among the ones who are polytheists—and again, they reduce you not at all nor do they back anyone against you, then, fulfill their compact with them until their term of contract expires. Truly, God loves the ones who*

are God-conscious. **(9:4)**

WHEN THE PERIOD OF GRACE IS OVER

Thus the opening signs of the Chapter make it clear that God and His Messenger would have no dealings whatsoever with the idolaters, whether or not they had a treaty with the Messenger. They were given a four-month period of grace in which they were safe. When this period was over, treaties would continue to be observed to the end of their terms, but only with those who were true to their obligations under those treaties, and did not collaborate with any enemy of the Muslims. Now the Chapter mentions what the Muslims were to do when the four-month grace period was over.

The Quranic instruction is very clear. A state of all-out war was then to be declared: *When the months of pilgrim sanctity were drawn away, then, kill the ones who are polytheists wherever you found them and take them and besiege them and sit in every place of ambush. Then, if they repented and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms, then, let them go their way. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(9:5)**

The word which is used here to describe those four months in the Quranic text is one which describes the four months when fighting is not allowed except to repel aggression. These form two periods every year when people can go freely, secure from any danger of war. Because of the same usage scholars have disagreed in their interpretations of this statement here, on whether the four months meant the same ones observed annually, i.e. Dhu al-Qada, Dhu al-Hijja, Muharram and Rajab. In that case, the remaining period of grace given after the declaration of the termination of treaties would only be the rest of Dhu al-Hijja and Muharram, i.e. 50 days. Or were these four months, when fighting was forbidden, to start on the day of sacrifice and to end on 10 Rabi 2? A third point of view suggests that the first interpretation applies in the case of those who had violated their treaties and the second applies to those who did not have any treaty and those who had treaties with an unspecified duration.

The correct interpretation, in our view, is that the four months meant here are different from the four sacred months observed annually. The same description is given to both because fighting during them is forbidden. This new period of grace also applied to all, except in the case of those who had treaties lasting for a specified length of time, in which case such treaties were to be honored in full. Since God has said to them: You may go freely in the land for four months, then the four months must start from the day when the announcement was made to them. This fits with the nature of this announcement.

God's instructions to the Muslims were clear: when the four months were over, they were to kill any idolater wherever he was found, or they were to take him captive, or besiege him if he was in a fortified place, or lie in wait for him so that he could not escape without punishment, except for those to whom obligations were to be observed for as long as their treaties remained in force. Indeed the idolaters were given enough notice, which meant that they were not taken by surprise. Nor did they fall victim to any treachery. Their treaties were terminated publicly and they were made fully aware of what was to be done with them.

Moreover, this was not meant as a campaign of vengeance or extermination, but rather as a warning which provided a motive for them to accept the Quranic message. *Then, if they repented and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms, then, let them go their way.* **(9:5)** For 22 years they had been listening to the message of the Quranic message put to them in the clearest possible way. For 22 years they were, nevertheless, trying to suppress the message of the Quranic message by persecution, open warfare and forging alliances to destroy the Quranic state. This was a long history that contrasted with the never failing tolerance of the Quranic message, as demonstrated by God's Messenger and his Companions. Nevertheless, the Quranic message was now opening its arms to them. Instructions are here issued to the Messenger and the Muslims, the very victims of persecution who were driven out of their homeland and suffered a war of aggression, to extend a hand of welcome to those idolaters should they turn to God in repentance. Such repentance should be genuine, confirmed by their observance of the main duties of the Quranic message. That is because God never rejects anyone who turns to Him in sincere repentance, no matter how great his sins are: *Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(9:5)**

We do not here want to go into any of the arguments which are frequently found in books of commentary on the Quran or the Quranic jurisprudence, i.e. *fiqh*, concerning the proviso mentioned in this sign: *Then, if they repented and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms, then, let them go their way.* **(9:5)** These arguments discuss whether these are the essential conditions of being a Muslim, in the sense that a person who does not observe them is considered an ungrateful. They also discuss whether these are sufficient for the acceptance of anyone who declares repentance without going into the other basic duties of the Quranic message. We do not feel this sign is concerned with any such argument. Rather, it simply tackles a real situation involving the idolaters in Arabia at the time. None of these would have declared their repentance, prayed regularly

and paid the *zakat* without the full intention of submitting themselves to God and being Muslims in the full sense of the word. Therefore the Quranic sign specifies the declaration of repentance, regular prayers and *zakat* payment as a mark of the acceptance of the Quranic message in full with all its conditions and significance. The first of these is naturally the submission to God by declaring one's belief that there is no deity other than God and belief in the Messenger Muhammad's message by declaring that Muhammad is God's Messenger. This sign is not, then, about making any rulings on legal matters, but it outlines practical steps to deal with a particular situation where certain circumstances applied.

ASYLUM FOR THE ENEMY

Yet despite the declaration of war against all the idolaters after the four months are over, the Quranic message continues to demonstrate its grace as well as its serious and realistic approach. It does not seek to exterminate all idolaters. On the contrary, it also declares a campaign of guidance whenever that is possible. Individual idolaters who are not part of a hostile and belligerent community are guaranteed safety in the land of the Quranic message. God instructs His Messenger to give them asylum so that they may listen to God's word and become aware of the nature of the Quranic message before they are given safe conduct to their own domiciles. All this, even though they are still idolaters: *And if anyone of the ones who are polytheists sought asylum with you, then, grant him protection so that he hears the assertions of God. Again, convey you him to a place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not.* **(9:6)**

This shows how the Quranic message was keen to reach out to every heart with its guidance. No single case was to be taken lightly. Whoever appeals for protection shall be granted it. Anyone who seeks such asylum cannot at the same time try to join a hostile force seeking to undermine the Muslim community. Therefore granting protection to such a person provides him with the opportunity to listen to the Quran and to get to know the true nature of the Quranic faith. When God's word is heard in such an atmosphere, hearts may well respond positively. Even if they do not, the Muslims are still required to ensure the safety of anyone who appeals for their help until he is returned to a place where he feels secure.

This is one of the sublime heights to which the Quranic message raises its community. Protection is provided for an idolater, an enemy who might have participated in persecution of the Muslims themselves. Now they are required to give him safe conduct until he has reached a place where he feels secure outside the Muslim state. This

is a mark of the Quranic method of action. It is a method of guidance, and guidance remains its ultimate goal even when its efforts are concentrated on the protection of the land of the Quranic message.

And if anyone of the ones who are polytheists sought asylum with you, then, grant him protection so that he hears the assertions of God. Again, convey you him to a place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not. **(9:6)**

This religion seeks to provide knowledge to those who lack such knowledge, and to give protection to whoever appeals for protection, even though they may belong to the enemy camp and who might have fought to suppress the Quranic message. It resorts to the use of force only to destroy physical forces that prevent people from listening to God's word and stop them from knowing what He has revealed. Such forces deprive them of the chance to follow God's guidance and force them into submission to beings other than God. When such physical forces have been destroyed and impediments have been removed, individuals are given protection, despite choosing to remain ungrateful. the Quranic message only informs them of God's word without subjecting them to fear or pressure, and grants them protection and security, the fact that they continue to reject God's message notwithstanding.

This is, then, an outline of the final rulings that determine the relations between the Muslim community and the remaining idolaters in Arabia. They mean an end to the state based on peace agreements with all idolaters, after four months in some cases and at the end of their specified terms in others.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran

The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 113(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)
SIGNS 9:7-9:16

Madinah: *How will there be*
for the ones who are idol worshippers
a compact with God and with His Messenger
but for those with whom you made a contract
near the Masjid al-Haram?
If they go straight with you, then, go straight with them.
Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious. (9:7)
How?
And if they get the better of you,

they regard not ties of relationship with you nor a pact?
They please you with their mouths,
but their hearts refuse compliance
and many of them are ones who disobey. (9:8)
They sold out the signs of God for a little price
and barred others from His way.
Truly, how evil is what they had been doing. (9:9)
They regard not towards one who believes
either ties of relationship or a pact.
And those, they are the ones who exceed the limits. (9:10)
But if they repented and performed the formal prayer
and gave the purifying alms, then,
they are your brothers/sisters in your way of life,
We explain the signs distinctly for a folk who know. (9:11)
But if they broke their sworn oaths after their compact
and discredited your way of life,
then, fight the leaders of ingratitude.
Truly, they, their sworn oaths are nothing to them,
so that perhaps they will refrain themselves. (9:12)
Will you not fight a folk who broke their sworn oaths
and were about to expel the Messenger?
Began they the first time against you?
Will you dread them?
God has a better right that you should dread Him
if you had been ones who believe. (9:13)
Fight them! God will punish them by your hands
and cover them with shame
and help you against them.
And He will heal the breasts of a folk, ones who believe, (9:14)
and He causes to be put away the rage in their hearts.
And God turns to whom He wills in forgiveness.
And God is Knowing, Wise. (9:15)
Or assumed you that you would be left
before God knows those who struggled among you?
And take not anyone to yourselves
other than God and His Messenger
and the ones who believe as intimate friends.
And God is Aware of what you do. (9:16)

COMMENTARY°

The very idea that idolaters may have a treaty with God and His Messenger is questioned, except for those who had shown true commitment in observing their treaty with honesty. With these the exist-

ing treaties were to be honored for the rest of their terms, as long as the ungrateful remained faithful to them. The believers are warned, however, that the idolaters would try to do them harm whenever they could as also feeling that they would escape punishment. **(9:7-9:10)**

This termination of the state of peace based on treaties and agreements is followed by a rhetorical question stating that it is just not possible that idolaters should have such covenants with God and His Messenger. The very principle of having such agreements is rejected outright: *How will there be for the ones who are polytheists a compact with God and with His Messenger?* **(9:7)**

This outright denunciation, coming as it does in the signs that follow the opening ones, may be understood to abrogate the first rulings which allowed the continued observance of treaties with those who fulfilled their obligations under those rulings and did not provide any assistance to any group hostile to the Muslim community. In order to dispel any such misunderstanding, the ruling is restated once more: *but for those with whom you made a contract near the Masjid al-Haram ?If they go straight with you, then, go straight with them. Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.***(9:7)**

This restatement adds a new provision. The first instruction required the Muslims to honor their obligations to those who had shown their true commitment to their peace agreements and fulfilled their own obligations under such agreements. Now the instruction to keep faith with them is qualified, making it clear that the Muslims were to honor their obligations to them for as long as they themselves continued to observe their treaties in full, as they did in the past. Here we note the careful phraseology of texts relating to dealings, transactions and relations with others. Implicit understanding is not sufficient. It is followed by a clear statement.

NO PEACE POSSIBLE

How will there be for the ones who are polytheists a compact with God and with His Messenger? **(9:7)** The idolaters do not submit themselves truly to God, nor do they acknowledge His Messenger or the message he conveys to them. How could they, then, have a treaty with God and His Messenger? They do not simply deny a creature like themselves, or a constitution devised by human beings. Rather, they deny the One who has created them and continues to provide them with sustenance to preserve their lives. By so doing they place themselves in opposition to God and His Messenger. How is it conceivable, then, that they should have a treaty with them? The rhetorical question posed by the Chapter addresses the very principle of having such a treaty. It is not concerned with any particular appli-

cation of the principle.

Although the principle itself is denounced, God has permitted the honoring of treaties with those who continued to honor their obligations. He only made the proviso that this should be reciprocated, which means that treaties were to be honored by the Muslims as long as the idolaters continued to honor them: *But for those with whom you made a contract near the Masjid al-Haram? If they go straight with you, then, go straight with them. Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:7)**

Unlike what some contemporary commentators have understood, those people who had a treaty signed at the Sacred Mosque were the same group as they to whom reference was made earlier in the Chapter: *But those with whom you made a contract—among the ones who are polytheists—and again, they reduce you not at all nor do they back anyone against you, then, fulfill their compact with them until their term of contract expires. Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:4)** The two signs refer to the same group. However, the first reference makes an exception in their case as opposed to all those whose treaties are terminated. They are mentioned again in **(9:7)** in connection with the denunciation of the principle of making peace agreements with idolaters. Their second mention is necessary to make it clear that there is no abrogation of the first ruling in their favor. The righteous and the God- fearing are mentioned on both occasions, using the same Arabic word for both, and highlighting the fact that God loves those who are righteous and God-fearing, to indicate that the subject matter is the same. The second statement completes the conditions stated earlier. In the first, their past attitude of honoring their obligations is mentioned, and in the second the condition of their continued observance of these obligations is made clear. The careful phraseology requires that both statements are taken together to grasp the meaning in full.

The principle of making peace with the idolaters is then denounced on historical and practical grounds, after it had been denounced on grounds of faith. Both sets of reasons are grouped together in the signs that follow: **(9:8-9:10)**

How is it conceivable that the idolaters should have a covenant with God and His Messenger when they do not make any agreement with you unless they are unable to overcome you? Should they prevail over you, they would subject you to their wrath, observing no agreement, honoring no commitment and heeding no moral or ethical value. They would respect no pledge and allow no limit in the punishment they would inflict on you if only they could prevail against you in war. They would not even respect the values of their own so-

ciety, risking any criticism they might incur for not abiding by these limits. No matter what agreements they may have with you, their blind hatred of you causes them to trespass all limits and violate all commitments, if only they can prevail over you. What prevents them from doing that now is not the sort of agreements they have with you. They are only prevented by the fact that they cannot achieve victory over you in battle. Now that you are too strong for them, they try to please you with what they say and by showing that they are true to their commitments. But in truth, their hearts are full of grudges against you. With such heart-burning animosity, they will always wish you ill. They have no desire to be in a relation of friendship with you and they harbour no good intention towards you.

NO OBLIGATION HONORED

There is a basic reason for their treacherous attitude **(9:8-9:9)**: that they are transgressors who have deviated widely from God's guidance. They have bartered away God's revelations for a paltry price in the shape of fleeting pleasures and temporary comforts. They fear that adopting the Quranic message will deny them some or all of these interests or that it may involve some financial cost. Therefore they do not merely refuse to accept the Quranic message, but they also try to debar others from its path. This is, then, the result of the deal they made when they exchanged God's message for a paltry price. Therefore, they turn away from God's path and debar others from following it. What they do is evil indeed, as God Himself states: *Truly, how evil is what they had been doing.* **(9:9)**

Faith is then the cause of all their hatred for the believers. Therefore their ill-will and atrocities are directed against every believer: *They regard not towards one who believes either ties of relationship or a pact. And those, they are the ones who exceed the limits.* **(9:10)** It is in their nature that they are aggressors. Their aggression begins with their hatred of the divine faith and their rejection of its message. It is their aggression that leads them to stand in opposition to faith and adopt a hostile attitude to the believers, respecting no treaty or obligation of honor. Therefore, should they prevail and feel that they can get away with what they want, they will resort to any atrocity without limit.

God then gives His instructions on how the believers should react to this state of affairs: **(9:11-9:12)** In view of such a long history as well as the nature of the inevitable battle between God's message, which seeks to free humanity from subjugation by other creatures in order that they submit to God alone, and *jahiliyyah* systems which seek to make some people tyrannize over others, God gives a very

clear and decisive directive to the Muslims.

The choice before them, then, is clear. They may accept what the Muslims have accepted and repent of whatever aggression and transgression they have committed. In this case, the Muslims will forgive them for whatever they might have committed against them in the past. A new relationship will then be established which makes these new Muslims brothers of the older Muslims and the past is forgiven and forgotten altogether: *We explain the signs distinctly for a folk who know.* **(9:11)** These rulings are best appreciated and acted upon by the people of knowledge who are the believers.

AN ATTITUDE CONFIRMED BY HISTORY

As for the Arabian stage, the events that took place during the lifetime of the Messenger are sufficient to give us a clear answer. In our commentary on this Chapter alone we have enough information to describe the attitude of the idolaters towards this religion and its followers ever since its early days in Makkah up to the time of the revelation of these signs. It is true that the later and much longer-lasting conflict was between the Quranic message on the one hand and the Jews and Christians on the other, rather than between the Quranic message and idolatry. Nevertheless, the idolaters have always adopted the same attitude towards Muslims as described in these signs: **(9:8-9:10)** They simply do what the Quran states: *They regard not towards one who believes either ties of relationship or a pact. And those, they are the ones who exceed the limits.* **(9:10)**

The believers are further reminded of their own bitter experiences with them, and their feelings of happiness at the crushing of their enemy by God's might. **(9:13-9:15)**

They are told that they must cut themselves off, as far as family relations with the ungrateful were concerned. They are required to weaken the effects of their family ties with the ungrateful. They are told to choose between those ties of blood and friendship on the one hand and God and His Messenger on the other. **(9:23-9:24)**

They are also reminded of the numerous victories they achieved with God's help, the most recent of which was the Battle of Hunayn. They were able to achieve victory only when God provided them with His help and gave reassurance to His Messenger who remained steadfast: **(9:25-9:26)**

They are also reassured about their provisions, and that they should not fear any loss of trade or lack of business. What they get is subject to God's will, not to the apparent causes people associate with profitable business: *O those who believed! Truly, the ones who are polytheists are unclean, so let them come not near the Masjid al-Haram after this year. And if you feared being poverty-stricken, God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed. Truly, God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:28)**

All these concerns which required reassurance and clear judgement are indicative of the situation that prevailed in the Muslim state in Madinah. Had it not been for the fact that the Muslim community in Madinah was firm in its belief, stable and enlightened, these conditions might have represented a serious threat to it, and to the very existence of the Quranic message itself.

DOUBTS DISPELLED

These **(9:13-9:16)** signs come immediately after questions have been raised over the very principle of a treaty or a covenant being granted to the idolaters by God and His Messenger. In the same signs the idolaters were given the choice either to accept the faith based on submission to God alone or open warfare, except for the person who may seek refuge with the Muslims. Such a person is given shelter and made to listen to God's revelations before he is given safe conduct to his place of security. The reason for questioning the principle itself is that the idolaters will never respect any agreement or obligation of honor with regard to any believer when they prevail over the Muslims.

The whole history of the idolaters with the believers is one of violating solemn pledges and breaching agreements. **(9:13)** The most recent example was the violation of the peace treaty concluded at al-Hudaybiyah. Acting on instructions from his Lord, the Messenger accepted in that agreement their conditions which were felt by some of his best Companions to be totally unfair to the Muslims. He fulfilled his obligations under that agreement as meticulously as possible. For their part, the idolaters did not respect their agreement, nor did they fulfil their obligations. Within two years, and at the first opportunity, they committed a flagrant breach of their obligations, extending active support to their allies who launched a treacherous attack against the Messenger's allies.

Will you dread them? **(9:13)** They should not refrain from fighting the idolaters, after this long history of treachery, unless they were afraid of them. But this question is followed by a statement which stirs new feelings of determination and courage: *God has a better right that you should dread Him if you had been ones who believe.* **(9:13)** A true believer fears no creature whatsoever, because he only fears God. So they should examine their true feelings, because if they are true believers they will fear no one other than God.

AN ORDER TO FIGHT

The feelings of those early Muslims were heightened when they were reminded of those events: how the idolaters plotted to assassi-

nate the Messenger, and how they repeatedly violated their agreements with the Muslims and launched a treacherous attack against them, taking them by surprise whenever a chance presented itself. They also remembered how the idolaters, in their despotic insolence, were the first to attack them. With their feelings so heightened, they are encouraged to fight the idolaters and are promised victory over them: **(9:14-9:15)**

When you fight them, God will make you the means of the execution of His will, and He will bring about their punishment by your hands, causing them to be defeated and humiliated after they have arrogantly been demonstrating their power. With the victory He will grant you, God will make the believers who had been at the receiving end of the idolaters' repression and persecution happy. This happiness will come about as a result of the complete victory of the truth and the defeat of falsehood and its advocates.

But this is not all. There is more good news and more reward for certain people: *And God turns to whom He wills in forgiveness.* **(9:15)** When the Muslims achieve victory some of the idolaters may open their hearts to the truth. They may be able to recognize that this victory was achieved with the help of a power that is totally superior to all that human beings can muster. They may appreciate the effects faith brings about in the outlook and behavior of the believers and feel that faith makes its followers better people. All this takes place in reality. Therefore the believers receive the reward for their jihad and struggle against ingratitude, and they are rewarded for enabling ungrateful to see the truth of faith. the Quranic message will gain in strength as a result of those who join its ranks after the victory of the believers: *And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:15)** He knows the outcome of events before they even take place, and in His wisdom, He is aware of the results and effects of forthcoming actions and moves.

It was also necessary that the Muslims should launch their struggle against all the idolaters as one camp, and that all treaties with all the idolaters should be terminated at the same time, and that the Muslims would form a solid, united camp against all idolaters. Thus, those who had harbored different intentions and sought excuses of business, blood relations or other interests to justify their continued dealings with the idolaters should make their true position clear, free of all ambiguity. All such excuses had to be tested so that those who make of them a means to maintain close relations with the idolaters, in preference to their association with God, His Messenger and the believers should be known. If such excuses could be made in the past when relations between different camps had not crystallized, there was no room for any ambiguity now: *Or assumed you that you would*

be left before God knows those who struggled among you? And take not anyone to yourselves other than God and His Messenger and the ones who believe as intimate friends. **(9:16)**

God has known such people all the time. Nothing is added to God's knowledge as a result of any event or action. "*And God is Aware of what you do.* **(9:16)** He, however, holds people to account only for what appears of their reality through their own actions. It is His method to test people so that their true feelings and what they harbour in their innermost hearts are made to appear. The best way to do this is to test them with hardship.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never

experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

Lesson 113(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)

Signs 9:17-9:24

Madinah: *It had not been for the ones who are idol worshippers*
to frequent the places of prostration to God
while they are ones who bear witness
against themselves of their ingratitude.
Those, their actions were fruitless.
They are ones who will dwell in the fire forever! (9:17)
Only he frequents places of prostration to God
who believed in God and the Last Day
and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms
and dreads none but God.
Perhaps those will be among the ones who are truly guided. (9:18
Made you the giving of water to drink to the ones who are pilgrims
and frequenting the Masjid al-Haram
the same as he who believed in God and the Last Day
and struggled in the way of God?

They are not on the same level with God.
And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust. (9:19)
Those who believed and emigrated
and struggled in the way of God
with their wealth and their lives
are sublime in their degree with God.
And those, they are the ones who are victorious. (9:20)
Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him
and His contentment and of Gardens for them
in which is abiding bliss. (9:21)
They are ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.
Truly, God, with Him is a sublime compensation. (9:22)
O those who believed! Take not to yourselves your fathers
and brothers/sisters as protectors
if they embraced disbelief instead of belief.
And whoever of you turns away to them,
then, those, they are the ones who are unjust. (9:23)
Say: If had been your fathers and your children
and your brothers/sisters and your spouses
and your kinspeople and the wealth you gained
and the transactions you dread slacken
and the dwellings with which you are well-pleased
were more beloved to you than God and His Messenger
and struggling in His Way,
then, await until God brings His command.
And God guides not the folk, ones who disobey. (9:24)

COMMENTARY°

WHO MAY TEND GOD'S HOUSES

It had not been for the ones who are polytheists to frequent the places of prostration to God while they are ones who bear witness against themselves of their ingratitude. **(9:17)** It is totally wrong that this should ever happen because it is contrary to the nature of things. God's houses of worship belong to Him alone, and only His name should be glorified in them. No other name should be invoked beside His name. How could it be acceptable then that those who associate partners with Him should ever tend these houses of worship when they are self- confessed ungrateful. *Those, their actions were fruitless.* **(9:17)** Whatever they do is without value, including their tending of the Kabah, the Inviolable House of Worship. That is because none of their actions is based on the fundamental principle of God's oneness. As a result of their open and clear rejection of the truth of faith: *They are ones who will dwell in the fire forever!* **(9:17)**

Worship is simply an expression of faith. If the faith is wrongly based, then the worship offered on its basis is wrong as well. Therefore any act of worship, including the visiting and tending of the houses of worship, is of little benefit unless hearts are full of faith which translates itself into action that is totally dedicated to God alone. *Only he frequents places of prostration to God who believed in God and the Last Day and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms and dreads none but God.* **(9:18)** We note that the two conditions relating to belief and action are coupled with a third stipulating that those believers who do good deeds must fear none other than God. This is not an idle condition. It is important that a believer should be totally dedicated to God alone and should rid himself of all traces of idolatry in his feelings, beliefs and behavior. To fear anyone beside God is a subtle aspect of polytheism. Therefore the Chapter warns against it specifically so that believers may make sure that their faith is pure and that their actions are intended to earn God's pleasure. When they do that they deserve to tend houses of worship and to be graced with God's guidance: *Perhaps those will be among the ones who are truly guided.* **(9:18)**

First, concepts are formulated and beliefs are held, then action is undertaken on the basis of faith. God will then reward people with His guidance and with success and prosperity.

This is a criterion which God states clearly to the believers and ungrateful alike, because it determines who may tend God's houses and provides a basis for the evaluation of actions of worship and rituals. Those who tended the Kabah and provided drinking water for pilgrims in pre-the Quranic days when their faith was not based on submission to God alone cannot be placed in the same position as those who have accepted the divine faith and striven hard for God's cause to help make His word supreme: *Made you the giving of water to drink to the ones who are pilgrims and frequenting the Masjid al-Haram the same as he who believed in God and the Last Day and struggled in the way of God? They are not on the same level with God. And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust.* **(9:19)** It is God's scale and His measure that are the important ones.

Nothing else is of any value. *And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust.* **(9:19)** The unjust meant here are the idolaters who reject the true faith, even though they may tend and maintain the Kabah, the Sacred Mosque, and provide drinking water for pilgrims. The point here is concluded with a statement which speaks of the high position of those believers who strive hard to make God's word triumph. We are also told of the eternal bliss and great reward that await them: **(9:20-9:22)**

It should be pointed out here that the comparative stated in this sign, "stand higher in rank with God," does not imply two positions on the same scale, or that the others have a lesser rank with God. It indicates an absolute preference. We have already been told about the others, i.e. the idolaters, and that *Those, their actions were fruitless. They are ones who will dwell in the fire forever!* **(9:17)** Therefore the two situations cannot be compared.

The Chapter continues to stress the need to purge feelings and relations within the Muslim community of any influence other than that of faith. It calls on the believers to give no importance to ties of kinship or to other interests. It groups together all worldly pleasures as well as family and social ties in order to weigh them against loving God and His Messenger and striving for His cause. The choice is then left to Muslims to make: **(9:23-9:24)**

ATTITUDES SHAPED BY FEELINGS

O those who believed! Take not to yourselves your fathers and brothers/sisters as protectors if they embraced disbelief instead of belief. **(9:23)** All ties of blood and family relations are severed if the tie of belief does not take its place in people's hearts. Family loyalty is nullified when loyalty based on faith is nonexistent. The first bond is that which exists between the human being and God. It is the bond which unites all humanity. When this is severed, no relationships, ties or bonds may exist. *And whoever of you turns away to them, then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(9:23)** The term wrongdoers' here means the idolaters, because to maintain ties of loyalty and alliance with family and community when they prefer unbelief to faith is a form of idolatry which believers may not entertain.

The Chapter does not merely state the principle. It goes on to list all types of ties, ambitions and pleasures, grouping them all together and putting them in the scale against faith and its requirements. Thus we have in the first group fathers, children, brothers, spouses and clan (i.e. ties of blood and family), property and business (i.e. the natural desire to have money), and comfortable houses and dwellings (i.e. the pleasures of affluence). Against all this is placed love of God and His Messenger and striving for God's cause. It is important to realize that striving here implies a great deal of hardship and sacrifice. It may mean suffering oppression, going to war and sacrificing one's life altogether. Moreover, all this striving must be purged of any desire to be known or to be publicly appreciated or recognized. Once this striving aims at such recognition, it earns no reward from God.

Say: If had been your fathers and your children and your broth-

ers/sisters and your spouses and your kinspeople and the wealth you gained and the transactions you dread slacken and the dwellings with which you are well-pleased were more beloved to you than God and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then, await until God brings His command. And God guides not the folk, ones who disobey. **(9:24)** What is required here is certainly hard, and it is certainly of great importance. But thus are God's requirements. Otherwise, *await until God brings His command.* **(9:24)** The only alternative is to have the same fate as those who perpetrate evil: *And God guides not the folk, ones who disobey.* **(9:24)** This requirement is not obligatory merely on individuals. The whole Muslim community, and indeed the Muslim state, are also required to make the same choice. There is no consideration or bond which may have priority over those of faith and the struggle for God's cause.

God does not impose this obligation on the Muslim community unless He knows that its nature can cope with it. It is indeed an aspect of God's grace that He has given human nature this strong ability to cope with great demands when motivated by dedication to a noble ideal. Indeed He has given it the ability to feel a more sublime pleasure which is far superior to all the pleasures of this world. This is the pleasure or the ecstasy of having a tie with God Himself and the hope of winning His pleasure. It is also the pleasure of rising above human weaknesses, family and social pressures while looking forward to a bright horizon. If human weakness sometimes pulls us down, the bright horizon that looms large will give us a renewed desire to break loose of all worldly pressures to give faith its due importance.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?

What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:
Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

Lesson 113(4). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating or Assessing Solutions

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)

Signs 9:25-9:29

Madinah: *God, certainly, helped you in many battlefields*
and on the day of Hunayn
when you were impressed with your great numbers,
but it avails you not at all.
And the earth was narrow for you for all its breadth.
Again, you turned as ones who draw back. (9:25)
Again, God caused His tranquility to descend on His Messenger
and on the ones who believed and caused armies you see not
to descend and punished those who were ungrateful.
And this is the recompense of the ones who were ungrateful. (9:26)
Again, God will turn to whom He will in forgiveness after that.
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (9:27)
O those who believed!
Truly, the ones who are idol worshippers are unclean,
so let them come not near the Masjid al-Haram after this year.
And if you feared being poverty-stricken,
God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed.
Truly, God is Knowing, Wise. (9:28)
Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day
nor forbid what God and His Messenger forbade

nor practice the way of life of The Truth
among those who were given the Book
until they give the tribute out of hand
and they be ones who comply. (9:29)

COMMENTARY°

LARGE FORCES AVAIL NOTHING

Hunayn was the battle in which the Muslims had for the first time an army which was 12,000 strong. They felt confident when they looked at their numbers. They overlooked the most essential cause of victory. So God allowed defeat to befall them at first so that they might remember. He then granted them victory at the hands of the small group which remained steadfast with the Messenger and defended him with all the bravery they could muster. The Chapter portrays some scenes of the battle in order to recall the feelings experienced by those who were on the battlefield: *God, certainly, helped you in many battlefields and on the day of Hunayn when you were impressed with your great numbers, but it avails you not at all. And the earth was narrow for you for all its breadth. Again, you turned as ones who draw back.* **(9:25)**

This describes how the excessive confidence felt by a large force led to spiritual defeat causing the Muslims to feel such a heavy burden that made the vast earth seem too narrow. This then led to a physical defeat and those large forces were on the retreat. But what happened next?

Again, God caused His tranquility to descend on His Messenger and on the ones who believed.. **(9:26)** This inner peace' seems as if it were a garment which people wore to pacify their feelings and give them tranquillity. *and caused armies you see not to descend and punished those who were ungrateful.* **(9:26)** We do not know the nature of these forces and whom they really were. No one other than God Himself knows what forces He may bring in. *And this is the recompense of the ones who were ungrateful.* **(9:26)** The killing of some of their soldiers and taking others captive, and the defeat that befell them all were part of the punishment they received in this life, which is only a fitting reward for their denial of God and rejection of the faith. However, the door to repentance is always open to receive those who wish to mend their ways. *Again, God will turn to whom He will in forgiveness after that. And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(9:27)**

The Chapter refers to the Battle of Hunayn in order to portray the consequences of turning away from God and relying on any power other than His. The events of the battle, however, highlight

the real forces on which every faith should rely. Numerical strength is of little importance. Power lies with the hard core who are totally dedicated to their faith and cannot be shaken. Sometimes the multitude may cause defeat, because some people may join in without really knowing the truth of the faith they profess. At times of hardship, courage deserts them and this may lead to confusion within the ranks of believers. Besides, large numbers may lead to a feeling of complacency which causes people to overlook the need to strengthen their ties with their Lord. The triumph of faith has always come about through the efforts of the hard core of firm believers who are ready to sacrifice all for their faith.

At this point the Chapter concludes its statement on the ungrateful who associate partners with God and gives its final verdict concerning them. This verdict remains valid for the rest of time: *O those who believed! Truly, the ones who are polytheists are unclean, so let them come not near the Masjid al-Haram after this year.* **(9:28)**

The Chapter emphasizes the abstract impurity of the idolaters to make it their essential quality. This shows them to be totally and completely impure. This statement gives the feeling that we should seek to purify ourselves when we have anything to do with them, although their impurity is abstract. Their bodies are not really impure. In its unique style, the Quran often resorts to magnification, giving abstract matters a physical shape and entity. *And if you feared being poverty-stricken, God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed. Truly, God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:28)** Here we have the strictest injunction prohibiting their presence in the Haram area. The order implies that they must not even come near it, because they are impure while the Haram is a source of purity.

The whole commercial season which the people of Makkah await every year, and their business which provides livelihood for most people and the two business trips in summer and winter which are so essential for the continued prosperity of the people of Makkah will all be jeopardized as a result of banning the idolaters from pilgrimage and declaring jihad against them all. This may be true, but when it comes to faith, God wants people's hearts to be totally dedicated to their faith. When they do this, they will not worry about their livelihood, because God ensures that everyone gets his or her share in the normal way and through recognized means: *And if you feared being poverty-stricken, God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed.* **(9:28)** When God wills, He may replace certain causes with others, and He may close certain doors in order to open others. *Truly, God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:28)** He manages all matters and conducts all affairs in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom.

nor practice the way of life of The Truth
among those who were given the Book
until they give the tribute out of hand
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In this Chapter the Quran is addressing the Muslim community as it was composed immediately after the conquest of Makkah, when standards of faith were not at the same level. We can see from reading the Chapter carefully that there were gaps in that community, and we can also see how the Quran has set about filling these gaps and the great effort made to educate the Muslim community.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?

Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

LESSON 113(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)
SIGNS 9:30-9:37

Madinah: *And the Jews said: Ezra is the son of God*
and the Christians said: The Messiah is the son of God.
That is the saying with their mouths.
They conform with the sayings of those who were ungrateful
before. God took the offensive.
How they are mislead! (9:30)
They took to themselves their learned Jewish scholars
and their monks as lords—other than God—
and the Messiah son of Mary.
And they were only commanded to worship The One God.
There is no god but He!
Glory be to Him above the partners they ascribe! (9:31)
They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths,
but God refuses so that He fulfill His light
even if the ones who are ungrateful disliked it. (9:32)
It is He Who sent His Messenger with the guidance
and the way of life of The Truth so that He may uplift it
over all ways of life,
even if the ones who are idol worshippers disliked it. (9:33)
O those who believed!
Truly, there are many of the learned Jewish scholars
and monks who consume the wealth of humanity in falsehood
and bar from the way of God
and those who treasure up gold and silver
and spend it not in the way of God.
Give to them tidings of a painful punishment, (9:34)
on a Day it will be hot in the fire of hell.
Then, by it are branded their foreheads
and their sides and their backs.
It will be said: This is what you treasured up for yourselves
so experience what you had been treasuring up. (9:35)

Truly, the period of months with God is twelve lunar months
in the Book of God.
On the day when He created the heavens and the earth of them.
Four are sanctified.
That is the truth-loving way of life.
So do not wrong yourselves in it.
And fight the ones who are idol worshippers collectively,
as they fight you collectively.
And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious. (9:36)
Truly, the postponing a Sacred Month is an increase in ingratitude.
By it are caused to go astray those who were ungrateful,
for they permit it a year, and forbid it a year,
so that they agree with the period that God forbade,
and they permit what God forbade.
Made to appear pleasing to them was the evil of their actions.
And God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (9:37)

COMMENTARY°

CLEAR ORDER AND PERVERSE RESPONSE

Commenting on the assertions by the Jews and the Christians that Ezra or Jesus is the son of God, the Quran emphasizes that they echo the assertions and concepts of ungrateful in former times: *And the Jews said: Ezra is the son of God and the Christians said: The Messiah is the son of God. That is the saying with their mouths.* **(9:30)** First of all this comment emphasizes that these assertions were made by them and not reported by others. This is the reason for mentioning their mouths' to add a physical image, following the Quranic method of expression. It is evident that whatever they say or assert must be said by word of mouth. The deliberate mention of their mouths is neither redundant—far be it from God to unnecessarily add what is redundant—nor does it make the statement verbose. The Quranic style pictures how they make their assertions and gives us a very real image that we can see as we listen to the statement. There is also an additional connotation stressing that the words do not describe any thing that exists in reality. These are merely words uttered and have no real significance.

Then we have another aspect of the uniqueness of the Quran which points to its origin and that it is God's revelation. This we find in the statement: *They conform with the sayings of those who were ungrateful before. God took the offensive. How they are mislead!* **(9:30)** Commentators on the Quran used to say that this means that their assertions about God having a son are similar to what the Arab idolaters used to say that the angels were God's daughters. The sim-

ilarity between the two assertions is true, but this statement has a wider implication which has transpired only recently when the faiths of idolaters in India, ancient Egypt and Greece were studied.

A careful look at the ideologies of the ancient idolaters, which were not known to people at the time when the Quran was revealed, in the light of this Quranic statement: *They conform with the sayings of those who were ungrateful before.* **(9:30)** will prove two points. It shows that the people of earlier revelations do not follow the faith of truth and do not have the right concepts of God. It also reveals a certain aspect of the uniqueness of the Quran, pointing to its source and that it is revealed by God whose knowledge is perfect, absolute.

This sign, which makes it clear that the people of earlier revelations have adopted idolatrous beliefs, is concluded with these words: *God took the offensive. How they are mislead!* **(9:30)** Yes indeed. "May God destroy them!" How they overlook the simple truth which is clear and straightforward to adopt ambiguous and complex idolatrous concepts which have no logical or coherent basis.

The Chapter then describes another type of deviation from the truth manifested by the people of earlier revelations. This time the deviation is not confined to verbal statements and beliefs only; it translates itself into practices based on erroneous beliefs: *They took to themselves their learned Jewish scholars and their monks as lords—other than God—and the Messiah son of Mary. And they were only commanded to worship The One God. There is no god but He! Glory be to Him above the partners they ascribe!* **(9:31)**

This sign comes at its most appropriate place in this passage which dispels all lingering doubts that those people may still be following a divine faith. For this sign states that they are no longer following any religion revealed by God. This is proven by their beliefs and practices. They were ordered to worship God alone, but they took their rabbis and monks as lords besides God. All this is a form of idolatry which associates partners with God.

A TRUE PROMISE

The Chapter goes a step further in encouraging the believers to fight: **(9:32-9:33)** The people of earlier revelations do not stop at mere deviation from the religion of truth and worshipping lords and other beings instead of God, as well as refusing to believe in God and the Last Day in the true sense of such a belief. They go further by declaring war against the religion of truth and trying hard to extinguish God's light, represented by this religion, the movement advocating it and the system it provides for human life.

They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths.

(9:32) So, they are hostile to God's light, trying to prevent its spread. They fabricate lies and sew the seeds of discord and division. They also mobilize their followers to stand in opposition to this religion and its followers, as was the case when these signs were revealed. This has continued to be the case ever since. Although this statement aimed primarily at enhancing the determination of the Muslims at the time, it also describes the true nature of the attitude the people of earlier revelations always adopt towards God's light as reflected by His true faith providing guidance for humanity.

But God refuses so that He fulfill His light even if the ones who are ungrateful disliked it. **(9:32)** This is a true promise by God reflecting His permanent law which ensures that His light will always be perfected and that His religion will always prevail in spite of the ungrateful' attempts to stifle it. This promise will reassure the believers and motivate them to continue along their way, full as it may be with hardships, and to stand up to all the wicked scheming of the ungrateful. In this instance, the term ungrateful refers to those people who were given Scriptures in former times. The promise also implies a clear threat to those ungrateful and all who follow in their footsteps.

The Chapter re-emphasizes the promise and the threat at the same time: *It is He Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the way of life of The Truth so that He may uplift it over all ways of life, even if the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* **(9:33)**

It is clear from this statement that the religion of the Quranic message, preached by God's last Messenger, is the one to which reference is made in the previous Quranic statement: *Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day nor forbid what God and His Messenger forbade nor practice the way of life of The Truth among those who were given the Book until they give the tribute out of hand and they be ones who comply.* **(9:29)** It is also clear that this order to fight is targeted against those who do not believe in this religion.

It is He Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the way of life of The Truth so that He may uplift it over all ways of life, even if the ones who are polytheists disliked it. **(9:33)** This statement confirms God's first promise: *They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths, but God refuses so that He fulfill His light even if the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(9:32)** The confirmation, however, takes a much more specific form. The light which God, who is limitless in His glory, has decided to bring to full perfection is the religion of truth with which He has sent His last Messenger so that He may cause it to prevail over all other religions.

HOARDING GOLD AND SILVER

This last step in exposing the reality of those people of earlier revelations who have distorted God's message is given in two signs addressed to the believers: **(9:34-9:35)**

The first sign elaborates on the roles of the rabbis and monks whom those people of earlier revelations have made as lords, following their bidding in their day-to-day transactions, and also in their worship. **(9:34-9:35)** The scene is portrayed in full detail, with the whole operation described from its first step to its conclusion. Thus the scene is deliberately made to linger in our minds so that we contemplate it longer.

The description starts with a general statement: *O those who believed! Truly, there are many of the learned Jewish scholars and monks who consume the wealth of humanity in falsehood and bar from the way of God and those who treasure up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God. Give to them tidings of a painful punishment,* **(9:34)** The sign ends here with a general reference to the punishment of the hereafter. But then the full details are given: *On a Day it will be hot in the fire of hell. Then, by it are branded their foreheads and their sides and their backs. .* **(9:35)**

As we listen we wait for the heating up to be completed, then we see it red hot and gathered in readiness. Now the suffering starts with foreheads being branded with all that gold and silver. When all foreheads have been branded, those who are being punished are made to turn on their sides so that they can be branded there as well. With that over, they are made to turn yet again in order to brand them a third time with the red hot gold and silver on their backs. When this type of their punishment is completed, they are severely rebuked: *Those who treasure up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God, give to them tidings of a painful punishment,* **(9:35)** It is the very thing you were keen to have and keep for your pleasure and enjoyment. It is now a means to inflict on you this grievous suffering: *It will be said: This is what you treasured up for yourselves so experience what you had been treasuring up.* **(9:35)** Taste it in reality, because it is the very thing which is branding your foreheads, sides and backs.

CHANGING THE ORDER OF TIME

Truly, the period of months with God is twelve lunar months in the Book of God. On the day when He created the heavens and the earth of them. Four are sanctified. That is the truth-loving way of life. So do not wrong yourselves in it. And fight the ones who are polytheists collectively, as they fight you collectively. And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious. **(9:36)**

This Quranic statement refers the origin of time and the way it runs to the nature of the universe and how God created it, and to the origin of creation of both the heavens and the earth. It tells us that there is a permanent cycle of time consisting of twelve months. That it is permanent is evident from the fact that in every cycle there are twelve months. This is included in God's decree, which means that it is part of the divine law for the universe. Therefore, the cycle is permanent and the months are twelve, without any possibility of increase or decrease. Its movement is in accordance with the divine law set into operation when God created the heavens and the earth.

The reference to the fact that this time cycle is permanent serves as a prelude to making certain months sacred. Their selection and sanctity is part of God's decree or His law which cannot be changed at will. It simply cannot be made subject to people's desires who may wish to bring one month forward and put another back. Its permanence is similar to that of the seasons which follow one another according to a constant law: *That is the truth-loving way of life. So do not wrong yourselves in it.* **(9:36)** This religion is, then, in perfect harmony with the law which governs the creation of the heavens and the earth and their functions.

All this about the number of months and those of them which are sacred is *That is the truth-loving way of life. So do not wrong yourselves in it.* **(9:36)** You should not wrong yourselves in these four sacred months, the sanctity of which relates to a law of nature which applies to the whole universe. This law makes it clear that God is the Legislator in human life and in the universe at large. Do not wrong yourselves by violating the sanctity of these months which God has willed to be a period of peace and security for all. Whenever human beings violate God's rules they wrong themselves because they actually expose themselves to punishment in the life to come and to fear and worry in this life when all months become a period of war without intermission.

And fight the ones who are polytheists collectively, as they fight you collectively. And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious. **(9:36)** This obviously applies throughout the rest of the year, not in the sacred months, except when the ungrateful launch an attack, in which case the Muslims must repel the aggression in these months. To take a unilateral decision not to fight will weaken the forces of goodness which are required to defend sanctities and repel aggression by forces of evil. It will also lead to the spread of corruption in the land and the disruption of the laws of nature. Repelling aggression in the sacred months is a means to preserve their sanctity and prevent their violation.

And fight the ones who are polytheists collectively, as they fight you collectively. **(9:36)** Fight them all without exception, because they do not make any exception of any single person or community when they fight you. The battle is truly between idolatry and believing in God's oneness, between proper guidance and going astray. It is a battle between two clearly distinguished camps which cannot come to a complete agreement or make permanent peace because the differences between them are not over details or over conflicting interests where a compromise could be worked out, or over borders which may be demarcated anew. The Muslim community would be deluded if it believes, or is led to understand, that its battle with the idolaters, whether pagan or people who had distorted their Scriptures, is over issues of politics or economics, national independence or strategy. It is first of all an ideological battle, and it is over the system laid down by this ideology, which means religion. Such a battle cannot be sorted out by compromises worked out through negotiations. It is sorted out only by jihad and dedicated struggle. This is God's law which never changes, and over which the whole universal system is founded. It is the law at the core of the divine faith and which controls the operation of conscience. It has been set in operation on the day when God created the heavens and the earth.

And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious .**(9:36)** Those who fear to violate God's sanctities or to make lawful what He has forbidden, or to disrupt His laws are the ones who will be granted victory. Muslims then must never hesitate to fight the ungrateful all together, or fear to engage in an all-out campaign of jihad. Theirs is a campaign of struggle for God's cause, in which they do not violate its rules or moral standards. They dedicate their struggle to God and watch Him when they are alone as much as they do when they are with other people. Victory is theirs because God is with them, and whoever is on God's side shall certainly be victorious.

A CHANGE NOT SANCTIONED BY GOD

In this act **(9:37)** which is described as an 'excess of unbelief,' *Truly, the postponing a Sacred Month is an increase in ingratitude.* **(9:37)** They actually deceive themselves with their ploys and tricks. *By it are caused to go astray those who were ungrateful, for they permit it a year, and forbid it a year, so that they agree with the period that God forbade, and they permit what God forbade.* **(9:37)** They see as fair what is evil and they think deviation from the truth to be a virtue. They are totally unaware of how far astray they have gone and to what depths of unbelief they have sunk.

Made to appear pleasing to them was the evil of their actions.

And God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful. **(9:37)** They have placed a shield between their hearts and divine guidance. Therefore God abandons them to their unbelief in which they live in total darkness, far removed from God's guidance.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

LESSON 113(6). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
Signs 9:38-9:42

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
What was it with you when was said to you:
Move forward in the way of God,
you inclined heavily downwards to the earth?
Were you so well-pleased with this present life
instead of the world to come?
But the enjoyment of this present life
is not but little compared to the world to come. (9:38)
Unless you move forward, He will punish you
with a painful punishment and will have in exchange for you
a folk other than you.
And you will not injure Him at all.
And God is Powerful over everything. (9:39)
If you help him not, then, surely,
God helped him when those who were ungrateful drove him out.
The second of two, when they were both in the cavern,
he says to his companion: Feel no remorse.
Truly, God is with us.
Then, God caused His tranquility to descend on him
and confirmed him with armies that you see not
and made the word of those who were ungrateful the lowest.
And the Word of God is Lofty. God is Almighty, Wise. (9:40)
Move forward light and heavy and struggle with your wealth
and your lives in the way of God.
That is better for you if you had been knowing. (9:41
If it had been a near advantage and an easy journey,
they would have followed ***you****, except the destination of the journey*
was distant for them.
And they will swear by God: If we were able,
we would, certainly, have gone forth with you.
They will cause themselves to perish.
And God knows that they are the ones who lie. (9:42)

Commentary°

O those who believed! What was it with you when was said to you: Move forward in the way of God, you inclined heavily downwards to the earth? **(9:38)**

Such reluctance to march forth in support of God's cause is only motivated by worldly considerations and ambitions. People may fear for their lives and their property. They are keen to protect their interests and preserve their pleasures, and would prefer a settled life of

ease and comfort. They think primarily of their present life, immediate objectives, close relatives and physical needs. The words chosen here give a vivid impression of "clinging heavily to the earth". It is as if we are looking at a heavy object that has been in its position for a long time. It is lifted up by a group of people, but it soon falls down with a strong gravitational pull.

Joining a jihad campaign for God's cause represents freedom from the shackles of this earthly life and physical pleasures. It emphasizes the yearning for freedom after the shedding of narrow needs, and the expanse of eternity after getting rid of this limited worldly life: *Were you so well-pleased with this present life instead of the world to come? But the enjoyment of this present life is not but little compared to the world to come.* **(9:38)**

A stern threat then follows: *Unless you move forward, He will punish you with a painful punishment and* He *will have in exchange for you a folk other than you.* **(9:39)** who will guard their faith and who are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices without ever submitting to God's enemies. *And you will not injure Him at all. And God is Powerful over everything.* **(9:39)** He can easily cause you to perish and bring about a different community to take your place. In the final balance you will count for nothing.

To elevate oneself above the shackles of the earth and over one's own weaknesses is to enhance one's noble existence. It represents the higher meaning of life. To give in to fears for one's life and the attractions of this worldly life is to condemn one's humanity to extinction. This is the real death knell of the spiritual aspect which distinguishes human life.

THE BEST CHOICE FOR BELIEVERS

God then gives them an example of the history which they themselves had witnessed, showing them how He supported His Messenger and gave him a great victory without need for their support. After all, victory is granted by God to whom He pleases: **(9:40)**

The Chapter describes vividly the situation of the Messenger and his friend:*If you help him not, then, surely, God helped him when those who were ungrateful drove him out. The second of two, when they were both in the cavern, he says to his companion: Feel no remorse. Truly, God is with us. Then, God caused His tranquility to descend on him and confirmed him with armies that you see not.* **(9:40)**

What was the result of this confrontation when all the material power was on one side while the Messenger and his Companion stood alone with no such power? A fantastic victory was granted,

employing troops whom no human being could see. A humiliating defeat engulfed the ungrateful: He *made the word of those who were ungrateful the lowest.* **(9:40)** God's word remained mighty, victorious, supreme: *And the Word of God is Lofty. God is Almighty, Wise.* **(9:40)** God is certainly Almighty and those who advocate His cause will never be humiliated, and He is Wise, which means here that He determines when to grant victory to those who deserve it.

They are then called upon to mobilize their forces and not to allow any impediment to stand in their way. If they wish to attain what is best for them in this life as well as in the life to come, then they should not allow any factor to interfere with their response to such a call: *Move forward light and heavy and struggle with your wealth and your lives in the way of God.* **(9:41)**

They must march whatever the circumstances, and must strive hard, and be ready to sacrifice their wealth and their lives, seeking no excuses and allowing no impediments to stand in their way: *That is better for you if you had been knowing.* **(9:41)**

MANIFESTATIONS OF HYPOCRISY

DISTINGUISHING TRUE BELIEVERS FROM LIARS

At this point the Chapter speaks about certain groups that demonstrated weakness, but it reserves more space for exposing the hypocrites who pretended to believe in order to join the Muslim ranks after the Quranic message had shown its strength and looked certain to triumph. They felt it safer to bow their heads to the Quranic message so as to acquire whatever they might by way of other gain. Simultaneously, and with open hostility no longer feasible, they could also undermine the Muslim community from within.

The first thing highlighted here **(9:42)** is that had the situation involved the prospect of immediate gain or the undertaking of a short journey, which represented no serious risk, they would have joined the Messenger. But the undertaking was not an easy one. The destination was much too far for those with a weak resolve and a frail aptitude for glory. The effort required was not for those with weak hearts. People were called upon to rise to a great occasion, one which would prove their metal. Therefore we find in the community a type of people that we encounter across all generations: *If it had been a near advantage and an easy journey, they would have followed you, except the destination of the journey was distant for them.* **(9:42)**

And they will swear by God: If we were able, we would, certainly, have gone forth with you. **(9:42)** Lying goes hand in hand with cowardice and weakness. Only the weak and faint- hearted resort to lies, even though they may occasionally appear to command consid-

erable power. A strong person will not hesitate to face any eventuality head on, while the weak will always remain evasive. It is a rule that never fails. *They will cause themselves to perish.* **(9:42)** They certainly ruin themselves by their false swearing which they imagine will save them in the eyes of other people. However, God knows the truth and He reveals it to humanity. Thus the liar is ruined in this life by the effects of his falsehood and he ruins himself in the hereafter when he cannot deny his true motives before God, because *God knows that they are the ones who lie.* **(9:42)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others

LESSON 113(7). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)
SIGNS 9:43-9:59

Madinah: *God pardon you!*
Why had you given permission to them
before it becomes clear to you those who were sincere

*and **you** have known who are the ones who lie?* (9:43)
*They ask not permission of **you**,*
those who believe in God and the Last Day,
that they struggle with their wealth and their lives.
And God is Knowing of the ones who are God-conscious. (9:44)
*It is only those who ask permission of **you***
who believe not in God and the Last Day
and whose hearts were in doubt,
so they go this way and that in their doubts. (9:45)
And if they wanted to go forth,
certainly, they would have prepared for it some preparation,
except God disliked arousing them,
so He caused them to pause and it was said:
Sit along with the ones who sit at home. (9:46)
If they went forth with you,
they would have increased nothing for you,
but ruination.
And they would have rushed to and fro in your midst
with insolent dissension.
And among you are ones who would have harkened to them.
And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust. (9:47)
Certainly, they were looking for dissension before.
*And they turned around and around for **you***
the commands until The Truth drew near,
and the command of God became manifest
although they were ones who dislike it. (9:48)
Among them is he who says:
Give me permission and tempt me not.
But they descended into dissension.
And, truly, hell is that which
encloses the ones who are ungrateful. (9:49)
*If lights on **you** benevolence, they are raised to anger,*
*but if an affliction lights on **you**, they say:*
Surely, we took our commands before.
And they turn away and they are glad. (9:50)
Say: Nothing will light on us
but what God had been prescribing for us.
He is our Defender.
And in God let the ones who believe put their trust. (9:51)
Say: Are you watching for something,
but one of the two fairer things to befall us?
And we watch for you, whether God will light on you
a punishment from Him or from our hands.

So watch! We are ones who are waiting with you. (9:52)
Say: Spend willingly or unwillingly.
There will be only non-acceptance.
Truly, you, you had been a folk, ones who disobey. (9:53)
And nothing prevented their contributions being accepted
from them but that they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger
and that they not approach formal prayer
but while they are lazy
and they spend but as ones who dislike to spend. (9:54)
So let not their wealth impress thee nor their children.
God wants only to punish them in this present life
and so that their souls depart
while they are ones who are ungrateful. (9:55)
And they swear by God that they are, truly,
of you while they are not of you.
They are but a folk who are in fear. (9:56)
If they find a shelter or a place to creep into or a place of retreat,
they would turn to it as they rush away. (9:57)
And among them there are some who find fault with you
about charities.
If they were given a part of it, they were well-pleased,
but if they are not given of it,
that is when they are displeased. (9:58)
Better if they were well-pleased with what God gave them
and His Messenger.
And they had said: God is Enough for us.
God will give to us of His grace and so will His Messenger.
Truly, to God we are ones who quest. (9:59)

COMMENTARY°

God pardon thee! Why had you given permission to them before it becomes clear to you those who were sincere and you have known who are the ones who lie? **(9:43)** Here we have an example of God's kindness as He begins with stating His pardon before His reproach. Those hypocrites who stayed behind were able to hide their true colors when the Messenger allowed them to stay behind after they had presented their excuses. This was a chance to expose their falsehood, because they would have stayed behind anyway, even though the Messenger would have withheld his permission. They would have been seen as they truly were, without their false guise. But since this did not happen, the Quran exposes them and states clearly the rules which distinguish the true believers from the hypocrites: **(9:44-9:45)**

The way leading to God's pleasure is straight and clearly

marked. Only a person who does not know the way, or one who knows it but tries to avoid its hardship, is reluctant to follow it. Those who stayed behind at the time of the Tabuk Expedition were able to join the army, had they wished to do so. They had all the means at their disposal. Among them were people like Abd Allah ibn Ubayy and al-Jadd ibn Qays, both of whom were rich and from among the nobility. *And if they wanted to go forth, certainly, they would have prepared for it some preparation, except God disliked arousing them, so He caused them to pause.* **(9:46)**

This is due to what He knew of their nature and their hypocrisy, as well as their ill intentions towards the believers, as we will see. Therefore, "He caused them to hold back," and did not give them the motivation to set forth with the believers. So, *it was said: Sit along with the ones who sit at home.* **(9:46)** Thus they stayed behind with the elderly, the women and the children who were not required to fight. This is the right place for faint-hearted waverers who lack faith.

However, this was certainly better for the Quranic message and the Muslims: *If they went forth with you, they would have increased nothing for you, but ruination. And they would have rushed to and fro in your midst with insolent dissension. And among you are ones who would have harkened to them.* **(9:47)**

Wavering hearts are likely to spread cowardice and reluctance to meet the enemy. Traitors are a real danger to any army. Had those hypocrites set out with the Muslim army, they would not have added to the strength of the Muslims. Indeed they would only have added chaos and trouble, and they would have scurried to and fro, sewing discord and counselling retreat. At that time, there were among the Muslims some who would listen to them, thinking them to be honest in their counsel. However, God who takes care of His message and extends His protection to those who are dedicated believers, spared the Muslims all this by letting the hypocrites stay behind:*And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust.* **(9:47)** The description, wrongdoers, in this instance means 'the idolaters,' which in effect means that they also belong to the idolaters.

ABSURDITY CARRIED TOO FAR

The Chapter goes on to report some of their fabricated excuses and to expose their ill intentions towards the Messenger and the Muslim community: **(9:49-9:52)** This is typical of the absurd excuses proffered by the hypocrites. What answer has the Quran for them? *Among them is he who says: Give me permission and tempt me not. But they descended into dissension. And, truly, hell is that which encloses the ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:49)** The Chapter portrays here

a scene in which temptation is shown like an abyss in which the tempted fall, and behind them stands hell ready to engulf them, blocking all openings for escape. This image suggests that they have committed an unmitigated sin and that their punishment is inevitable. It is a punishment for their falsehood, staying behind at a time of war and offering such absurd excuses. It confirms their total lack of faith, despite the fact that they were keen to pretend that they believed in God and His Messenger.

They certainly do not wish the Messenger or the Muslims well. They are grieved when the Messenger and the Muslims meet good fortune: *If lights on you benevolence, they are raised to anger.* **(9:50)** Indeed they are so happy when misfortune or a disaster befalls the believers, or when they encounter hardship: *But if an affliction lights on you, they say: Surely, we took our commands before.* **(9:50)** Thus they consider having stayed behind when the Muslims left to fight the Byzantines a wise precaution. *And they turn away and they are glad.* **(9:50)** They are so pleased that they have ensured their own safety and did not expose themselves to the hardship the Muslims endured.

Their attitude shows their superficial outlook. They consider any hardship to be evil which must be avoided at all costs. They think that they make great gain by staying behind. Their hearts are devoid of any element of submission to God and accepting His will, believing it to be for their own good. A true believer does his best, fearing no outcome, because he believes that whatever good or evil he experiences is tied to God's will, and that God will help him and grant him success: *Say: Nothing will light on us but what God had been prescribing for us. He is our Defender.* **(9:51)**

God has promised the Muslims eventual victory. Therefore whatever hardship they are made to suffer, and however hard their test appears to be, they are being prepared for their promised victory. The believers will certainly have their victory after they have passed their test. It will come by the means God has ordained so that it is treated as a valuable, not a cheap, victory. Thus the Muslims will defend their position of honor, ready to give any sacrifice for it. It is God who gives help and grants victory: *And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* **(9:51)**

It should be mentioned that a believer will only get what is good for him, whether he achieves victory or martyrdom. An ungrateful will only end up with what is evil, whether he is made to taste God's punishment directly or at the hands of the believers: *Say: Are you watching for something, but one of the two fairer things to befall us? And we watch for you, whether God will light on you a punishment*

from Him or from our hands. So watch! We are ones who are waiting with you. **(9:52)**

POSSESSED BY FEAR

Some of the hypocrites who tried to stay behind, hoping to spare themselves hardship, offered to help finance the campaign. In this way, they were holding the stick in the middle, like all hypocrites do at all times. God foiled their attempt and instructed His Messenger to declare that their spending was unacceptable by God. Their offers were motivated by fear and hypocrisy, not by genuine faith. Therefore, even if the offer were made voluntarily to deceive the Muslims, or they were forced to make it for fear of being exposed for what they truly were, it was of no value. It was rejected by God and earned them no reward whatsoever: **(9:53-9:54)**

This detailed description is true of all hypocrites wherever they happen to be. They are always full of fear, sly, deviant, making pretenses that are void of all substance. They are keen to give a false impression in order to escape confrontation. The Quran describes them very accurately: *And nothing prevented their contributions being accepted from them but that they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger and that they not approach formal prayer but while they are lazy and they spend but as ones who dislike to spend.* **(9:54)** They only put up false appearances, and do not approach prayer with sincerity which would enhance their honesty. Therefore, they are reluctant when they pray, because they are forced to do it. They have no real motivation to pray, except to impress the Muslims that they belong to them, when in reality they do not. The same is the case with what they spend. It is all a question of appearances.

God does not accept such false pretenses which are not motivated by true faith. Indeed it is the motive which gives value to any action, and the intention behind it provides the standard by which it is judged.

Many of those hypocrites were people of affluence, having many children and occupying positions of nobility and honor in their tribes. All this counts for nothing with God and so it should be with His Messenger and the community of believers. Such privileges were not a bounty given to them by God to enjoy; they were only a means of trial which would ensure their punishment: *So let not their wealth impress you nor their children. God wants only to punish them in this present life and so that their souls depart while they are ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:55)**

The hypocrites tried to place themselves in the ranks of believers, not because of their faith—for they had none—but because of

fear coupled with hope and expectation. Therefore they would swear that they were believers and that they were convinced of the truth of the Quranic message. This Chapter exposes their reality. Therefore it is described as the Chapter which reveals the reality,' since it shatters falsehood and tears off the mask of hypocrisy: **(9:56-8:57)**

They are indeed cowards, and here we are presented with a very vivid picture of their cowardice. It is painted in a physical and mental sweep: *If they find a shelter or a place to creep into or a place of retreat, they would turn to it as they rush away.* **(9:57)** They will always look for a shelter, whatever it may be, a fort or a cave or even a tunnel, as long as it gives them protection from an imminent calamity. They are in terrible fear, chased by internal and spiritual cowardice. Therefore, *they swear by God that they are, truly, of you while they are not of you. They are but a folk who are in fear.* **(9:56)** using all means of emphasis and assertion in order to cover up what they harbour at heart. They only hope to ensure their safety. It is a very miserable picture of cowardly fear which only the unique style of the Quran can depict as it shows the inner feelings of hearts vividly brought before our eyes.

CONTENTED WITH GOD'S GIFTS

Here, the Chapter exposes the true nature of both hypocrisy and the hypocrites. Their case is linked to that of the ungrateful which was discussed earlier. Those ungrateful were destroyed after having enjoyed their portion for a time. Thus the difference between them and the believers is clearly shown.. **(9:58-9:59)**

Some of the hypocrites may hurt the Messenger accusing him of injustice when it comes to the distribution of charitable donations, implying that he favors certain people. They do not say this for any love of justice, or to express their enthusiasm for the truth and the values of faith. They only make their claims for vested interests and ulterior motives: *If they were given a pare of it, they were well-pleased.* **(9:58)** They would not care then about justice, the rights of others or about religious values, because they would have had their share, and that is all that counts with them. *But if they are not given of it, that is when they are displeased* **(9:58)**

Within the same context, the Chapter outlines the attitude that befits true believers: *Better if they were well-pleased with what God gave them and His Messenger. And they had said: God is Enough for us. God will give to us of His grace and so will His Messenger. Truly, to God we are ones who quest.* **(9:59)**

Such are the attitudes and the manners that befit true believers. They accept with complete satisfaction whatever division is made

by God and His Messenger. It is not a forced acceptance. They feel that whatever God gives them is good and sufficient, and He will certainly give His servants what will satisfy them. They hope for God's grace and bounty, and seek His pleasure with complete devotion, free from any expectation of material gain. Such are the proper manners of true believers. Of course these manners are unknown to hypocrites who have never experienced the happiness generated by faith in God and His Messenger. Never had the light of faith shined in their hearts.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with

each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

Lesson 113(8). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Virtuous Conduct Through Moral Discipline

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
Signs 9:60-9:66

Madinah: *Charities are only for the poor and the needy*
and the ones who work to collect it
and the ones whose hearts are brought together
and to free the bondsperson and the ones who are in debt
and in the way of God and for the traveler of the way.
This is a duty to God. And God is Knowing, Wise. (9:60)
And among them are those who malign the Messenger
and say: He is unquestioning.
Say: He is unquestioning of what is good for you.
He believes in God and believes in ones who believe.
And he is a mercy to those of you who believed.
And those of you who malign the Messenger of God,
for them is a painful punishment. (9:61)
They swear by God to you to please you,
but God and His Messenger have better right
that they should please Him
if they had been ones who believe. (9:62
Know they not that whoever opposes God and His Messenger,
then, truly, for him will be the fire of hell—
one who will dwell in it forever?
That is the tremendous degradation. (9:63)
The ones who are hypocrites are fearful

that should be sent down against them a chapter of the Quran
to tell them what is in their hearts.
Say: Ridicule us, but, truly,
God is One Who Drives Out that of which you are fearful. (9:64)
And if you had asked them, they would say:
Truly, we had only been engaging in idle talk and playing.
Say: Was it God and His signs and His Messenger
that you had been ridiculing? (9:65)
Make no excuses! Surely, you disbelieved after your belief.
If We pardon a section of you,
We will punish another section
because, truly, they had been ones who sin. (9:66)

COMMENTARY°

FAIR DISTRIBUTION ORDERED BY GOD

Having established the right attitude a Muslim should have towards God and His Messenger, which is an attitude of total acceptance of their judgment in all situations, the Chapter makes clear that the final decision on the distribution of charity does not belong to the Messenger. It is all God's decision, and it is He who determines which groups of people are entitled to receive a share. The Messenger's role is only to execute what God has ruled. Obligatory donations are taken from the rich in fulfilment of God's commandment, and they are given to the poor also in fulfilment of His same commandment. Its beneficiaries are certain groups of people specified in the Quran. There can be no addition to, or reduction from, these groups by anyone, not even the Messenger himself. **(9:60)**

Thus *zakat*, which is referred to here as charitable donations', occupies its important position in the Quranic law and the Quranic social system. It is not given as a favor by those from whom it is due, but is rather an incumbent duty. Nor is it given as a gift in an amount determined by the one who distributes it, but rather its amount is properly calculated. It is a major the Quranic duty collected by the state in order to fulfil a particular social service. The one who gives it does not hold a favor for doing so, and the beneficiary does not have to beg for it. No, the Quranic social system could never be based on begging.

Zakat is a branch of the Quranic message system of social security, and this system is far wider and more comprehensive than *zakat*, because it works along several lines that comprise all aspects of life and all sides of human ties. *Zakat* is only an important one of these lines.

Zakat is collected at the rate of one-tenth, or a half or a quarter

of one-tenth of the principal property, depending on the type of property held. It is collected from everyone who owns more than the threshold of *zakat* when a year has passed since he or she has had that threshold. This means that most members of the community make their contribution to the *Zakat* Fund. The proceeds are then spent according to the system outlined in the sign we are discussing. The first groups of its beneficiaries are the poor and the needy. The poor are those who have less than what they need to live on. The needy are also in the same position, but they do not show their need or ask for help.

Some among the people who qualify as *zakat* payers and pay their *zakat* one year may find their position has changed the following year. Their property may have decreased and they may not have enough for their needs. Thus they qualify as *zakat* beneficiaries. Some may not have ever paid any *zakat* but they nevertheless qualify as beneficiaries. In both these cases we see *zakat* as a means of social security. However, it is first and foremost a duty imposed by God. A human soul is purified as one pays *zakat* as a form of worship. It is purged of all traces of miserliness, and it triumphs over its love to retain money and property.

THE BENEFICIARIES OF *ZAKAT*

Let us now look at the groups who should benefit by *zakat*. *Charities are only for the poor and the needy and the ones who work to collect it.* **(9:60)** We have already explained who the poor and the needy are. The third group of beneficiaries are the people who actually work in the collection and distribution of *zakat*.

And the ones whose hearts are brought together. This description applies to several groups of people. Among them may be people who are newcomers to the Quranic message and it is felt that they may be helped to consolidate their conviction of its truth. Also included in this category are those whom we hope to win over to the faith. Similarly, we may include here people who have already become Muslim, but we may give them *zakat* money to win over some of their colleagues and friends who may start to think about the Quranic message when they see that those who have become Muslim are being given gifts.

To free the bondsperson. **(9:60)** In olden days, slavery was an international system where captives of war were enslaved. There was no escape from this system where it had to be applied on the basis of an eye for an eye,' until the world could get rid of that system and replace it with something that does not involve enslaving anyone. This portion of *zakat* funds was used to help anyone who could buy

his own freedom in return for a sum of money which he would pay to his master. Alternatively, slaves would be bought with *zakat* funds and then set free by the Muslim authorities.

And the ones who are in debt. **(9:60)** This category includes anyone who has incurred debts for a purpose that does not involve committing a sin. They are helped in the repayment of their debts, instead of forcing them to go bankrupt, as happens in a materialistic civilization where business people who are unable to repay their debts have no other option. the Quranic message is a system based on social security, where no honorable human being is left to go by the wayside, and no honest person is lost. Under man-made law, or should we say the law of the jungle, people are allowed to eat one another like fish, although they give the process a legal guise.

And in the way of God. **(9:60)** Under this heading any activity which brings benefit to the Muslim community and serves the advancement of God's cause may be included.

And for the traveler of the way. **(9:60)** This includes anyone who might have spent or lost his money while on a journey. He is given what will see him home, even though he may be rich in his hometown.

This is then the *zakat* system which some people criticize these days, describing it as a system of begging and handouts. It is simply a social duty, discharged in the form of an act of the Quranic worship, to purge people's hearts of all traces of miserliness and a grudging love of money. It establishes a bond of mutual care and compassion between all people in the Muslim community. It gives human life an element of loving care while providing a comprehensive system of social security. It retains at the same time its essential nature of being an act of worship which strengthens the bond between man and God, as well as the social human bond.

It is after all: *This is a duty to God.* **(9:60)** who knows what is good for humanity and who provides the best system for it based on His wisdom. For, *And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:60)**

THE MESSENGER'S CARE

This explanation of the *zakat* system and how *zakat* is to be distributed shows at the same time how ignorant and ill-mannered were those people who criticized the Messenger and made unfavorable remarks about his honesty. The Chapter gives further examples of hypocrites and what they used to say and do: *And among them are those who malign the Prophet and say:* **(9:61)**

Here their extremely bad manners in their dealings with the Messenger appear in a different way. They find him extremely accessible,

listening to all people with full attention, and always making them welcome. He treats them as they profess to be, without judging their intentions, as he is indeed required to do according to the principles of his faith. They describe his exemplary attitude and refined manners by the wrong adjectives. Describing the Messenger , they say: *He is unquestioning.* By this they mean that he listens to all people, and that he can easily be taken in by lies and false assertions. He believes anyone who is ready to swear to him, and he accepts whatever is being said to him with a false air of conviction.

The Quran uses their very words to silence them with its reply: "And among them are others who hurt the Messenger and say: *Say: He is unquestioning of what is good for you.* **(9:61)** He is a good ear, listening to what God reveals and communicating it to you as it is. In it you have what is most beneficial to you, ensuring a very good outcome for you. Besides, he listens to you most politely, without confronting you with your hypocrisy and scheming, aware of all that as he certainly is.

Moreover, *he believes in God.* **(9:61)** He certainly believes what God tells him about you and about any other people. He also *believes in ones who believe.* **(9:61)** and he believes what they tell him. He knows them to be true believers and he knows that true faith deters its adherents from saying anything false or putting up any false appearance. But above all the Messenger is: *And he is a mercy to those of you who believed.* **(9:61)** He leads them by the hand to all that is good. *And those of you who malign the Messenger of God, for them is a painful punishment.* **(9:61)** That suffering will undoubtedly be inflicted by God on anyone who hurts His Messenger. He will not allow anyone who hurts His Messenger to escape punishment.

DREADING EXPOSURE

They swear by God to you to please you, but God and His Messenger have better right that they should please Him if they had been ones who believe. **(9:62)** They are always ready to swear by God in order to persuade others to believe them. Here the aim of their swearing is also to please the believers. This is typical of the hypocrites everywhere. They say and do whatever they want behind people's backs, but they are too cowardly to admit to their real attitude. They will not say openly what should be said. Therefore, they try to seek every sort of cover and put on any false appearance in the hope of pleasing other people.

They swear by God to you to please you, but God and His Messenger have better right that they should please Him if they had been ones who believe. **(9:62)** Why should they care about other human

beings? What power or influence do they have? But a person who does not believe in God and does not submit to Him will always fear and submit to a human being like him. He would be much better off submitting to God in front of whom all people are alike. A person who submits to God will never suffer any humiliation. The only people who are humiliated and who feel their own inadequacy are those who turn away from God and fear their fellow human beings.

Know they not that whoever opposes God and His Messenger, then, truly, for him will be the fire of hell—one who will dwell in it forever? That is the tremendous degradation. **(9:63)** This is a question of censure and rebuke. They profess to be believers, and a believer knows for certain that there can be no offense greater than defying God and His Messenger and taking a stand in opposition to Him. Hell stands in waiting for anyone who commits such an offense. Moreover, humiliation is the fitting reward of rebellion. If they are truly believers, as they claim to be, how is it then that they do not know such an elementary fact?

They are much too cowardly to confront the Messenger and the believers openly. They fear that God will expose their reality and reveal their intentions to His Messenger: **(9:64-9:66)**

This is a general statement that applied to all hypocrites who feared that revelations might be sent down to expose what they entertained in their hearts. They would then be out on a limb, with all that they had carefully concealed being brought out into the open. However, we have several reports of certain events that led to the revelation of these signs.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus

on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

Lesson 113(9). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Empowering Constancy, Change

How do I develop courage (determination, constancy)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
Signs 9:67-9:72

Madinah: *The ones who are male hypocrites*
and the ones who are female hypocrites, some are of some other.
They command that which is unlawful
and prohibit that which is honorable and close their hands.
They forgot God so He forgot them.
Truly, the ones who are hypocrites,
they are the ones who disobey. (9:67)
And God promised the males, ones who hypocrites

and the females, ones who are hypocrites
and the ones who are ungrateful, the fire of hell,
ones who will dwell in it forever!
It will be enough for them. God cursed them.
And for them is an abiding punishment. (9:68)
Like those before you who had been with more strength than you
and more wealth and children, they enjoyed their apportionment
so you enjoyed your apportionment as enjoyed
those who were before you their apportionment.
And you engaged in idle talk as they engaged in idle talk.
As to those, their actions were fruitless in the present
and are such in the world to come.
And those, they are the ones who are losers. (9:69)
Approaches them not the tidings of those before them
—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud,
and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian,
and that which are cities overthrown?
Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents.
So it had not been God who did wrong to them,
rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)
The males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe,
some are protectors of some other.
They command to that which is honorable
and they prohibit that which is unlawful
and they perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms
and obey God and His Messenger.
Those, God will have mercy on them.
Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (9:71)
God promised males, the ones who believe and the females,
the ones who believe, Gardens beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in them forever and good dwellings
in the Gardens of Eden.
And the greater contentment is with God.
That, it is the winning of the sublime triumph. (9:72)

COMMENTARY°

THE TRODDEN PATH OF HYPOCRISY

So far, the Chapter has given us a number of examples of what the hypocrites said and did, as well as the way their concepts and views are formulated. Now it moves on to describe their true nature and their distinctive qualities which set them as a class apart from true believers. It also defines the punishment awaiting all hypocrites: **(9:67-9:68)**

So, all the hypocrites have the same nature and the same characteristics, regardless of the time and the place where they are found. Their actual actions and statements may differ but they all share the same essence and go back to the same roots. They all have the same essential characteristics: wickedness at heart, ill intentions towards others, and evil scheming against them, because they feel themselves to be too weak and cowardly to enter into an open confrontation, etc. Their behavior is similarly wicked: they urge others to do what they know to be wrong, and discourage them from doing what is right. They are also tight-fisted with their money. They will not give financial support to any good cause except when they need to do so in order to give a false impression about themselves.

At the same time, they deride those who do right and belittle the committing of wrong deeds. But in all that, they conceal their motives and notions. Whatever they say about right and wrong, they say it in whispers, or sly remarks, ridiculing people and slandering them, because they have no courage to confront anyone with their true convictions. Only when they feel secure do they come out with what is truly in their hearts.

They forgot God. **(9:67)** so they only consider their own interests and weigh up other people's reactions. They only fear those who are powerful among fellow human beings. With such, they are humble and submissive. They try their best to please them and to carry favor with them. As a result, God *forgot them* **(9:67)** He gives them no weight and no consideration. Such indeed is their situation in this life, and so it is in the life to come. People only give due importance to those who are strong, ready to speak up and make their position clear, defending their beliefs and trying to impress others with their ideas, and who fight or make peace in open daylight. Such people pay little attention to human beings in order to give all importance to the Lord of humanity. As they take their position in support of the truth, they fear no one. Such people are given their due respect by others.

Truly, the ones who are hypocrites, they are the ones who disobey. **(9:67)** They have abandoned the path of faith, and chosen the path of error. Therefore God promises them the same fate as that He promised the ungrateful. That is indeed a sorrowful destiny: *And God promised the males, ones who hypocrites and the females, ones who are hypocrites and the ones who are ungrateful, the fire of hell, ones who will dwell in it forever! It will be enough for them.* **(9:68)** It is a fitting recompense for their crimes. There is no need for any other punishment. Nevertheless, they are denied access to God's mercy: *God cursed them. And for them is an abiding punishment.* **(9:68)**

Such a wicked nature is not something new; it has its parallels and forerunners in history. Previous communities had their own cases of hypocrisy. Those hypocrites of old faced a doom which befitted their offenses, after they had their apportioned share of what this earthly life had to offer. Despite the fact that those were even more powerful than the hypocrite Arabs and possessed greater wealth and had more numerous children, nothing of all this was of any use to them when God inflicted His punishment on them.

Therefore the Quran reminds those Arabs of what happened to those communities before them, and warns them that as they follow the same route, they are likely to face the same outcome. If heeded, such warnings should be enough to guide them to follow the message of truth: *Like those before you who had been with more strength than you and more wealth and children, they enjoyed their apportionment so you enjoyed your apportionment as enjoyed those who were before you their apportionment. And you engaged in idle talk as they engaged in idle talk.* **(9:69)**

They are deluded by the fact that they have power, wealth and children. Therefore they adopt such an attitude. However, those who recognize the greatest power of God have no such delusions about any earthly or material power. They only fear the One who has the greatest power, and, therefore, they use their own power in demonstrating their obedience to Him and ensuring that His word reigns supreme. Their wealth and children do not give them any false sense of power, because they realize that it is God who has given them these. They are keen to show their gratitude to Him and to use what He has given them in what pleases Him. It is only those who have taken themselves away from the source of real power that are ungrateful and arrogant. Their style of life is that of eating and enjoyment, just like animals.

As to those, their actions were fruitless in the present and are such in the world to come. **(9:69)** Indeed whatever they do is worthless, because it is the same as a plant which has no roots: it cannot stand, grow or blossom.*And those, they are the ones who are losers.* **(9:69)** They have ended with complete loss with nothing left for them.

The Chapter now makes a general address, wondering at those who follow in the footsteps of those communities which suffered God's punishment without learning the lesson: *Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud, and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian, and that which are cities overthrown? Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents.***(9:70)**

The Chapter then puts a question with regard to those who just seek enjoyment and tread the path of destroyed nations: *Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud, and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian, and that which are cities overthrown? Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents. So it had not been God who did wrong to them, rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves.* **(9:70)** But they choose to deny such clear evidence and follow the path of error instead. Therefore God punished them for what they did: *So it had not been God who did wrong to them, rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves.* **(9:70)**

THE BELIEVERS' DWELLING PLACE

In contrast to the ungrateful and the hypocrites stand the true believers. They are characterized by their totally different nature, different behavior and different destiny: **(9:71-9:72)**

While the hypocrites are all of a kind, having the same characteristics, the believers are by nature a community united in furthering every good thing and promoting what is right. Despite having the same qualities, the hypocrites cannot achieve a status of friends or community. That requires mutual solidarity which is alien to the nature of hypocrisy. Such solidarity cannot be achieved even within a group of hypocrites, who remain weak individuals, despite their identical qualities and behavior. The Quran points this out in describing both groups: *The ones who are male hypocrites and the ones who are female hypocrites, some are of some other.* **(9:67)** *The males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe, some are protectors of some other.* **(9:71)** An individual believer has the same qualities of the community, where the values of solidarity and mutual care are upheld to promote what is good and prevent what is wrong: *They command to that which is honorable and they prohibit that which is unlawful.* **(9:71)**

Whenever division appears within the community, it must be a signal pointing to the existence of a strange factor which is alien to its nature and its faith. There must be a purpose or an ailment which prevents the first characteristic of the Muslim community from taking root. That characteristic is described by God, the All- knowing who is aware of all details: "The believers, men and women, are friends to one another." Their friendship motivates them to enjoin what is right and to censure and forbid what is wrong. Their aim is to make God's word reign supreme, and to make their community fulfil its role in human life.

And they perform the formal prayer for prayer gives them their

bond with God. *And give the purifying alms* for *zakat* is the duty which cements the bonds within the Muslim community. It reflects the material and spiritual solidarity within this community. *And obey God and His Messenger.* **(9:71)** They have no desire other than to discharge God's orders and obey Him and His Messenger. They have no law other than that revealed by God, and no constitution other than the faith revealed by God to His Messenger. When God and His Messenger determine something concerning their affairs, they accept it realizing that this is the choice they have. This gives them unity of goals, approaches and methods of action. They have a single course which they follow, paying no attention to other courses of action which may cause disunity in their ranks.

Those, God will have mercy on them. **(9:71)** Mercy is not bestowed only in the hereafter. It is first bestowed in this life, and it is granted first to the individual who fulfils his duties of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is evil, attends to his prayer and pays his *zakat*. It is also granted to the community which is made up of individuals of such qualities. It is manifested in the reassurance felt by such people and in their bond with God who looks after them and spares them much strife and friction. God's mercy is also seen in the unity and co-operation which are characteristic of such a community where every individual enjoys a contented life, and is reassured by God's acceptance.

These four characteristics of the believers: enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, attending to prayer and paying *zakat* are contrasted with four characteristics of the hypocrites, namely, enjoining what is wrong, forbidding what is right, forgetting God and tightening their fists. God's mercy which He bestows on the believers is shown here in contrast to His rejection of the hypocrites and the ungrateful. It is for maintaining these characteristics that God has promised the believers victory and establishment in the land. Thus they will be able to put them into effect when they exercise their role as the leaders of humanity.

Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. **(9:71)** He is able to give power to the believers so that they can help one another to discharge their duties. His wisdom is also seen in granting victory to such a community which sets human life on the right footing, and ensures that God's word reigns supreme.

As we have seen, suffering in hell is the destiny awaiting the hypocrites and ungrateful. They cannot escape God's curse. The fact that He will forget them shows that they are of little importance, suffering deprivation. In contrast, the happiness of being in heaven is what awaits the believers: *God promised males, the ones who believe*

and the females, the ones who believe, Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever and good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. **(9:72)** That is then their dwelling place.

But there is something much greater that awaits them: *And the greater contentment is with God.* **(9:72)** Indeed, heaven and all the bliss and happiness that are assured for those who are admitted into it appear to be so small when compared to being accepted by God: *That, it is the winning of the sublime triumph.* Indeed one moment of being in communion with God, contemplating His majesty; a moment of release from the restraints of a physical constitution, and the limitations of this earth and its petty concerns; a moment when a ray of that light which cannot be seen by our eyes lightens our hearts; a moment when the human soul is enlightened by a glimpse of God's mercy; any moment of these which are experienced only by a small number of people when they have clear, undisturbed vision is far greater than all enjoyments and all aspirations. How do people feel when His acceptance overwhelms their souls and they receive it without interruption?

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged

from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

Lesson 113(10). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Persevering in Goodness

What is perseverance?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

What does persevering in goodness mean?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
Signs 9:73-9:80

Madinah: *O Messenger!*
Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful
and the ones who are hypocrites
and be you harsh against them.

And their place of shelter will be hell.
Miserable will be the Homecoming! (9:73)
They swear by God that they said not against the Messenger but,
certainly, they said the word of ingratitude
and they were ungrateful after their submission to God.
And they were about to do something that they never attain.
And they sought revenge but that God would enrich them
and His Messenger with His grace.
And if they repent, it would be better for them.
And if they turn away, God will punish them
with a painful punishment in the present
and in the world to come.
And there is not for them on earth
either a protector or a helper. (9:74)
And of them are some who made a contract with God saying:
If He gave us of His grace, we will be charitable
and, certainly, we will be
among the ones in accord with morality. (9:75)
Then, when He gave them of His grace,
they were misers with it and turned away
and they were ones who turn aside. (9:76)
He made the consequence hypocrisy in their hearts
until a Day they will meet Him
because they broke with God what they promised Him,
because they had been lying against Him. (9:77)
Know they not that God knows their conspiring secretly
and their secret?
And that God is The Knower of the unseen. (9:78)
Those who find fault with ones who are volunteer donors
to charities from among the ones who believe
and those who find not but their striving to give,
so they derided them. God will deride them.
And they will have a painful punishment. (9:79)
Ask for forgiveness for them or ask not for forgiveness for them,
if thou hast asked for forgiveness for them seventy times,
God will never forgive them.
That is because they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger.
And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey. (9:80)

Commentary°

All Out Effort to Fight Ungratefuls

Thus the Chapter has given us a clear outline of the essential characteristics of true believers and those of the hypocrites who claim

to be believers. This is now followed by an order from God to His Messenger to strive against the ungrateful and the hypocrites. The Quran makes it clear that the hypocrites certainly disbelieved after they had claimed to be Muslims. They tried something that only their disbelief could have led them to contemplate, but God foiled their attempts. It wonders at their hostile attitude to the Messenger when they have gained nothing but good from his message. It invites them to repent and change their attitude. **(9:73-9:74)**

This event betrays what those people harbored of ill intentions. Whether this event or a similar one is meant here, it remains very surprising that they should be so treacherous. The Quran wonders at their attitude: *They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. And they were about to do something that they never attain. And they sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace.* **(9:74)** the Quranic message had caused them no harm to justify such hostility. The only reason that could be thought of was perhaps the wealth they were able to gain as a result of the advances made by the Quranic message. It may be that the easy life they were able to lead accounted for their hostility!

This is followed by a clear verdict concerning their case: **(9:74)**

LYING TO GOD

The Chapter goes on to portray more cases of hypocrisy and how the hypocrites behave. **(9:75-9:76)**

Some of these hypocrites pledge solemnly to God that if He would bestow His grace on them and give them some of His bounty, they would be very charitable to the poor and behave in the way expected of righteous people. Such a pledge, however, is given at a time when those people are poor, when their poverty makes them yearn for a time of plenty. Yet when God answers their prayers, and favors them with His bounty, they forget all about their pledges, and behave like misers. They turn away unwilling to honor their pledges. This violation of their promises and lying to God make hypocrisy take root in their hearts. Therefore they continue to be hypocrites until they die.

Therefore their deliberately unfulfilled pledges and their repeated lies breed hypocrisy which settles permanently in their hearts, as the Quranic sign describes: *He made the consequence hypocrisy in their hearts until a Day they will meet Him because they broke with God what they promised Him, because they had been lying against Him.* **(9:77)**

Since they claim to be believers **(9:78)**, do they not know that God knows all that there is in people's innermost hearts, and what they may say to each other even in the most private of situations? He is certainly aware of all that is kept hidden, and aware of the most secret of intentions. Since they know all this, they should not try to conceal any bad intention, hoping that God will not be aware of it. They should not have harbored any thoughts of leaving their pledges unfulfilled, or of lying to Him.

The Chapter then describes another version of the hypocrites' view of *zakat* which is contrary to that of the true believers. It also shows how the hypocrites are always given to taunting and slandering others, an indication of their perverted nature: *Those who find fault with ones who are volunteer donors to charities from among the ones who believe and those who find not but their striving to give, so they derided them. God will deride them. And they will have a painful punishment.* **(9:79)**

This is how they scoffed at the believers who were prompt in giving what they could, willingly and generously, eager to contribute as best as they could to the jihad campaign. They simply do not understand the motives of any true believer and why he gives willingly, nor do they understand that a believer's conscience urges him to do so. They do not appreciate the pure feelings which respond readily to the call to sacrifice. Therefore, they describe the one who gives much as showing off and say of the one who has only little to give away that he reminds others of his poverty. They thus abuse the rich person because he gives generously, and deride the poor person because he has only very little to give. Thus, no one who gives freely is immune from their derision. They do all this while they themselves stay behind, give nothing and remain niggardly. If they give anything away, they do it only out of hypocrisy. That is the only motive they understand.

Therefore they are given the decisive answer: *God will deride them. And they will have a painful punishment.* **(9:79)** What a painful ridicule which they will suffer. How can we imagine a few weak individuals suffering the ridicule of the Almighty and destined for His punishment. That is a woeful end no doubt.

NEVER TO BE FORGIVEN

Ask for forgiveness for them or ask not for forgiveness for them, if you have asked for forgiveness for them seventy times, God will never forgive them. **(9:80)**

This sign refers to the hypocrites who deride the true believers when they come forward with their contributions and donations.

Such people have a well-known destiny which will not change. They shall not benefit by any request for forgiveness. "God will not forgive them," whether such requests are made on their behalf or not. It seems that the Messenger used to pray to God to forgive those who committed mistakes or sins in the hope that they would mend their ways and earn God's forgiveness. As for the hypocrites, their fate has been sealed. There is no going back, and that is for a very good reason: *That is because they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(9:80)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

Lesson 113(11). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Empathetic Altruism

What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
Signs 9:81-9:89

Madinah: *The ones who are left behind*
were glad of their positions behind the Messenger of God.
And they disliked struggling with their wealth
and themselves in the way of God.
And they said: Move not forward in the heat.
Say: The fire of hell has more severe heat.
Would that they had been understanding! (9:81)
So let them laugh a little and weep much
as a recompense for what they had been earning. (9:82)
*Then, God returned **you** to a section of them.*
*And they asked **your** permission for going forth.*

Then, say: You will never ever go forth with me
nor fight an enemy with me.
You were well-pleased sitting the first time.
Then, sit—ones who await with who lagged behind. (9:83)
Pray you not formally for any of them who died, ever,
or stand up at his grave.
Truly, they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger
and died while they are ones who disobey. (9:84)
And let not their wealth impress you nor their children.
For God only wants to punish them with these in the present
and their souls depart
while they were ones who are ungrateful. (9:85)
When a chapter of the Quran was caused to descend saying that:
Believe in God and struggle along with His Messenger,
those imbued with affluence ask permission of you.
And they said: Forsake us.
We would be with the ones who sit at home. (9:86)
They were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind.
And a seal was set on their hearts so they understand not. (9:87)
But the Messenger and those who believed with him
struggled with their wealth and their lives.
Those, for them are good deeds.
And those, they are the ones who will prosper. (9:88)
God prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in them forever.
That is the winning of the sublime triumph. (9:89)

COMMENTARY°

PLEASED WITH ONE'S MISDEEDS

The Chapter resumes its comments on the attitude of those who stayed behind when the Messenger had marched to Tabuk: **(9:81-9:85)** Such people are so keen to ensure their continued personal comfort and are unwilling to spend anything of their wealth for God's cause. They are devoid of all desire to strive because their hearts are devoid of faith. The adjective used in the Arabic text to refer to them has the added connotation of showing them to be left behind as if they were dispensable articles of little value. They are delighted at having secured their own safety when they stayed at home after the Messenger and his Companions had departed on their blessed mission. They spared themselves the toil and hardship willingly undertaken by the believers who were ready to strive for God's cause, thinking that personal safety is a goal coveted by all men. Therefore: *The ones who are left behind were glad of their positions behind the*

Messenger of God. And they disliked struggling with their wealth and themselves in the way of God. **(9:81)** Such words are only said by a person who is keen to indulge himself in every luxury. Such a person is not fit to do anything which only men of endurance can undertake.

The Chapter answers them coupling the truth with sarcasm: *And they said: Move not forward in the heat. Say: The fire of hell has more severe heat. Would that they had been understanding!* **(9:81)** If they fear the heat of the summer and prefer the comfort of staying in the shade, how will they tolerate the heat of the Are of hell, when it is much more intense and longer lasting? Although this sounds like a remark full of derision, it only states the truth. The choice they had to make was between striving for a certain period in defense of God's cause, tolerating the heat of the earthly summer or being thrown in hell for an extended period the length of which is known to God alone.

So let them laugh a little and weep much. **(9:82)** Their laughter takes place in this life which lasts only for a certain number of days, but their tears are poured in the hereafter with its much longer days. Indeed each one of God's days is equal to one thousand years of ours. Their tears are *as a recompense for what they had been earning.* It is then a befitting and just reward.

Those hypocrites who preferred to stay behind during a time of hardship, when all Muslims were called upon to join the jihad campaign, are not fit to join any campaign or to take part in any effort undertaken for God's cause. Therefore, leniency is not the proper policy to follow with them. They are not to be given the chance of earning the honor of participating in jihad at any time. The Messenger is directed to make this clear to them whenever the occasion arises: *Then, God returned **you** to a section of them. And they asked **your** permission for going forth.* **(9:83)**

The Messenger is instructed to make it clear to them that they have no place in the ranks of the believers: *Then, say: You will never ever go forth with me nor fight an enemy with me.* **(9:83)** And the reason for this attitude is also made clear: *You were well-pleased sitting the first time.* **(9:83)** That deprived them of the privilege of being able to join the ranks of the fighters for God's cause and the honor of going forth with the Messenger. Therefore they are told: *Then, sit—ones who await with who lagged behind.* **(9:83)** You may stay with such people as are like you in their attitude. You all prefer to absent yourselves when the occasion requires sacrifices.

STAYING BEHIND AT A TIME OF MOBILIZATION

This last instruction to the Messenger meant that he was not to

allow those hypocrites who stayed behind when he called on all Muslims to join him on the expedition to Tabuk to be part of any subsequent campaign. They were to be deprived of the privilege of joining any effort aimed at defending God's cause. The Messenger is also commanded not to give such people any semblance of honor: *Pray you not formally for any of them who died, ever, nor stand up at his grave.* **(9:84)**

The Chapter gives here the reason for this instruction: *Truly, they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger and died while they are ones who disobey.* **(9:84)** This explanation applies to the order not to pray for the dead among them and for the Messenger not to stand at any of their graves. But the principle itself has a wider application. Prayer and standing at the grave of a deceased person are aspects of honor. The Muslim community must not accord such an honor to anyone who stays behind at a time of jihad. The standing of any person in the Muslim community is related to what that person is ready to give, do or sacrifice at the time when he is called upon to do so. True Muslims give their all, remain steadfast at times of hardship and are always ready to strive with their wealth and persons. Therefore they receive the honor they deserve.

On the other hand, those who stay behind deserve neither the apparent honor seen by everyone in the community, nor the type of mental appreciation that is felt by people though may not be demonstrated in any action: *And let not their wealth impress you nor their children. For God only wants to punish them with these in the present and their souls depart while they were ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:85)** The general meaning of this sign has already been explained when a similar one was mentioned earlier in the Chapter. It is repeated here for a different reason. What is meant here is that no significance should be attached by the Muslim community to the wealth or the children of these hypocrites, because to admire these is to give such people a degree of mental honor or appreciation which they do not deserve. The only thing they deserve is to be ignored and looked upon with contempt.

When a Chapter was revealed from on high calling on them to believe in God and to strive alongside His Messenger, those of them who were well able to do so asked you to give them leave and said to you: *When a chapter of the Quran was caused to descend saying that: Believe in God and struggle along with His Messenger, those imbued with affluence ask permission of thee. And they said: Forsake us. We would be with the ones who sit at home.* **(9:86)**

These signs tell of two different natures, one of hypocrisy, weakness, and self- abasement, and another full of faith, strength and sac-

rifice. These give rise to two different attitudes: one of deviousness, humbleness and lack of self-respect, and another which is straightforward, dignified and ready to sacrifice.

In regard to the former, they do not realize how abject and humiliating their request is. They are only interested in their own safety. Those who make their own safety paramount do not feel any shame, because: *They were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind. And a seal was set on their hearts so they understand not.* **(9:87)** Had they been able to understand it, they would have realized that it is when one strives for God's cause that one feels strong, leading a life of dignity and honor, and when one stays behind, one lives in weakness and abject humiliation. But who are these? They are the ones who *were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind.* (9:87)

But the Messenger and those who believed with him struggled with their wealth and their lives. (9:88) They fulfil the duties imposed on them by their faith and work hard to achieve the dignity which cannot be attained while one stays behind. Therefore: *Those, for them are good deeds.* **(9:88)** Such good things are of both the type enjoyed here in this life and the one attained in the life to come. In this world they enjoy dignity, honor and a position which guarantees that people respect what they say. In the hereafter, they receive the best and fullest reward, as they attain God's acceptance. *And those, they are the ones who will prosper.* **(9:88)** They prosper in this life as they enjoy good living, and they prosper in the life to come as they receive their mighty reward. *God prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever. That is the winning of the sublime triumph.* **(9:89)**

Some of the Bedouins who had excuses to offer turned up, begging to be granted exemption; while those who denied God and His Messenger stayed behind. *And the ones who make excuses drew near from among the nomads that permission be given them. And they sat back, those who lied against God and His Messenger. There will light on those who were ungrateful among them a painful punishment.* **(9:90)**

The first group are the ones who have real excuses which merit their exemption. Therefore no blame is attached to them for their request. The others have no real excuse. They stay behind and lie to God and His Messenger. The ungrateful among these have grievous punishment awaiting them. Those who repent and do not disbelieve are not discussed here because they may face a different fate.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 113(12). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS BEING FAIR AND JUST

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)
SIGNS 9:90-9:99

Madinah: *And the ones who make excuses*
drew near from among the nomads
that permission be given them.
And they sat back, those who lied against God and His Messenger.
There will light on those who were ungrateful among them a
painful punishment. (9:90)
Not on the weak nor on the sick
nor on those who find nothing to spend
is there fault if they were true to God and His Messenger.
There is no way against the ones who are doers of good.
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (9:91)
Nor on those who when they approached ***you***
that ***you*** *would find mounts to carry them,*
you *had said: I find not what will carry you.*
So they turned away while their eyes overflow with tears of grief
when they find nothing for them to spend in the way of God. (9:92)
The way of blame is only against those who ask thee permission
to remain behind and they are rich.
They were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind.
And God set a seal on their hearts so that they know not. (9:93)
They will make excuses to you when you returned to them.
Say: Make no excuses. We will never believe you.
Surely, God told us news about you.
God and His Messenger will consider your actions.
Again, you will be returned to One Who Knows
the unseen and the visible.
Then, He will tell you of what you had been doing. (9:94)
They will swear to you by God when you turned about to them
so that you renounce them.
So renounce them.
Truly, they are a disgrace.
And their place of shelter will be hell,
as a recompense for what they had been earning. (9:95)
They swear to you so that you will be well-pleased with them.
So while you be well-pleased with them,
then, truly,
God is not well-pleased with the folk,
the ones who disobey. (9:96)
The nomads are stauncher in ingratitude and hypocrisy
and more likely not to know the ordinances
that God caused to descend to His Messenger.

And God is Knowing, Wise. (9:97)
And of the nomads are some who take what they spend
to themselves as something owed them and await
for some turn of your fortunes.
Theirs will be the reprehensible turn of fortune.
And God is Hearing, Knowing. (9:98)
And of the nomads are some who believe in God
and the Last Day and take for himself what he spends—
as an offering to God—and blessings of the Messenger
that will be sent for them.
No doubt these are not but an offering from them.
God will cause them to enter into His mercy.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (9:99)

COMMENTARY°

EAGER BUT WITHOUT MEANS

The Chapter then provides a definitive statement with regard to who should join the army when there is a general call of mobilization. It is not obligatory that all people, whether able or not, should fight. the Quranic message is a religion that does not overburden people. God does not charge anyone with more than he or she can bear. Those without the means or the ability to fight cannot be blamed because of their situation: **(9:90-9:92)**

The issue is clear, then. The weak, disabled, ill and also those who are too poor to pay their own expenses and for whom the Messenger cannot provide transport will not be blamed for staying behind. The real blame attaches to those who come to the Messenger with their thinly disguised excuses, when they have the means to go to battle and have no real reason for staying behind. *The way of blame is only against those who ask you permission to remain behind and they are rich.* **(9:93)**

It is the ones happy to stay behind that are to be blamed, because they have no real desire to take part in a struggle for God's cause. They do not give what is due to God when He has given them wealth and ability, nor do they fulfil their duties to the Quranic message when it has given them power and dignity, or to their community which gives them protection and honor. Therefore God's description of them: *They were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind.* **(9:93)** They are then weak of heart, spineless, and content, though without reason, to remain with those who stay behind for valid reasons such as women, children and disabled men who are exempt from jihad.

In view of this: *And God set a seal on their hearts so that they*

know not. **(9:93)** With what they have preferred for themselves of laziness and inactivity, staying away from active participation in efforts that open new horizons for the Quranic cause, God has sealed their means of reception, feeling and understanding.

HOLLOW EXCUSES

They will make excuses to you when you returned to them. **(9:94)** This is a piece of information which God gives to His Messenger and the faithful among his Companions. It tells them of what those hypocrites will be doing when the Muslims return from their arduous expedition. This confirms that these signs were revealed when the Muslim army was on its way back from the expedition, and before they had arrived in Madinah. The hypocrites would come with their excuses, because they would be ashamed to let their action be seen in its true light. It would be disgraceful to let it be seen with its real motives, which were a weak faith, a preference for personal safety and an unwillingness to fight a great power: " *Say: Make no excuses. We will never believe you. Surely, God told us news about you.* **(9:94)**

Those offering their excuses are told not to do so, because words are of no use. They need to show what they do. If their action confirms what they say, then their assertions will be true. If not, there can be no trust or acceptance. *God and His Messenger will consider your actions.* **(9:94)** God sees every action and knows every secret hidden in every heart. He knows the real intentions of all His creation. The Messenger was to take what people say in conjunction with what they do. That would be the basis of internal relationships in the Muslim community.

Moreover, matters will not end in this life on earth. There will eventually come the reckoning and the reward which will be based on God's absolute knowledge of what is done openly and what remains in people's hearts: *Again, you will be returned to One Who Knows the unseen and the visible.* **(9:94)**

The phrase "beyond the reach of human perception" means what people do not know, while "what is manifest" refers to what they see and what comes to their knowledge. God knows all this when the statement is read in this simple sense, but it also has a wider and more profound sense. God knows everything in this world which is seen and experienced, and He knows everything in the worlds beyond, of which we know nothing. There is an intended meaning in what God says to those whom He addresses in this sign: *Then, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* **(9:94)** They know what they do, but God — limitless is He in His glory — knows their doings better than they, and He will tell them about these. It is often the case that a per-

son may not be aware of an inner motive for something he does. God knows it better than he. An action may very often produce an outcome that may remain unknown to the person who performed it. What is meant here is that God gives people the results of what they used to do. That is the reward they will have for their actions. Here, though, they are only informed and the reward itself is not specified. *They will swear to you by God when you turned about to them so that you renounce them. So renounce them.* .**(9:95)**

God instructs His Messenger to leave them alone, not as a sign of forgiveness, but as a sign of turning away from them, because they are abominable: *Truly, they are a disgrace.* **(9:95)** This gives a physical expression of mental impurity. They are not physically or bodily unclean, but they are unclean mentally, as a result of their actions. The physical description gives an image that is much more abominable, revolting and contemptible. They are more concerned with their personal safety than striving for the cause of the community and are hence described as unclean. Their impurity contaminates souls, spreads disease and fills people with disgust, just like a rotten, dead body left in their midst.

And their place of shelter will be hell, as a recompense for what they had been earning. **(9:95)** They feel that they gain by staying behind, securing their safety and comfort and enjoying their wealth. The fact is that in this life they are unclean, while they waste their share of the life to come. They end up in utter loss. God certainly tells the truth.

The Chapter goes on to tell more of what they will do after the Muslim fighters return home: *They swear to you so that you will be well-pleased with them. So while you be well-pleased with them, then, truly, God is not well-pleased with the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(9:96)** They first request the Muslims to overlook what they have done. Then, they gradually ask for more, trying to make the Muslims feel easy with them so that they can secure their own safety within the community. They want to ensure that the Muslims continue to accept their outward appearances, treating them on that basis, and not mounting a campaign against them as God has ordered them in this final, definitive description of relations between Muslims and hypocrites.

A MOSQUE FOR THE HYPOCRITES

This new passage **(9:97-9:99)** gives an account of the different groups and classes that lived within the Muslim community at the time of the Tabuk Expedition. It describes those groups which were part of its overall structure and their true attitudes to faith as well as

their deeds and distinctive characteristics.

The stubborn opposition of the idolaters continued to act as a barrier preventing the advance of the Quranic message into the rest of Arabia. The idolaters tribe had the ultimate say in all religious matters in Arabia, and it exercised a very strong influence over economic, political and social matters. Therefore its determined and uncompromising opposition to the new faith ensured that the rest of Arabia turned away from it, or at least adopted a wait-and-see attitude until the fight between the idolaters and one of its children had produced a clear winner. When the idolaters declared its submission, followed by the major tribes of Hawazin and Thaqif, and when the three main Jewish tribes in Madinah had previously been subdued, and those of Khaybar had been defeated, people embraced the new faith in flocks. The whole of Arabia submitted to the Quranic message within one year.

This rapid expansion in the geographical area of the Quranic message heralded the resurgence, on an even more intensive scale, of all the symptoms experienced after the resounding victory the Muslims achieved in the Battle of Badr. The Muslim community had almost managed to rid itself of those, thanks to the seven-year-long education process it had enjoyed after that battle. The rapid geographical expansion of the Quranic message in Arabia could have had some serious negative effects, had it not been for the fact that Madinah had become, in its entirety, the solid base of the Quranic message. It was God Almighty who looked after the new faith and charted its course. He had prepared the first core of believers, the Emigrants and the Helpers, to be the first solid base of the Quranic message after the relatively important expansion that followed the victory at Badr. He also made the whole of Madinah the solid base which would withstand the great expansion brought about by the splendid triumph achieved when Makkah was won over to the Quranic message. God certainly knows what forces to mobilize in support of His message.

The first symptom of the new dangers appeared on the day of the Battle of Hunayn, mentioned in this Chapter: **(9:25-9:26)** One of the apparent reasons for the defeat at the beginning of the battle was that 2,000 of those the Messenger had pardoned in Makkah, and who embraced the Quranic message after the fall of that city, had joined the 10,000-strong army which originally travelled from Madinah to subdue the idolaters in Makkah. The presence of those 2,000 men alongside the others who came from Madinah was a cause of imbalance in the Muslim ranks. There was also the fact that the Hawazin took the Muslims by surprise. What that meant was that the army did

not wholly belong to the solid, well-knit base which had been nurtured over the several years separating the Battle of Badr and the conquest of Makkah.

Similarly, the negative symptoms that appeared at the time of the Tabuk Expedition were a natural result of this rapid expansion and the great influx of new Muslims with varying standards of faith. These symptoms are discussed fully in this Chapter in a long exposition with varied styles and methods of treatment.

WHERE HYPOCRISY IS HARDEST

Bearing this in mind, we can now discuss the signs included in this passage: **(9:97-9:99)**

These signs begin with mentioning different classes of desert Arabs, some of whose tribes lived close to Madinah. Earlier, they had attacked the land of the Quranic message in Madinah, but later, when they accepted the Quranic message, they belonged to either one of the two groups mentioned in this passage. The descriptive outline of these groups begins with establishing a rule about their general nature: *The nomads are stauncher in ingratitude and hypocrisy and more likely not to know the ordinances that God caused to descend to His Messenger.* **(9:97)**

And God is Knowing, Wise. **(9:97)** He knows His creation, their circumstances, characteristics and nature. He has given them a variety of talents, capabilities and specialities, and He made them into races, communities and nations. All this is in manifestation of His wisdom.

THE GAP SEPARATING FAITH AND HYPOCRISY

Having given a general description of the desert Arabs, the Chapter classifies them further on the basis of what changes in their characteristics the faith has produced, and the gap that has emerged between hearts that have experienced the happiness generated by faith and those that remained unbelieving, hypocritical. This description is drawn against the background of the situation of the Muslim community at that time: *And of the nomads are some who take what they spend to themselves as something owed them and await for some turn of your fortunes. Theirs will be the reprehensible turn of fortune. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(9:98)** Most probably the hypocrites among the desert people are mentioned first in order to group them with the hypocrites in Madinah who were the subject of discussion in the previous passage. This complements the discussion of hypocrites from both areas.

Such a person needs to give some of his money in *zakat* and to

contribute to the jihad campaigns. In this way he gives evidence of his being a Muslim and is thus able to enjoy the comforts of life in the Muslim community. He is also able to win favor with the Muslims who were the major power in Arabia. To him, what he spends is a clear loss which he is forced to pay. He does not give it out of any good will towards the Quranic message or the Muslims. He does not like that they are victorious. Indeed his real attitude is quite different. He *awaits for some turn of your fortunes* **(9:98)** He would love to see the Muslims return from battle soundly defeated. He would be thrilled if misfortune befell them.

Therefore a supplication against them is stated here. A supplication by God signifies certainty. Therefore the supplication is given here in the form of a statement: *Theirs will be the reprehensible turn of fortune. .* **(9:98)** The Arabic expression describes evil as if it has a circle which closes in on them and from which they can have no escape. It turns them round and they are seized in the middle with no let up. This abstract notion, described in vivid and concrete terms, brings the meaning closer to our minds. *And God is Hearing, Knowing* **(9:98)** His hearing and knowledge are attributes which fit in perfectly with the atmosphere of ill intention, the waiting for misfortune to befall the Muslim community, and the hypocrisy that fills their hearts, although they try hard to conceal it. God certainly hears what they say, and He knows what they hide and what they keep in the open.

Another group however have experienced the happiness and delight that come with faith: *And of the nomads are some who believe in God and the Last Day and take for himself what he spends—as an offering to God—and blessings of the Messenger that will be sent for them. No doubt these are not but an offering from them.* **(9:99)** What motivates these people to spend their money is their belief in God and the Day of Judgement. They have no fear of people, and they feel no need to flatter those in power. They make no calculation of profit and loss which they are likely to make in this world.

This group of believers wish that what they spend of their wealth will bring them closer to God and are eager to be remembered in the Messenger's prayers. That remembrance would demonstrate that he is pleased with them. His prayers are certainly answered by God as he devotes them to believers who spend their money for God's sake. The Chapter states clearly that what they give is indeed a means to give them what they wish of being close to God: *God will cause them to enter into His mercy.* **(9:99)** Again mercy is described in rather concrete terms to set it in contrast with the evil turn'. Mercy is described here as if it is a house into which they are admitted. *Truly,*

God is Forgiving, Compassionate. **(9:99)** He accepts repentance and charity. He forgives past sins and bestows His mercy on those who seek it.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view

Lesson 113(13). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Logic (being reasonable)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions und which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, c what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message.The Quranic message, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[1]

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
Signs 9:100-9:110

Madinah: *As for the forerunners,*
the ones who take the lead
among the ones who emigrate
and the helpers and those who followed them with kindness,
God was well-pleased with them
and they were well-pleased with Him.
He prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.
That is the winning of the sublime triumph. (9:100)
And from around you of the nomads are ones who are hypocrites.
And from among the people of the city,
some grew bold in hypocrisy.
***You** have not known them but We know them.*
We will, truly, punish them two times in this world.
Again, they will be returned to a tremendous punishment. (9:101)
And others acknowledged their impieties.
They mixed actions, ones in accord with morality
with others that are bad deeds.
Perhaps God will turn to them in forgiveness.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (9:102)
Take charity from their wealth to purify them
and make them pure with it.
And invoke blessings for them.
Truly, thy entreaties will bring a sense of comfort and rest to them.
And God is Hearing, Knowing. (9:103)
Know they not that God is He
Who accepts remorse from His servants and takes charities
and that God, He is The Accepter of Repentance,
The Compassionate? (9:104)
And say: Act!
God will consider your actions and so will His Messenger
and the ones who believe.
And you will be returned to Him,
One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible.
Then, He will tell you what you had been doing. (9:105)
And there are others, ones who are waiting in suspense
for the command of God.
Either He will punish them
or He will turn to them in forgiveness.
And God is Knowing, Wise. (9:106)
Mention those who took to themselves places of prostration

by injuring and in ingratitude and separating and dividing
between the ones who believe
and as a stalking place for whoever warred
against God and His Messenger before.
And they will, certainly, swear that:
We wanted nothing but the fairer.
And God bears witness that they are,
truly, ones who lie. (9:107)
And stand not up in it ever!
A place of prostration that was founded from the first day
on God-consciousness
is more rightful that you have stood up in it.
In it are men who love to cleanse themselves.
And God loves the ones who cleanse themselves. (9:108)
Is one who founded his structure on the consciousness of God
and His contentment better than he
who founded his structure
on the brink of a crumbling, tottering bank of a river
so that it tumbled with him into the fire of hell?
And God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust! (9:109)
The structure they built will cease not the skepticism in their hearts
until their hearts are cut asunder.
And God is Knowing, Wise. (9:110)

COMMENTARY°

THOSE WHO LEAD THE WAY

Having classified the desert Arabs, now the Chapter classifies the whole community, in urban and desert areas alike, into four groupings: the vanguard who took the lead among the Emigrants and the Helpers as well as those who followed in their footsteps, those who were hardened in their hypocrisy whether they lived in Madinah or in the desert nearby, those who combined good deeds with bad ones, and those whose cases were deferred for judgement. These groups are outlined in the following signs:

It appears that these signs **(9:100-9:106)**, making this classification, were revealed after the Messenger's return from Tabuk. By that time, different people, most of whom were hypocrites, had presented their excuses. The true believers who did not join the expedition made their real regret apparent, and some of them tied themselves to a pillar in the mosque declaring that they would not release themselves until the Messenger himself released them. Others did not make any excuses, hoping that God would accept their sincere repentance. These were three of the Messenger's Companions

whose cases were not settled until God accepted their repentance, as will be discussed in full in Chapter 7. Together these groups represented the total variety of people around the Muslim area in Arabia after the expedition. God wanted to reveal the whole of the battlefield in front of His Messenger and the true believers with him. They would then understand the situation that prevailed at the time, which was close to the end of the first epoch, close to the time and birth place of this religion of the Quranic message.

Such a revelation was necessary before the Quranic message made its move to liberate the whole of humanity throughout the globe. All communities needed to be liberated from serving any deities other than God, and from submitting themselves to anyone beside God. Before making such a move, the Muslim community needed to fully understand the prevailing situation so that it would be able to chart its course of action with clarity and a thorough perception of what was needed.

As for the forerunners, the ones who take the lead among the ones who emigrate and the helpers and those who followed them with kindness, **(9:100)** This class of Muslims, with its three groupings, the Emigrants, the Helpers and those who followed closely in their footsteps, formed the hard core of the Muslim community in Arabia after the conquest of Makkah. This was the group that ensured the unity of the Muslim community in every hardship as well as every period of ease and comfort. It is often the case that a trial of ease and comfort is more difficult to overcome than a trial of hardship.

This account clearly shows the position of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them with regard to their strength of faith and readiness to sacrifice their all for God's cause. Theirs is a highly significant role in the building of the structure of the Muslim community and giving the message of the Quranic message a practical manifestation. Their role will continue to influence every group of people who want to live their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Quranic message.

God was well-pleased with them and they were well-pleased with Him. He prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. That is the winning of the sublime triumph. **(9:100)** That God is pleased with them means that He will be rewarding them generously. Indeed His pleasure with them is the highest reward to which they may aspire. That they are pleased with Him means that they are reassured by being on His side, confident that whatever He determines for them is right and good. They are grateful when they receive His bounty and they remain steadfast when they endure hardship. However, usage of the term

"well pleased" in both conditions imparts an air of total happiness, which is mutual between God and this elite group of His servants. It elevates this group to a high position in which they reciprocate God's feelings towards them when He is their supreme Lord and they are His servants whom He created. Language cannot adequately describe such a situation; it is merely felt as we read the Quranic expression and reflect on it with an open mind and a spirit that aspires to the sublime.

That is their situation with their Lord. It is a permanent situation: *God was well-pleased with them and they were well-pleased with Him. He prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. That is the winning of the sublime triumph.* **(9:100)** What triumph can be greater than this? It is indeed the supreme triumph.

MIXING GOOD DEEDS WITH BAD ONES

The second group is in total contrast with the one we have just described: *And from around you of the nomads are ones who are hypocrites. And from among the people of the city, some grew bold in hypocrisy.* **(9:101)** We have discussed at length the nature of the hypocrites, whether they lived in Madinah or in the Arabian desert. The Chapter has given numerous examples of their attitude. Here, however, it points to a special type of hypocrite who acquired great skill in hiding their true attitude to the extent that they remain unknown to the Messenger, despite his profound insight and great experience. What is so special about such hypocrites?

God declares that such hypocrites were in Madinah, as well as among the nearby desert Arabs. He reassures His Messenger and the believers that the hypocrites' scheming will come to nothing. He also warns the hypocrites who were adept at hiding their true position that they will not escape God's punishment. Indeed their punishment will be doubled in this life as well as in the life to come. *You have not known them but We know them. We will, truly, punish them two times in this world. Again, they will be returned to a tremendous punishment.* **(9:101)** Perhaps the closest interpretation of the double punishment in this life is that they worry lest their reality be discovered by the Muslim community, and the punishment inflicted on them by the angels when they gather their souls, hitting them on their faces and backs. Alternatively, it refers to the pain they feel when they see the Muslims triumph over the forces of falsehood and their fear lest their true feelings are discovered. God knows best the precise meaning of His statement.

If those were the two extreme groups, there is a third one in be-

tween: **(9:102-9:105)**

The fact that God instructs His Messenger to take a certain action with this group suggests that they were known in person to the Messenger. It is reported that these signs refer to a particular group who did not join the Messenger on the Tabuk Expedition, but soon regretted their action, admitted their guilt and repented. Their bad action was to stay behind, and their good action was their regret and repentance.

Having described this group of people who regretted their staying behind and repented having done so, the Chapter goes on to say: *And others acknowledged their impieties. They mixed actions, ones in accord with morality with others that are bad deeds. Perhaps God will turn to them in forgiveness. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.***(9:102)**

God says to His Messenger, Muhammad: *Take charity from their wealth to purify them and make them pure with it. And invoke blessings for them. Truly, your entreaties will bring a sense of comfort and rest to them.* **(9:103)** Those were people with alert consciences which prompted their regret and repentance for what they had done. Therefore they deserved to be reassured and to receive the sympathy which opened up for them hopeful prospects. As the Messenger was molding a whole community and establishing a system, he felt he needed to wait for instructions from God regarding their cases.

Thus we see how God favored them with His acceptance as He knew that they were good at heart, sincere in their repentance. He ordered His Messenger to take some of their money for charitable uses, and to pray for them. Taking charity from them brought them back as full members of the Muslim community. They could once again share in its duties and participate in meeting its responsibilities. They were thus neither rejected nor expelled. Their charitable donation added to the purity of their hearts. The Messenger's prayer on their behalf gave them reassurance.

And God is Hearing, Knowing. **(9:103)** He hears supplications and prayers, and He knows what is in peoples' hearts. He judges all in accordance with what He hears and knows, for He is indeed the One who hears all and knows all. It is He who makes the final judgement on His servants, accepting their repentance and their charity. His Messenger, the Messenger Muhammad, carries out what God commands. He does not initiate any part of this himself.

To establish this fact God says in the following sign: *Know they not that God is He Who accepts remorse from His servants and takes charities and that God, He is The Accepter of Repentance, The Compassionate?* **(9:104)** This is a form of question which signifies an

emphatic statement, meaning: let them know that it is God who accepts repentance, takes charitable offerings and bestows mercy on His servants. None of this belongs to anyone beside God.

Finally those who had repented after they had stayed behind are addressed directly: *And say: Act! God will consider your actions and so will His Messenger and the ones who believe. And you will be returned to Him, One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible. Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(9:105)** The Quranic system is based on faith as well as action that gives credence to professed beliefs. The real proof of their repentance is their action which is apparent to all. It is seen by God, His Messenger and the believers. In the hereafter, they are returned to the One whose knowledge encompasses what is manifest and what is thought to be hidden, as well as physical actions and inner feelings.

Regretting slips and mistakes and repenting past errors do not represent the end. It is the action that follows such repentance that counts. It may either give credence to such feelings of regret and build new actions on their basis or undermine them and deprive them of their value.

The Quranic message is a practical code of living in which feelings and intentions count for little unless they are transformed into real action. A good intention has its place, but the final verdict is not determined on its basis. A good intention is added to the action following it in order to determine its value. This is the import of the hadith in which the Messenger says: "Actions are but by intentions." So intention on its own is of little value unless it is acted upon.

AWAITING GOD'S JUDGEMENT

The fourth group of people in the society that lived in Madinah and its surrounding area at the time of the revelation of this Chapter are left to God to judge in their case: *And there are others, ones who are waiting in suspense for the command of God. Either He will punish them or He will turn to them in forgiveness. And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:106)**

This is the fourth group of people who did not join the expedition, and whose cases were deferred for judgement. These were different from the hypocrites, the apologetic, and the repentant who admitted their error. Until the revelation of these signs, nothing had been determined in the case of this group. Their cases were left to God for judgement. Neither they nor anyone else were aware of what decision would be taken.

A MOSQUE TO PROMOTE UNBELIEF

The story of this mosque: *Mention those who took to themselves places of prostration by injuring and in ingratitude and separating and dividing between the ones who believe and as a stalking place for whoever warred against God and His Messenger before. And they will, certainly, swear that: We wanted nothing but the fairer. And God bears witness that they are, truly, ones who lie.* **(9:107)** intended for mischief is prominent in the events of the expedition to Tabuk. This is the reason for making specific mention of the hypocrites who built it. Their case is discussed at length after completing the discussion of the various groups of people in the Muslim society at the time.

This evil man dug large holes in the ground in the area separating the two hosts. The Messenger fell into one of them and received an injury to his face, and his right lower front tooth was broken. There was a cut on his forehead. At the beginning of the battle, Abu mir stepped forward and addressed his clansmen among the Helpers, calling on them to support him. When they recognized him and understood his purpose, they abused him, describing him as an enemy of God. He went back to the idolaters saying some evil had befallen his people after he had left them.

Before Abu Amir left Madinah, the Messenger had called on him to believe in God and he recited the Quran to him, but he stubbornly refused. The Messenger then prayed that he would die in a far away land, without support. That was indeed his end. When the Battle o Uhud was over and the Muslims were able to overcome its effect he felt that the Messenger would move from strength to strength. H then fled to join Hercules, the Byzantine Emperor, and tried to persuade him to fight the Messenger. He promised him something to satisfy him and Abu mir stayed in his court. He started to write to a group of hypocrites from his tribe, promising them that he would come at the head of a large army to defeat the Messenger. He asked them to establish an outpost where anyone he would be sending could stay, and where he himself would establish residence when he came. They started to build what ostensibly was a mosque at a place not far away from the Quba' Mosque.

The building was completed before the Messenger marched towards Tabuk. The hypocrites who built it came to the Messenger and asked him to come over and pray in their mosque, hoping that they would use that prayer as an endorsement of their action. They told the Messenger that they intended it to be used by the weak and the ill on a rainy night. However, God protected him against praying in such a place. He said to them: We have embarked on a travel. So let it be until we come back, God willing. When the Messenger was on his way back from Tabuk, and at a distance of one day's travel from

Madinah, or even less, the Angel Gabriel came down with the true story of this mosque intended for evil and to sow seeds of discord among the believers who used to pray in the Quba Mosque which was founded right from the first day on piety. The Messenger dispatched some of his Companions to pull this other mosque down before he arrived in Madinah.

This is then the story of the mosque which was built by the hypocrites to further their designs against the Quranic message. The Messenger was instructed not to pray there, but to pray in the first mosque built in the Quranic period, i.e. the Quba' Mosque: *And stand not up in it ever! A place of prostration that was founded from the first day on God-consciousness is more rightful that you have stood up in it. In it are men who love to cleanse themselves. And God loves the ones who cleanse themselves.* **(9:108)**

HOUSES OF FALSE WORSHIP

It was then at the time of the Messenger that a mosque for mischief making was built by the hypocrites, intended to scheme against the Quranic message and to undermine the position of the Muslims. Its purpose was to promote unbelief and to provide a cover for those who plotted against the Muslim community, co-operating with the enemies of the Quranic message while pretending to be believers. The same types of mosque are still being established in a great variety of forms, making use of advanced evil. These may take the form of an activity which ostensibly seeks to promote the Quranic message, but works in reality to obliterate it or to deprive it of its true character. They may also establish regimes or social orders which raise a false religious banner, when in reality they undermine the Quranic message. They can also take the form of organizations, books and research which take on a religious guise in order to pacify those who feel ill at ease as they see the Quranic message being attacked by its enemies. These organizations and books try to quieten their worries, reassuring them that the Quranic message is still in a healthy position.

Because there are so many masks and disguised places of mischief, it is important that they should be known and identified. They should be made to appear in their rue colors, and their reality laid bare. If we do this, we will only be doing what was done to this mosque once its true nature was unmasked so clearly and powerfully: **(9:107-9:110)**

The inimitable Quranic style draws here a very vivid picture showing the end which awaits every deceptive structure built close to a real mosque or centre of piety, and intended to play the same

role as that of the first such mosque built by the hypocrites of Madinah. It reassures the true advocates of faith who are keen to purge themselves of the evil designs of the enemies of the Quranic message: *Is one who founded his structure on the God-consciousness of God and His contentment better than he who founded his structure on the brink of a crumbling, tottering bank of a river so that it tumbled with him into the fire of hell? And God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust!* **(9:109)**

This remarkably vivid scene which is full of movement is painted and brought alive with just a few words, which reassure the advocates of the truth that the scheming of the hypocrites and the ungrateful will come to nought. Thus those who build their structure on a proper foundation of fear of God will be able to face up to others who scheme against this religion of the Quranic message.

The Chapter paints another remarkable scene showing the effects on the evil builders of their deceptive structure: *The structure they built will cease not the skepticism in their hearts until their hearts are cut asunder. And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:110)** The edge has crumbled and the ill-intended structure built on it has collapsed and fallen into the precipice, into the fire of hell, and good riddance!

Yet the effects of that building remain in the hearts of its builders in the form of doubt, worry and confusion. It will continue to deprive them of any comfort and stability until their hearts are torn into pieces and collapse from their positions.

The image of a collapsing building is complementary to that o doubt, instability and worry. The first depicts a physical picture anc the other a mental one. Both are held side by side in the remarkable scene painted by the inimitable Quranic style. They also complement each other in practical human situations in every age. The deviant schemer will always be shaken, confused, unstable, worried lest his reality is unmasked. This is perhaps the secret of the surpassing excellence of the Quran. It depicts feelings with artistic beauty and remarkable complementarity and contrast. At the same time it maintains simplicity and clarity of expression and vividness in its imagery.

Beyond all this there is a definite purpose served by the unmasking of the true nature of the mosque built by the hypocrites, and by the classifying of the community into those levels of belief. Thus the path is charted for the Quranic movement and its field of operation is clearly drawn.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

Lesson 113(14). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Definitiveness (to be precise)

Definitiveness means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitiveness indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)

Signs 9:111-9:118

Madinah: *Truly, God bought from the ones who believe*
themselves and their properties.
For them is the Garden! They fight in the way of God
so they kill and are slain.
It is a promise rightfully on Him in the Torah and the Gospel
and the Quran.
And who is more true to His compact than God?
Then, rejoice in the good tidings of the bargain
that you made in trading with Him
And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph (9:111
for the repentant worshippers, the ones who praise,
the ones who are inclined to fasting, the ones who bow down,
the ones who prostrate themselves, the ones who command
that which is honorable
and the ones who prohibit that which is unlawful,
and the ones who guard the ordinances of God,
and give you good tidings to the ones who believe! (9:112)
It had not been for the Messenger and those who believed
to ask for forgiveness for ones who are polytheists—
even if they had been imbued with kinship—
after it became clear to them
that they are the Companions of Hellfire. (9:113)
And had not been Abraham asking for forgiveness
for his father only because of a promise he had promised him?
Then, when it became clear to him that, truly, he was an enemy
to God, he cleared himself from him.
Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing. (9:114)
God would not have been causing a folk to go astray

after He guided them until He makes manifest to them
of what they should be God-conscious.
Truly, God is Knowing of everything. (9:115)
Truly, God, to Him belongs the dominion
of the heavens and the earth.
He gives life and He causes to die.
And there is not for you other than God,
either a protector or a helper. (9:116)
Certainly, God turned towards the Messenger
and the ones who emigrate and the helpers who followed him
in the hour of adversity after the hearts of a group of people
were about to swerve among them.
Again, He turned towards them.
Truly, He is Gentle, Compassionate. (9:117)
And upon the three who were left behind
when the earth became narrow for them
—for all its breadth—
and their souls became narrow for them
and they thought that there was no shelter from God,
but in Him, again, He turns to them in forgiveness
so that they would turn towards Him.
Truly, God, He is The Accepter of Repentance,
The Compassionate. (9:118)

COMMENTARY°

THE EARTH'S SUFFOCATING EXPANSE

This passage of the Chapter outlines a number of final rulings that govern the Muslim community's relations with other groups and communities. It starts with defining the relationship between a Muslim and his Lord, the nature of the Quranic message and an outline of the Quranic duties and methods of action.

• Embracing the Quranic message is described as a deal in which the buyer is God while the believer is the seller. Since it is a sale to God, believers have no say over anything in their lives. Neither their property nor their person can be withheld from serving God's cause. The final product is that God's word should be supreme, and all submission is made to God alone. The price a believer receives in this deal is admittance into heaven, which is far superior in value to the commodity he offers. Therefore, he receives it as a favor from God: *Truly, God bought from the ones who believe themselves and their properties. For them is the Garden! They fight in the way of God so they kill and are slain. It is a promise rightfully on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Quran. And who is more true to His compact*

than God? Then, rejoice in the good tidings of the bargain that you made in trading with Him. And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph **(9:111)**

• The people who enter into this deal are a select few with distinctive qualities, some of which apply to them in their direct relationship with God, their feelings and the worship they offer. Their other qualities are concerned with the duties under this deal, which requires them to work for the establishment of the divine faith on earth, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and to see to it that God's bounds are respected: *For the repentant worshippers, the ones who praise, the ones who are inclined to fasting, the ones who bow down, the ones who prostrate themselves, the ones who command that which is honorable and the ones who prohibit that which is unlawful, and the ones who guard the ordinances of God, and give you good tidings to the ones who believe!* **(9:112)**

• The signs that follow in this passage show that relations between the believers who make this deal and all others, including their close relatives, are severed. The two groups move in opposite directions, towards opposite ends. Those who are party to this deal go to heaven, while the others go to hell. The two meet neither in this world nor in the next. Therefore, blood relationships cannot establish a bond between the two: "*It had not been for the Prophet and those who believed to ask for forgiveness for ones who are polytheists—even if they had been imbued with kinship—after it became clear t them that they are the Companions of Hellfire. And had not bee Abraham asking for forgiveness for his father only because of a promise he had promised him? Then, when it became clear to him that, truly, he was an enemy to God, he cleared himself from him. Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing.* **(9:113-9:114)**

• A believer's loyalty must be purely to God. It is on the basis of this unified loyalty that all ties and bonds are established. Here we have a clear statement by God clarifying all issues and leaving no room for error. It is more than enough for the believers that they have God's protection and support. With these promised by the One who is the master of the universe, they need nothing from anyone else: *God would not have been causing a folk to go astray after He guided them until He makes manifest to them of what they should be God-conscious. Truly, God is Knowing of everything. Truly, God, to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and He causes to die. And there is not for you other than God, either a protector or a helper.* **(9:115-9:116)**

• With the nature of the deal being such, reluctance to join an expedition serving God's cause is a very serious matter. However,

God has pardoned those whom He knew to have good intentions and a firm resolve to do their duty after having once failed. Thus, He turned to them in mercy: **(9:117-9:118)**

A VERY SPECIAL CONTRACT

It is an inspiring sign **(9:111)**, revealing the nature of the relationship between the believers and God, and the nature of the deal they make with God when they adopt the Quranic message and which remains in force throughout their lives. Whoever makes this deal and remains true to it is the one who may truly be described as a believer reflecting the nature of faith. Otherwise his claim to be a believer remains short of proof.

The nature of this deal, or this contract of sale, as God graciously describes it, is that He has taken for Himself the souls and property of the believers, leaving them nothing of all that. They do not retain any part of that which they would feel too dear to sacrifice for His cause. They no longer have any choice whether to spend it in furthering His cause or not. It is indeed a deal that has been concluded and sealed. The buyer may do what He likes, as He pleases, with what He has bought. The seller has no option other than to fulfil the terms of the deal. He cannot argue or make any choices. He can only do what the deal specifies. The price given for this purchase is paradise, and the way to be followed by the sellers is that of jihad, fighting and sacrificing their lives, and the end result is either victory or martyrdom.

Truly, God bought from the ones who believe themselves and their properties. For them is the Garden! They fight in the way of God so they kill and are slain. **(9:111)** Whoever is party to this deal, signing the contract, paying the price agreed is a true believer. It is with the believers that God has made this deal of purchase. He has bestowed His grace on them by specifying a price. He is, after all, the One who gives life and property to all His creation, and He has also given human beings the ability to make a choice. He then bestowed further grace on human beings by making them able to make contracts, even with God Himself, and holding them to their contracts. He makes the honoring of their contract an evidence of their humanity, while going back on it is evidence of sinking back to the level of animals, and the worst of animals:

It is indeed an awesome deal, but it remains binding on every believer who is able to honor its terms. He is not to be exempt from it unless he goes back on his faith. Therefore the sense of dread that I feel now as I am writing these words. *Truly, God bought from the ones who believe themselves and their properties. For them is the*

Garden! They fight in the way of God so they kill and are slain. **(9:111)** My Lord, we certainly need Your help.

The deal fills us with awe. Yet those who are claiming to be Muslims everywhere, from the far east to the far west are sitting idle, unwilling to strive hard in order to establish the fundamental truth of God's Lordship on earth, or to remove the tyranny which usurps the qualities of Lordship over human life on earth. They are unwilling to fight, kill and be killed for God's cause, and unwilling to undertake a struggle that does not involve fighting and sacrificing one's life.

And who is more true to His compact than God? **(9:111)** Indeed a promise by God is certain to be honored. No one fulfils his promises like He does.

A True Promise and a Profitable Deal

Then, rejoice in the good tidings of the bargain that you made in trading with Him. And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph **(9:111)** Yes, people should rejoice at having dedicated their souls and their property for God's cause in return for admittance into heaven, as God Himself has promised. What does a believer miss out on when he honors his part of the deal? He certainly does not miss out on anything. He is certain to die anyway, and his wealth is certain to go, whether he spends it to serve God's cause or in any other way. Being in paradise is a great gain which a believer actually gets for nothing, since the price he offers would be gone anyway, whichever course of action he follows.

On its own this is a great victory, because it represents the fulfilment of man's humanity through his release from the burdens of his needs. When admittance to heaven is added as a reward, then the sale he has made calls for him to rejoice as it represents a great triumph indeed: *Then, rejoice in the good tidings of the bargain that you made in trading with Him. And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph.* **(9:111)**

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE BELIEVERS

For the repentant worshippers, the ones who praise, the ones who are inclined to fasting, the ones who bow down, the ones who prostrate themselves, the ones who command that which is honorable and the ones who prohibit that which is unlawful, and the ones who guard the ordinances of God, and give you good tidings to the ones who believe! **(9:112)**

The first of these qualities is for: *the repentant worshippers,* They appeal to Him for forgiveness, regretting any slip they may make and resolving to turn to Him and follow His guidance in their

future days. They will not revert to sin. They will endeavour to do only good actions in order to make their repentance a reality. It is then a means of purging themselves of the effects of temptation and of mending their ways so that they can earn God's acceptance.

The ones who praise, **(9:112)** They submit and dedicate their worship to Him alone, acknowledging that He is God, the only Lord. This is a basic quality of theirs which is manifested by their worship, and also by their dedicating all their actions and statements to the pursuit of God's pleasure. Their worship, then, is meant as a practical confirmation of their belief in God's oneness. They praise God acknowledging His grace which He bestows on them. They praise Him continuously, in times of happiness and in times of adversity. When they are happy they praise God for His blessings, and when they go through difficult times they praise Him because they know that the difficulty is a test which they need to pass. They realize that God will show them His mercy when they prove their metal by going through the test with their faith unshaken. True praise is not that expressed only in times of ease and happiness. It is the praise genuinely expressed in times of adversity, recognizing that God, the Just and Merciful, would not put a believer through a trial unless it is eventually for his own good. A believer may not know that at the time, but God certainly knows it.

The ones who are inclined to fasting, the ones who bow down, the ones who prostrate themselves, **(9:112)** They attend to their prayers which becomes an essential part of their life. Praying is thus made one of their distinctive characteristics.

The ones who command that which is honorable and the ones who prohibit that which is unlawful, **(9:112)** When a Muslim community that conducts its life in accordance with God's law is established, making clear that it submits to God and no one else, then the quality of enjoining the doing of what is right and forbidding what is wrong is seen to be fully operative within this community. It addresses any errors of implementation of, or deviation from, the code of living God has revealed. But when there is no the Quranic community which gives supremacy to the implementation of God's law, then this quality of enjoining what is right should be addressed totally to the most important thing, which is acceptance of God's oneness, submission to His authority and the establishment of a truly the Quranic community.

And the ones who guard the ordinances of God **(9:112)** That is to say, they make sure of the implementation of God's law in their own life and in the life of the community, and they resist anyone who tries to forestall it. Like the previous one, this quality can only work

in a Muslim community governed by God's law in all its affairs. By definition, such a community acknowledges God's sovereignty as the only God, Lord and Legislator, and rejects any authority which seeks to implement laws that are not revealed by God. Efforts must concentrate first of all on the establishment of such a community. Only when it comes into being, will those who "keep within the limits set out by God" have their rightful place in it, as happened in the first the Quranic community.

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

The believers whose lives and property God has bought in return for His promise to admit them to paradise are a unique community, because faith is their only bond which unites them and makes of them a well-knit community. This Chapter which outlines the relationship between the Muslim community and others who do not belong to it also makes a final judgement in respect of relationships not based on this bond, particularly after the rapid expansion of the Muslim community following the conquest of Makkah, when large numbers of people embraced the Quranic message without being fundamentally affected by its way of life. They continued to attach great importance to blood relations. The signs that follow sever the ties that existed in the past between the believers who have made this deal and those who have not taken part in it, even though they may be related to them by blood. This is because they have two different courses to follow and two widely different ends in the hereafter. **(9:113-3:116)**

Faith is the great bond that regulates all human bonds and relationships. If it is severed then all other bonds are uprooted. There can be no more value for bonds of blood or marriage relationships, or bonds of race and nationality. It is either that faith unites people and maintains their bonds, or there are no relationships when faith does not exist: *And had not been Abraham asking for forgiveness for his father only because of a promise he had promised him? Then, when it became clear to him that, truly, he was an enemy to God, he cleared himself from him. Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing.* **(9:114)**

Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing. **(9:114)** He used to pray to God very often and with great sincerity. He was also clement and he would forgive those who treated him badly. His father ill-treated him but he was forbearing. Yet only when he realized that there was no hope that he would ever believe in God, did he give up on him.

It has been reported that when these signs were revealed those believers who were in the habit of praying for the forgiveness of their

relatives feared that they might have gone far astray because their action was against God's law. The following sign was then revealed to reassure them that no punishment could be incurred prior to a clear definition of error: *God would not have been causing a folk to go astray after He guided them until He makes manifest to them of what they should be God-conscious. Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* **(9:115)**

At the end of this passage, in an atmosphere which calls for abandoning blood ties and being ready to sacrifice one's life and property, the Chapter makes a clear statement that it is God alone who protects and supports the believers. He is the One who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and it is He who controls life and death: *Truly, God, to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and He causes to die. And there is not for you other than God, either a protector or a helper.* **(9:116)** All property, all human beings and all creation, the heavens and the earth, life and death, support and protection are all in God's hands. To maintain a strong tie with Him is sufficient for anyone.

ACCEPTANCE OF REPENTANCE

With the nature of the deal between God and the believers being such, to refrain from joining a jihad campaign by people who are able to do so is a very serious matter indeed. Therefore it was necessary to examine why some people were reluctant to join such an expedition. The passage we are looking at explains how much grace God bestows on the believers, overlooking their hesitation and their slips, serious as these may be. It also speaks of the three people whose cases were deferred for judgement. **(9:117-9:118)**

As for turning in mercy to the Emigrants and the Helpers, the sign outlines its causes. They are the ones who *certainly, God turned towards the Prophet and the ones who emigrate and the helpers who followed him in the hour of adversity after the hearts of a group of people were about to swerve among them. Again, He turned towards them. Truly, He is Gentle, Compassionate.* **(9:117)** Some of them were slow to join the Muslim army, but they joined as it marched, as will be given in detail. These were among the most sincere of believers. Others listened to the hypocrites as they tried to dissuade the believers from going out to confront the Byzantines whom they described as fearsome fighters. Those, however, joined the army after their initial reluctance.

THE WHOLE WORLD SEEMS TOO NARROW

The story of the three people who remained behind until God

accepted their repentance are referred to in **(9:118)**. We have highlighted some of the impressions it gives us of the life of the early Muslim community and its values. As related by one of the three people who went through its experience, the story brings clear before our minds the meaning of the sign which states: *And upon the three who were left behind when the earth became narrow for them—for all its breadth—and their souls became narrow for them and they thought that there was no shelter from God, but in Him, again, He turns to them in forgiveness so that they would turn towards Him. Truly, God, He is The Accepter of Repentance, The Compassionate.* **(9:118)**

When the earth became narrow for them—for all its breadth. **(9:118)** What is the earth? Its world is that of its inhabitants and the values that are upheld by them. Its expanse is as vast as the relationships between its people make it to be. Therefore the description here is very truthful in its practical significance, as much as it is truthful in its artistic beauty. It shows the whole expanse of the earth becoming too narrow for those three. Its outer limits are brought too near to make it extremely tight, closing in on them. *And their souls became narrow for them.* **(9:118)** It is as if their souls are a sort of a container that has become too small and tight. They can hardl breathe as it tightens over them. What happened then was that *The thought that there was no shelter from God, but in Him.* **(9:118)** Tha applies to all creation. None can have any refuge from God except in Him, because He has power over the whole universe. Yet stating this fact at this point, in an atmosphere of sadness imparts an air of stress and despair that can only be cleared by God Himself.

Then hope is restored and release is granted: *again, He turns to them in forgiveness so that they would turn towards Him. Truly, God, He is The Accepter of Repentance, The Compassionate.* **(9:118)** He has turned to them in mercy with regard to this particular error, so that they might make a general repentance which covers all their past sins. This means that they would watch God eagerly to guard against any future error.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

Lesson 113(15). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard
Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
Signs 9:119-9:122

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Be conscious of God and be with the ones who are sincere. (9:119)
It had not been for the people of the city
and among the nomads around them
to stay behind from the Messenger of God
nor prefer themselves more than himself.
That is because they were neither lit on by thirst
nor fatigue nor emptiness in the way of God
nor tread they any treading on any ground
—enraging the ones who are ungrateful—
nor glean any gleaning of ground against the enemy
but as an action in accord with morality
written down for them.
Truly, God wastes not the compensation
of the ones who are doers of good. (9:120)
Nor spend they contributions—be they small or great—
nor cross they over a valley, but it was written down for them
that God will give recompense to them
for the fairer of what they had been doing. (9:121)
And it had not been for the ones who believe
to move forward collectively.
If every band moved not forward of them
but a section of people only,
that they become learned in the way of life
and that they warn their folk when they returned to them
so that perhaps they will beware? (9:122)

Commentary°

• This is followed by a clear definition of the duties of the people

of Madinah and the Bedouins that live nearby on account of' their pledges given to the Messenger. It should be remembered that those formed the solid base of the Muslim community that was the standard-bearer of the Quranic message. Strong objections are raised to staying behind, coupled with a clear statement of the terms of the deal and the actions to be taken in fulfilment of those pledges **(9:120-9:121)**

• This encouragement to go forth on jihad for God's cause is coupled with a clarification that shows the limits of general mobilization, particularly after the land area of the Muslim state had become much bigger and the number of Muslims increased manifold. It is now feasible that only some of them should go to fight the enemy and acquire a more profound knowledge of the faith. The rest should stay behind to look after the needs of the community, provide logistic support and discharge other duties. All these efforts converge at the end: **(9:122)**

A REWARD FOR EVERY LITTLE THING

The element of truth is highly significant in the story of those three Companions of the Messenger. To give this element its due importance, all believers are advised to fear God and to align themselves with those truthful people of the early believers. On the other hand those people in Madinah and the surrounding desert who stayed behind are strongly criticized. This is followed by a promise of generous reward to those who strive for God's cause: **(9:119-9:121)**

The people of Madinah were the ones who rushed to support the Quranic message, which meant that they were truly its basic core of supporters. They had given shelter to God's Messenger, pledged their total loyalty to him and constituted the hard nucleus of the Quranic faith in the Arabian Peninsula. The bedouin Arabs in the surrounding area, having also adopted the Quranic message as a faith and a way of life, formed the outer belt of defense. Therefore those two groups could not refrain from joining the Messenger or spare themselves from any risk to which they might be exposed. When God's Messenger set out to attend to a certain task that served the Quranic interests, then the people of Madinah, the vanguard of the Quranic message, and those of the surrounding area could not but join him. Whether this happened to be in the burning summer heat or the extreme winter cold, in times of strict hardship or easy affluence, it does not behoove them, being so close to the Messenger, to try to spare themselves a difficulty that God's Messenger is undertaking. They could not excuse themselves by protesting ignorance or lack of awareness of the real task in hand.

The Chapter appeals to them to fear God and to join the truthful believers who have never entertained any thoughts of staying behind and who have maintained their strong commitment to their faith at times of hardship. Those were the cream among the early believers and those who followed in their footsteps: *O those who believed! Be God-conscious and be with the ones who are sincere.* **(9:119)**

The Chapter follows this appeal by a strong censure of the very thought of staying behind when God's Messenger is setting out: *It had not been for the people of the city and among the nomads around them to stay behind from the Messenger of God nor prefer themselves more than himself. That is because they were neither lit on by thirst nor fatigue nor emptiness in the way of God nor tread they any treading on any ground—enraging the ones who are ungrateful—nor glean any gleaning of ground against the enemy but as an action in accord with morality written down for them. Truly, God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good.* **(9:120)** The statement implies a strong reproach. No Companion of God's Messenger can be reproached in a stronger way than by saying that he puts his own safety ahead of the Messenger's. How could he when he is the Messenger's Companion and follower? The same applies to the advocates of the Quranic message in all generations and periods. It does not behoove a believer to try to spare himself a risk that the Messenger himself was willing to undertake for the cause of the Quranic message. How could he when he claims that he is an advocate of the cause of the Quranic message, and a follower of the Messenger Muhammad?

Taking up such a responsibility is a duty imposed by God's orde and emphasized by our love of the Messenger that makes any believer too ashamed to put himself ahead of him. At the same time it earns a very generous reward indeed: **(9:120-9:121)**

A TASK AKIN TO FIGHTING

The Muslim area had expanded. With the whole of Arabia practically adopting the Quranic message, large numbers were ready to fight. At Tabuk, there were about 30,000 of them, which was a much larger number than at any earlier battle the Muslims had fought. It was time that different people should attend to different tasks, so that no area, such as agriculture or trade or social concerns, was neglected. All these are necessary for an emerging nation, whose needs are far more sophisticated than those of a tribal community. Therefore the present sign was revealed to set out certain limits: *And it had not been for the ones who believe to move forward collectively. If every band moved not forward of them but a section of people only,*

that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk when they returned to them so that perhaps they will beware? **(9:122)**

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

Lesson 113(16). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

Appropriateness

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
Signs 9:123-9:129

Madinah: *O those who have believed!*
Fight the ones who are close to you of the ones who are ungrateful.
And let them find harshness in you.
And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.
(9:123)
And whenever there was caused to descend a chapter of the Quran,
some of them say: Which of you had this increased in belief?
As for those who believed, it increased them in belief
and they rejoice at the good tidings. (9:124)
But as for those who, in their hearts, is a sickness,
it increased disgrace to their disgrace
and they died while they are the ones who are ungrateful. (9:125
Consider they not that they are tried one time or two times a year?
Again, they neither repent nor they recollect. (9:126)
And whenever there was caused to descend a chapter of the Quran,
some looked at some others saying: Is anyone seeing you?
Again, they took flight.
God turned away from their hearts

because they are a folk who understand not. (9:127)
Makkah (9:128)
Makkah (9:129)

COMMENTARY°

• The next sign defines the line the jihad movement should follow after the entire Arabian Peninsula has become the base of the Quranic message. Now jihad should mean fighting the ungrateful all together, so that all oppression is ended and people submit only to God. The same applies to jihad against the people of earlier revelations until they pay the submission tax: *O those who have believed! Fight the ones who are close to you of the ones who are ungrateful. And let them find harshness in you. And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:123)**

• Now that a full clarification of the pledge and the responsibilities it lays down, and the line the Muslim community should follow is given, the Chapter provides two contrasting pictures showing the opposite attitudes of the believers and ungrateful towards the Quran as it is being revealed: **(9:124-9:126)**

UNCOMPROMISING FIGHT

We then have a sign outlining the plan and extent of jihad, which was implemented by the Messenger Muhammad and his successors generally. The only exceptions were limited cases dictated by special circumstances: **(9:123)**

Let us now reflect on this sign: *O those who have believed! Fight the ones who are close to you of the ones who are ungrateful. And let them find harshness in you.* **(9:123)** What we find here is an order to fight those ungrateful who are near to the Muslim state, without specifying whether these have launched any aggression on the Muslims or their land. We understand that this is the final situation which makes the need to carry the Quranic message forward the basis of the principle of jihad. This will ensure that the Quranic message is available to humanity. It does not have a defensive outlook, as was the case with the provisional orders in the early days after the establishment of the Muslim state in Madinah.

Finally, this sign, giving such a clear order, was revealed in circumstances that suggest that the first to be meant by it were the Byzantines, who belonged to an earlier religion, or, to use the Quranic term, People of the Book. The Chapter, however, has already made it clear that they had distorted their faith and obeyed man-made laws and systems, so they were truly ungrateful. We should reflect here on the line of action the Quranic message takes towards communities of the People of the Book who have turned away from their

faith and adopted manmade laws. This line of action applies to all such communities everywhere. God has commanded the believers to fight those ungrateful who are near to them, and to be tough on them, but then concluded the sign making this order by saying: *And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:123)**

THE QURANIC WAR ETHICS

When the Messenger appointed someone to command an army or a patrol, he would recommend him to be God-conscious in his public and private affairs, and to take good care of those who were under his command. Then he would tell them: March by God's name and to serve His cause. Fight those who deny God. March on; but do not be unfair, and do not commit any treachery. Do not disfigure the bodies of any enemy soldiers killed in battle. Never kill any children. When you meet your enemies, call upon them to choose one of three alternatives. If they choose one of them, accept it from them and do not fight them. Call on them first to accept the Quranic message. If they agree, accept their pledges and do not fight them. Then ask them to move over to the land of the Emigrants, and tell them that they would then have the same duties and privileges of the Emigrants. If they do not wish to move from their quarters, tell them that they would then be in the same position as the bedouin Muslims. They will be subject to God's orders that are applicable to all believers, but they will have no share of any booty that is gained through wa: or peaceful campaigns, unless they fight with the Muslims. If they refuse to accept the Quranic message, then offer them the alternative of paying *jizyah* [or tribute]. If they agree, accept it from them and do not fight them. If they refuse, then seek God's help and fight them.

HYPOCRITICAL ATTITUDES

Since the Chapter has spoken extensively about the hypocrites, we have here some signs showing how those hypocrites used to receive any new revelation outlining certain duties imposed by the faith they falsely claimed to accept. This is contrasted with the way believers used to receive the revelation of new signs of the Quran: **(9:124-9:127)**

It is a strange and suspicious question the first sign quotes: **(9:124-9:125)**

Before the Chapter portrays the opposite picture, it wonders at those hypocrites who never take an admonition, and never reflect on an event to gather the lesson that may be learnt from it: *Consider they not that they are tried one time or two times a year? Again, they neither repent nor they recollect.* **(9:126)** The test may have taken

the form of exposing their reality, or that the believers achieve victory without those hypocrites taking any part. There could be many other forms of test, which were all too frequent at the time of the Messenger. Still hypocrites today are tested and they pay no heed.

The next sign portrays a vivid scene, full of details, showing their behavior: **(9:127)**

When we read this sign, the scene of these hypocrites is large in front of us. We see them at the moment when a new Chapter is revealed, with some of them looking at each other winking and wondering: *And whenever there was caused to descend a chapter of the Quran, some looked at some others saying: Is anyone seeing you?* **(9:127)** Then they feel that the believers are preoccupied with their own business, so they go out stealthily, hoping not to be noticed: *Again, they took flight.* **(9:127)** But the eye which never loses sight of anything follows them with a curse that suits their suspicious deed: *God turned away from their hearts.* **(9:127)** Their hearts are turned away from the right guidance. They deserve to remain deep in error, *because they are a folk who understand not.* **(9:127)** This is because they have kept their hearts and minds idle, unable to function properly. All of this scene is portrayed so skilfully and vividly using only a few words.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

EPILOGUE

THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE DHU AL-HIJJA 10 AH (MARCH 630 CE

The period for the annual pilgrimage again approached. Nothing new appeared to hinder the Messenger from the fulfillment of its ceremonies. There was no longer the possibility of offense from idolatrous objects or rites of the idolaters. Every vestage of an image in Makkah and its outskirts had been cleared away. And after the threatening announcement of the previous year, none but professed believers might enter now. The Messenger had not performed the greater pilgrimage since his flight from Makkah. He now announced his intention fo going up to the coming festival.

JOURNEY FROM MADINAH TO MAKKAH

Five days before the beginning of Dhu al-Hijja, the month of pilgrimage, the Prophet assumed the pilgrim's garb. Before arriving in Makkah, Muhammad stayed at miqat and taught people the manners of wearing the sacred garb (ihram). He performed the full ablution (ghusl or ritual bath) and then put on ihram for Hajj. His ihram clothing was two pieces of Yemeni unsewed white cotton that later on became his shroud. He moved on so that he did his noon formal prayers in the mosque of Shajara. Followed by vast multitudes, he set out on the journey to Makkah. All his wives accompanied him. One hundred camels, marked by his own hand as victims, were led in solemn procession. Along the road, mosques had already sprung up at the various halting places. At each, the people prayed, the Messenger leading the devotions. On the evening of the tenth day, he reached Sarif, an easy stage from Makkah. there he rested for the night and on the following morning, having bathed, and mounted al-Qaswa, he proceeded towards Makkah. He entered the upper suburbs by the same route which he had taken two years before; and, passing down the main street of the city, approached the Kabah. As he passed. through the Bani Sheyba gate, the ancient gate leading into the courtyard of the Kabah situated NE by E of the Kabah and beyond the Station of Abraham, with the Kabah full in view, he raised his hands to heaven, and said: O Lord! Add unto this House in the dignity and glory, the honor and the reverence, which already **You** have bestowed on it. And those who come for the greater Pilgrimage and the lesser visitation frequent the same, increase them much in honor and dignity, in piety, goodness, and glory! Then, mounted as he was on his camel, he performed the prescribed circuits, and other rites, and afterwards retired to a tent pitched for him in the valley.

MOST OF HIS FOLLOWERS PERFORM THE LESSER PILGRIMAGE ONLY

The greater part of the pilgrims had brought no sacrificial animals with them. after completing the customary forms of the *umra* or lesser pilgrimage, they were directed by the Messenger to divest themselves of the pilgrim garb. They accompanied the Prophet and the others who had brought sacrificial

animals, in their farther procession to Mina and Arafat, but only as spectators. Ali, who in the meantime had returned from Yemen, received the same directions as the rest of those who had no sacrificial animals: Go, said the Messenger, and encircle the Kabah; then divest yourself of the pilgrim's garb as your fellows have done. But Ali was anxious to fulfill the full rites of the yearly festival and he said: I have taken upon me vows to perform the same pilgrimage as the Prophet, whatever that might be. The Messenger yielded, and allowed him to fulfill the greater Pilgrimage, and to be a sharer in the sacrificial animals he had brought for himself.

THE MESSENGER PERFORMS THE PILGRIMAGE TO ARAFAT, DHU HIJJA 8.

On the 7th of Dhu al-Hijja, the day preceding opening rites of the greater Pilgrimage, the Messenger, after the mid-day prayer, preached to his followers assembled at the Kabah. Next day, (the 8th called *tarwiyah*) followed by the whole multitude of pilgrims, and shaded from the sun's glare by Bilal who walked at his side with a screen, he proceeded to Mina, where he performed the formal prayers, and passed the night in a tent. The following morning at sunrise, he moved onwards, and passing Muzdalifa, reached Arafat, an abrupt mound, about two hundred feet high, in the middle of the valley, which, though elsewhere narrow, and on the farther side pent in by lofty granite peaks, here spreads out bare and stony to the breadth of nearly a mile.

On the summit of the sacred mount, the Prophet, standing erect upon his camel, said: The entire valley of Arafat is the station for Pilgrimage, excepting only the vale of Urana. Observe and learn of me the ceremonies which you should practice for I know not whether after this I shall ever perform another pilgrimage. After he had bowed himself in prayer, he recited certain passages of the Quran, regarding the ceremonies of Pilgrimage, and concluded with the verse: *This day have I perfected your way of life unto you, and fulfilled my mercy upon you, and appointed Islam for you to be your way of life.*

As the sun was going down, the Messenger left Arafat. Retracing his steps with Usama, son of Zayd, seated behind him on the camel, he traveled hastily back by the bright moonlight along the narrow valley to Muzdalifa, where he offered the sunset and evening formal prayers both together. In this, and every other point, his example has been closely imitated by the pilgrims yearly, to the present day. He passed the night at Muzdalifa, and very early in the morning sent forward the women and the children, lest the crowds of pilgrims that followed should impede their journey. Touching them on the shoulder as they went, he said: My children, have a care that you throw not the stones until the sun arise.

When the morning of the tenth day of the month came, the Messenger arose to perform the early prayer; after which, he mounted his camel, and took his stand on a certain spot, saying: This place and the whole of Muzdalifa is the station of pilgrimage, excepting only the vale of Muhassir.t

Then, with Fadhl, son of Abbas, seated behind him, he proceeded onwards amid a heavy fall of rain to Mina, shouting as he went the pilgrim's cry: Labbayk! O Lord! Labbayk! Labbayk! There is no other god but **You**. Labbayk! Praise, blessing, and dominion be to **You**. Labbayk! No one may share with **You** therein. Labbayk, Labbayk. (Here I am O Lord!)

He ceased not to utter these prayers until he had reached Mina, and cast stones at the Aqaba, a projecting corner of the valley. Afterwards, he sacrificed the animals brought for sacrifice, and then ended the pilgrimage by shaving the hair of his head and partly also of his face, and paring his nails; the hair and parings be ordered to be burned. The scanty dress of pilgrimage was now put away, perfumes were burned, the flesh of the victims and other cattle was distributed for food, and proclamation made that the restrictions of the pilgrim state being ended, it was now a day for eating and enjoyment, and for the remembrance of God. the Messenger remained at Mina from the 10th to the 12th of Dul Hijja. Every evening as the sun declined he repaired to Aqaba and repeated the rite of casting stones.

PARTING EXHORTATION AT MINA 11TH DHI HIJJA

On the second of these three days, the Prophet mounted his camel, and taking up a central and prominent position in the Mina valley, addressed the vast crowd of pilgrims in a memorable speech, which was looked upon by the people, and probably was felt by the Messenger himself, as his parting exhortation. Fragments of the discourse have been preserved. Of these the following passages are the most important: O people! Hearken to my words for I know not whether, after this year, I shall ever be amongst you here again. Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another until the end of time. The Lord has ordained to every person the share of his inheritance: a Testament is not lawful to the prejudice of heirs. The child belongs to the parent: and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned. Whoever claims falsely another for his father, or another for his mother, the curse of God and the Angels, and of all humanity shall rest upon him.[1]

And your POW/slaves! See that you feed them with such food as you eat yourselves; and clothe them with the stuff you wear. And if they commit a fault which you are not inclined to forgive, then sell them, for they are the servants of the Lord, and are not to be tormented .O people! hearken to my speech and comprehend the same. Know that every Muslim is the brother of every other Muslim. All of you are on the same equality (and as he pronounced these words, he raised his arms aloft and placed the forefinger of one hand on the forefinger of the other). You are one brotherhood.

Know you what month this is? What territory is this? What day? To each question, the people gave the appropriate answer, viz., The Sacred Month, the Sacred Territory, the great day of Pilgrimage. After every one of these replies, the Messenger added: Even thus sacred and inviolable has God made the life

and the property of each of you unto the other until you meet your Lord. Let him that is present, tell it to him that is absent. Haply he that shall be told may remember better than he who has hard it.

ABOLITION OF THE INTERCALARY YEAR

The Messenger then proceeded to recite the 37th and 38th verses of Chapter 9 which abolish the triennial intercalation of the year and fix the month of Pilgrimage according to the changing seasons of the lunar year. Truly, the number of the months with God is twelve months on the day in which he created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. This is the true religion. Truly the changing of the months is an excess in ingratitude which causes the ungrateful to err. They make a month common in one year and they make it sacred in another year that they may equalize the number which God has made sacred. Thus do they make common that which God has hallowed. And now, continued the Messenger, on this very day has time performed its cycle and returned to the disposition thereof existing at the moment when God created the heavens and the earth.

O people! Truly Satan despairs of being worshipped in your land forever. But if in some indifferent matter which you might be disposed to slight, he could secure obedience verily he would be well pleased. Wherefore be aware of him![2]

Truly I have fulfilled my mission. I have left that amongst you a plain command—the Book of God and manifest ordinances which if you hold fast, you shall never go astray[3].

Then, looking up to heaven, the Messenger said : O Lord! I have delivered my message and fulfilled my mission. Yea, cried all the people who crowded round him, yea, verily you have. O Lord ! I beseech **You** bear **You** witness unto it. With these words, the Prophet concluded his address and dismissed the great assembly.

THE MESSENGER RETURNS TO MAKKAH

After staying three days at Mina, the pilgrims broke up and proceeded to Mecca. The Messenger desired the mass of the pilgrims to travel thither by day. He himself accompanied his wives on the journey by night. On reaching Makkah, he went straightway to the Kabah, and performed the seven circuits of it on his camel. He next proceeded to the well Zamzam close by, and calling for a pitcher of its water, drank part of its contents. Then he rinsed his mouth in the pitcher, and desired that the water remaining in it should be thrown back into the well.

After this, taking off his shoes, he ascended the doorway of the Kabah, and prayed within its walls. Having now ended all the ceremonies, and being fatigued with the journey, he stopped at the house of one who kept Nabidz, or date-water, for the Pilgrims to drink, and desired the beverage to be furnished

to him. The son of Abbas, who accompanied him, interposed: The hands of the passers-by, he said, have been in this all day, and fouled it: come unto my father's house, where we have some that is clean and pure for thee. But the Prophet, refusing to drink of any other, quenched his thirst upon the spot. Three days more were spent at Makkah, and then the Messenger with his followers set out for Madinah.

On the way back to Madinah, the Messenger stopped at Ghadir Khumm on the 18th of Dhu al-Hijja to convey the message to the pilgrims before they dispersed. He gave a long sermon on a rostrum of camel saddles. At one point, he asked his followers whether he, Muhammad, had more authority (*awla*) over the believers than they had over themselves; the crowd's answer was positive aloud. Then he took Ali by the hand and declared: Whomever's master (*mawla*) I am, this Ali is also his master. Then the Prophet also announced his imminent death and charged the believers to remain attached to the Quran and his family. Afterward, the caravan moved towards Madinah and apparently arriving there on one of the last days of Dhu al-Hijja.

Appendix 1: Madinah Signs Placed in Makkan Chapters

Quranic Sign 53:32

Madinah: *Those who avoid the major sins*
and the indecencies but the lesser offenses.
Truly, your Lord is One Who is Extensive in forgiveness.
He is greater in knowledge of you
when He caused you to grow from the earth
and when you were an unborn child
in the wombs of your mothers.
So you make not pure yourselves.
He is greater in knowledge of him who was God-conscious. (53:32)

Quranic Sign 77:4

Madinah: *When it will be said:*
Bow down, they bow not down. (77:48)

Quranic Sign 50:38

Madinah: *And, certainly, We created the heavens and the earth*
and whatever is between in six days,
and no exhaustion afflicted Us. (50:38)

Quranic Signs 7:163-7:171

Madinah: *And ask them about the town*
—that which had been bordering the sea—
when they disregarded the Sabbath,
when their great fish would approach them
on the day of the Sabbath,
one that was visible on the shore.
And the day they keep not the Sabbath,
they approach them not.
Thus, We try them because they had been disobeying. (7:163)
And mention when a community of them said:
Why admonish a folk whom God
is One Who Causes them to Perish
or One Who Punishes them with a severe punishment.
They said: To be free from guilt before your Lord
and so that perhaps they will be God-conscious. (7:164)
So when they forgot of what
they were reminded, We rescued those who prohibited evil
and We took those who did wrong
with a terrifying punishment
because they had been disobeying. (7:165)

Then, when they defied what they were prohibited
We said to them: Be you apes, ones who are driven away. (7:166)
*And mention when **your** Lord*
caused to be proclaimed that He would, surely,
raise up against them until the Day of Resurrection
who cause an affliction to befall on them
of a dire punishment.
*Truly, **your** Lord is Swift in repayment.*
And, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate. (7:167)
And We sundered them in the region into communities.
Some of them were the ones in accord with morality
and others were other than that.
And We tried them with benevolence
and evil deeds so that perhaps
they will return to obedience. (7:168)
Then, after that succeeded successors
who inherited the Book.
They take advantage of this nearer world,
and they say: We will be forgiven.
And if an advantage approaches them like it
they will take it. Is not a solemn promis
taken from them with the Boo
that they would say about God only The Truth?
And studied they not what is in it,
and know that the Last Abode
is better for those who are God-conscious?
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (7:169)
And those who keep fast to the Book
and performed the formal prayer,
We will not waste the compensation
of the ones who make things right. (7:170)
Mention when We shook up the mountain over them,
as if it had been an over shadowing,
and they thought it was that which would fall on them:
It was said: Take firmly what We have given you
and remember what is in it
so that perhaps you would be God fearing. (7:171)

Quranic Sign 36:45

Madinah: *And when it was said to them:*
Be Godfearing of what is in advance of you
and what is behind you,
so that perhaps you will find mercy. (36:45)

Quranic Signs: 25:68-25:70

Madinah: *Those who call not to another god with God*
nor kill the soul which God forbade but rightfully,
nor commit adultery.
And whoever disregards
and commits this will meet sinfulness. (25:68)
The punishment will be multiplied for him
on the Day of Resurrection.
And he will dwell in it forever,
as one who is despised. (25:69)
Whoever has repented and believed
and whose actions were done as one in accord with morality,
for those God will substitute
for their evil deeds benevolence.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (25:70)

Quranic Sign 19:58

Madinah: *Those are those to whom God was gracious*
from among the Prophets of the offspring of Adam
and whomever We carried with Noah
and of the offspring of Abraham and Jacob,
from among whomever We guided and elected.
When are recounted to them the signs of the Merciful
they fell down, crying, ones who prostrate themselves. (19:58)
Then, after them succeeded a succession
who wasted the formal prayer
and followed their lusts.
So they will meet error, (19:59)
but the ones who repented and believed
and did as ones in accord with morality.
For those will enter the Garden
and they will not be wronged at all, (19:60)
Gardens of Eden which The Merciful
promised His servants in the unseen.
Truly, He, His promise had been that which is kept. (19:61)
They will not hear in them idle talk, nothing but:
Peace. And they will have their provision in them. (19:62)
This is the Garden which We will give as inheritance
to whomever of Our servants who had been devout. (19:63)
And we come forth not but by the command of ***your*** *Lord.*
To Him belongs whatever is in advance of us
and whatever is behind us and whatever is in between that.
And ***your*** *Lord had not been forgetful,* (19:64)

the Lord of the heavens and the earth,
and what is between them!
So worship Him and maintain ***you*** *patience in His worship.*
Have ***you*** *known any namesake for Him?* (19:65)
And the human being says: When I am dead,
will I be brought out living? (19:66)
Will the human being not remember that We created him
before when he be of nothing? (19:67)
So by ***your*** *Lord, certainly, We will assemble them and the satans.*
Again, We will parade them around hell,
ones who crawl on their knees. (19:68)
Again, We will tear out every partisan,
whoever of them was more severe in stubborn rebellion
against The Merciful.(19:69)
After that We are greater in knowledge of those,
they who are most deserving of roasting in it. (19:70)
There is none of you, but ones who go down to it.
This had been a thing decreed,
that decreed by ***your*** *Lord. (19:71)*

Quranic Signs 20:130-20:131

Madinah: *So have* ***you*** *patience with what they say*
and glorify the praises of ***your*** *Lord before the coming up of the sun*
and before sunset and during the nighttime night watch
and glorify at the end of the daytime,
so that perhaps ***you*** *will be well-pleased.* (20:130)
And stretch not out ***your*** *eyes*
for what We gave of enjoyment in this life to spouses
among them as the luster of this present life
so that We try them by it.
And provision of ***your*** *Lord is Best and that which endures.* (20:131)

Quranic Signs 56:81-56:82

Madinah: *Then, is it this discourse*
that you are ones who scorn? (56:81)
And you make it your provision that you,
you deny the Recitation. (56:82)

Quranic Sign 26:197

Madinah: *Would it not be a sign for them*
that is known to the knowing
among the Children of Jacob? (26:197)

QURANIC SIGNS 26:224-26:227

Madinah: *As for the poets,*
the ones who are in error follow them. (26:224)
*Have **you** not considered that*
they wander in every valley (26:225)
and that they say what they accomplish not? (26:226)
But those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality
remembered God frequently
and helped themselves after they were wronged.
And those who did wrong will know
by which overturning they will be turned about! (26:227)

QURANIC SIGNS 28:52-28:55

Madinah: *Those to whom We gave the Book before it,*
they believe in it. (28:52)
And when it is recounted to them,
they say: We believed in it.
Truly, it is The Truth from our Lord.
Truly, even before it we had been
ones who submit to God. (28:53)
Those will be given their compensation
two times because they patiently endured
and drive off evil deeds with benevolence
and they spend out of what We provided them. (28:54)
And when they heard idle talk,
they turned aside from it and said:
To us are our actions and to you are your actions.
Peace be to you! We are not looking for
the ones who are ignorant. (28:55)

QURANIC SIGN 17:26

Madinah: *And give to the possessor of kinship his right*
and to the needy and to the traveler of the way.
And spend not extravagantly an extravagant spending. (17:26)

QURANIC SIGNS 17:32-17:33

Madinah: *And come not near committing adultery.*
Truly, it had been a great indecency!
How evil a way! (17:32)
And kill not a soul that God forbade, but rightfully.
And whoever was slain as one who is treated unjustly,

surely, We assigned for his protector, authority,
but he should not exceed all bounds in killing.
Truly, he would be one who is helped by the Law. (17:33)

QURANIC SIGN 17:57

Madinah: *Those are those to whom they call to,*
they are looking for an approach to their Lord
—whoever is nearer—and they hope for His mercy
and they fear His punishment.
Truly, the punishment of your Lord
had been one to beware. (17:57)

QURANIC SIGNS 17:73-17:80

Madinah: *And, truly, they were about to persecute you*
for what We revealed to you
so that you would devise against Us other than it.
And, then, they would take you
to themselves as a friend. (17:73)
And if We made you not firm, certainly,
you were about to incline to them a little. (17:74)
And, then, We would have caused you
to experience a double of this life
and a double after dying.
Again, you would find for yourself no helper
against Us. (17:75)
They were about to hound you from the region
that they drive you out of it.
Then, they would not linger in expectation
behind you but for a little while. (17:76)
This is, surely, the way
with whomever We sent before you
of Our Messengers.
And you will not find in Our way any revision. (17:77)
Perform the formal prayer
from the sinking sun until the darkening of the night
and the recital at dawn.
Truly, the dawn recital had been one that is witnessed. (17:78)
And keep vigil with it in the night
as a work of supererogation for you.
Perhaps your Lord will raise you up
to a station of one who is praised. (17:79)
And say: My Lord! Cause me to enter a gate in sincerity.

And bring me out as one who is brought out in sincerity.
And assign me from that which proceeds from ***Your*** *Presence*
a helping authority. (17:80)

Quranic Sign 10:40

Madinah: *And of them are some who believe in it*
and of them are some who believe not in it.
And ***your*** *Lord is greater in knowledge*
of the ones who make corruption. (10:40)

Quranic Signs 10:94-10:97

Madinah: *So if* ***you*** *had been in uncertainty*
about what We caused to descend to ***you****,*
then, ask those who recited the Book before ***you****.*
Certainly, The Truth drew near ***you*** *from* ***your*** *Lord*
so ***you*** *have not been among the ones who contest.* (10:94)
You *have not been among those who denied the signs of God,*
for, then, ***you*** *would be among the ones who are losers.* (10:95)
Truly, those against whom is realized
through the Word of ***your*** *Lord, will not believe.* (10:96)
—even if every sign drew near them—
until they consider the painful punishment. (10:97)

Quranic Sign 11:12

Madinah: *So would* ***you*** *perhaps be one who leaves*
some of what is revealed to ***you****?*
Or is ***your*** *breast that which is narrowed by it because they say:*
Why was a treasure not caused to descend to him
or an angel drew near him?
Truly, ***your*** *are only a warner.*
And God is a Trustee over everything.
Or they say: He devised it. (11:12)

Quranic Sign 11:17

Madinah: *Is he, then, who had been*
on a clear portent from his Lord,
and recounts it from Him as one who bears witness
—and before it was the Book of Moses, a leader
and a mercy—like them?
Those believe in it.
Whoever is ungrateful for it among the confederates,
he is promised the fire!

*So be **you** not hesitant about it.*
*Truly, it is The Truth from **your** Lord,*
except most of humanity believes not. (11:17)

QURANIC SIGN 11:114

Madinah: *And perform the formal prayer*
at the two ends of the daytime
and at nearness of the nighttime.
Truly, benevolence causes evil deeds to be put away.
That is a reminder for the ones who remember. (11:114)

QURANIC SIGNS 12:1-12:3; 12:7

Madinah: *Alif Lam Ra. That are the signs of the clear Book.* (12:1)
Truly, We caused to descend a Recitation in Arabic
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (12:2)
*We relate to **you** the fairer of narratives*
*through what We revealed to **you** of this,*
*the Quran, although **you** had been*
before this among the ones who are heedless. (12:3)
*****
Certainly, there had been in Joseph
and his brothers signs for the ones who ask. (12:7)

QURANIC SIGN 15:87

Madinah: *And, certainly, We gave **you** seven often repeated parts*
of the sublime Quran. (15:87)

QURANIC SIGN 6:20

Madinah: *Those to whom We gave the Book*
recognize it as they recognize their own children.
But those, they who lost themselves, they believe not. (6:20)

QURANIC SIGN 6:23

Madinah: *Again, their dissent will not be*
but that they would say:By God! Our Lord!
We had not been ones who are polytheists. (6:23)

QURANIC SIGN 6:91

Madinah: *And they measured not God with His true measure*
when they said:
God caused not to descend anything to a mortal.

Say: Who caused the Book to descend
that was brought about for Moses
as a light and guidance for humanity?
You make it into parchments.
You show them some of it and conceal much of it.
And you were taught what you know not,
you nor your fathers.
Say: God revealed it.
Again, forsake them playing, engaging in their idle talk. (6:91)

QURANIC SIGN 6:93

Madinah: *And who does greater wrong*
than he who devised lies against God or said:
It was revealed to me, when nothing is revealed to him.
Or who said: I will cause to descend
the like of what God caused to descend.
*And if **you** would see when the ones who are unjust*
are in the perplexity of death and the angels
—the ones who stretch out their hands will say:
Relinquish your souls.
Today, you will be given recompense
with the humiliating punishment
for what you had been saying about God
other than The Truth.
And you had been growing arrogant to His signs. (6:93)

QURANIC SIGN 6:114

Madinah: *Will I be looking for an arbiter other than God*
while it is He Who caused to descend to you the Book,
one that is distinct?
And those to whom We gave the Book,
they know that it is one that is sent down
*by **your** Lord with The Truth.*
*So **you** have not been among the ones who contest.* (6:114)

QURANIC SIGN 6:141

Madinah: *And it is He Who caused gardens to grow,*
trellised and without being trellised and the date palm trees
and a variety of harvest crops and the olives
and the pomegranates resembling and not resembling one another.
Eat of its fruit when it bore fruit
and give its due on the day of its reaping
and exceed not all bounds.

Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive. (6:141)

QURANIC SIGNS 6:151-6:153

Madinah: *Say: Approach now.*
I will recount what your Lord forbade you:
Ascribe nothing as partners with Him.
And show kindness to the ones who are your parents.
And kill not your children from want.
We will provide for you and for them.
And come not near any indecencies
whether these were manifest or what was inward.
And kill not a soul which God forbade, unless rightfully.
He charged you with that
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (6:151)
And come not near the property of the orphan
but with what is fairer
until one reaches the coming of age.
And live up to the full measure and balance with equity.
We will not place a burden on any soul, but to its capacity.
And when you said something,
be just, even if it had been with possessors of kinship
and live up to the compact of God.
Thus, He charged you with it
so that perhaps you will recollect. (6:152
And this is My straight path
so follow it and follow not the ways
that will split you up from His way.
That He has charged you of it
so that perhaps you would be God-conscious. (6:153)

QURANIC SIGNS 31:27-31:29

Madinah: *And if trees on the earth were only pens*
and the sea causes to increase after that
with seven more seas that were ink,
yet the Words of God would not come to an end.
Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (31:27)
Your creation and your Upraising
are not but like that of a single soul.
Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing. (31:28)
Have you not considered
that God causes the nighttime to be interposed into the daytime
and causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime
and caused the sun to become subservient and the moon,

each run for a term, that which is determined
and that God is Aware of what you do? (31:29)

QURANIC SIGN 34:6

Madinah: *And consider those who were given the knowledge*
*that what was caused to descend to **you** from **your** Lord.*
It is The Truth and it guides to a path of
The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise. (34:6)

QURANIC SIGNS 39:52-39:54

Madinah: *Know they not that God extends the provision*
for whomever He wills and tightens it for whom He wills?
Truly, in this are, certainly, signs for a folk who believe. (39:52)
Say: O My servants who exceeded all bounds against themselves,
despair not of the mercy of God. Truly, God forgives all impieties.
Truly, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate. (39:53)
Be penitent to your Lord and submit to Him
before the punishment approaches you.
Again, you will not be helped. (39:54)

QURANIC SIGNS 40:56-40:57

Madinah: T*ruly, those who dispute about the signs of God*
without any authority having approached them,
there is nothing but having pride in their breasts.
They will never be ones who reach its satisfaction.
So seek refuge in God.
Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing. (40:56)
Certainly, the creation of the heavens and the earth
is greater than the creation of humanity,
yet most of humanity knows not. (40:57)

QURANIC SIGNS 42:23-42:25; 42:27

Madinah: *That is what God gives as good tidings to His servants*
who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality.
Say: I ask you not for compensation, but for the affection for any kin.
And whoever gains benevolence,
We will increase for him goodness in it.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Most Ready to Appreciate. (42:23)
Or they say: He devised against God a lie.
*But if God wills He would have sealed over **your** heart.*
And God blots out falsehood and verifies The Truth by His Words.
Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (42:24)
And He is the One Who accepts the remorse of His servants

and pardons their evil deeds.
And He knows what you accomplish. (42:25)

*****

And if God extended the provision for His servants,
they would be insolent in the earth,
but He sends down by measure whatever He wills.
Truly, He is The Aware, The Seeing of His servants. (42:27)

Quranic Sign 45:14

Madinah: *Say to those who believed:*
Forgive those who hope not for the Days of God
that He give recompense to a folk
according to what they had been earning. (45:14)

Quranic Sign 46:10

Madinah: *Say: Considered you if this had been from God*
and you were ungrateful for it
and bore witness as one who bears witness
from among the Children of Jacob to its like
and believed in it, yet you grew arrogant,
how unjust you are;
truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust. (46:10)

Quranic Sign 46:15

Madinah: *And We charged the human being with kindness*
to ones who are his parents.
His mother carried him painfully
and she painfully brought him forth.
And the bearing of him and the weaning of him
are thirty months.
When he was fully grown, having come of age
and reached forty years he said:
My Lord! Arouse me that I may give thanks
*for **Your** divine blessing,*
*that with which **You** were gracious to me*
and to ones who are my parents
and that I do as one in accord with morality
*so that **You** be well-pleased*
and make things right for me and my offspring.
*Truly, I repented to **You** and, truly,*
I am of the ones who submit to God. (46:15)

QURANIC SIGN 46:35

Madinah: *So have **you** patience as endured patiently*
those imbued with constancy of the Messengers
and let them not seek to hasten the Judgment.
As, truly, on a Day they will see what they are promised
as if they lingered not in expectation
but for an hour of daytime.
This is delivering the message!
Will any be caused to perish but the folk,
the ones who disobey? (46:35)

QURANIC SIGN 18:28

Madinah: *And have **you** patience **yourself***
with those who call to their Lord
in the morning and the evening,
wanting His Countenance.
*And let not **your** eyes pass over them*
wanting the adornment of this present life.
And obey not him whose heart
We made neglectful of Our Remembrance
and who followed his own desires
and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

QURANIC SIGNS 18:83-18:101

Madinah: *And they will ask **you** about Dhu-l Qarnayn.*
Say: I will recount to you a remembrance of him. (18:83)
Truly, We established him firmly on the earth
and gave him a route to everything. (18:84)
So he pursued a route (18:85)
until when he reached the setting of the sun.
He found it beginning to set in a spring of muddy water.
And he found near it a folk.
We said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn!
*Either **you** will punish them*
*or **you** will take them to **yourself** with goodness.* (18:86)
He said: As for him who did wrong,
we will punish him.
Again, he will be returned to his Lord
Who will punish him with a horrible punishment. (18:87)
But as for him who believed
and did as one in accord with morality,
he will have the fairer recompense.

And we will say to him of our command with ease. (18:88)
Again, he pursued a route (18:89)
until when he reached the rising place of the sun.
He found it coming up on a folk
for whom We make not any obstruction against it. (18:90)
Thus, We, surely, enclosed whatever was near him
through awareness. (18:91)
Again, he pursued a route (18:92)
until when he reached between two embankments.
He found behind them a folk who would almost not understand
any saying. (18:93)
They said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn!
Truly, Gog and Magog are ones who make
corruption in and on the earth.
Will we assign to ***you*** *payment*
if ***you*** *have made an embankment*
between us and between them? (18:94)
He said: What my Lord established firmly for me is better,
so assist me with strength.
I will make a fortification between you and between them. (18:95)
Give me ingots of iron, until when he made level between the two cliffs.
He said: Blow, until when he made it a fire.
He said: Give me molten brass to pour out over it. (18:96)
So they were not able to scale it
nor were they able to dig through it. (18:97)
He said: This is a mercy from my Lord.
So when the promise of my Lord drew near, He will made it powder.
And the promise of my Lord had been true. (18:98)
And that Day We will leave some of them
to surge like waves on some others.
And the trumpet will be blown, then,
We will gather them altogether. (18:99)
We will present the depths of hell
on that Day in plain view to ones who are ungrateful, (18:100)
to those whose eyes had been screened
from My Remembrance and who had not been able to hear. (18:101)

Quranic Signs 16:126-16:128

Madinah: *And if you chastised, then,*
chastise with the like
of that with which you were chastised.
But if you endured patiently, certainly,
it is better for the ones who remain steadfast. (16:126)

*And have **you** patience and **your** patience is only from God.*
And feel not remorse over them,
*nor be **you** troubled about what they plan.* (16:127)
Truly, God is with those
who were God-conscious and those,
they are ones who are doers of good. (16:128)

QURANIC SIGNS 14:28-14:29

Madinah: *Have **you** not considered those who substituted ingratitude*
for the divine blessing of God
and caused their folk to live in abodes of nothingness? (14:28)
They will roast in hell. Miserable will be the stopping place! (14:29)

QURANIC SIGNS 32:15-32:20

Madinah: *Only those believe in Our signs who,*
when they were reminded of them, fall down,
ones who prostrate themselves
and glorify the praise of their Lord
and they grow not arrogant. (32:15)
whose sides deliberately avoided their sleeping places
to call to their Lord in fear and hope.
And they spend of what We provided them. (32:16)
No soul knows what was concealed for them of comfort
for their eyes as a recompense
for what they had been doing. (32:17)
Is he who had been one who believes
like he who had been one who disobeys?
They are not on the same level. (32:18)
As for those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
for them are Gardens as places of shelter,
hospitality for them for what they had been doing. (32:19)
And as for those who disobeyed,
their place of shelter will be the fire.
Every time they would want to go forth from there,
they would be caused to return to it.
And it will be said to them:
Experience the punishment of the fire
which you had been denying! (32:20)

QURANIC SIGN 30:17

Madinah: *So glory be to God at the time of the evening hour*
and at the time when it comes to be the morning! (30:17)

Quranic Signs 29:1-29:11

Madinah: *Alif Lam Mim.* (29:1)
Assumed humanity that they will be left
because they say: We believed and they will not be tried? (29:2)
And, certainly, We tried those who were before them.
Then, certainly, God knows those who were sincere
and knows the ones who lie. (29:3)
Or assumed those who do evil deeds that they will out do Us?
How evil is that about which they give judgment! (29:4)
Whoever had been hoping for the meeting with God,
then, truly, the term of God is that which arrives.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (29:5)
Whoever struggled, he struggles only for himself.
Then, truly, God is Sufficient for the worlds. (29:6)
And those who believed and do
as ones in accord with morality,
certainly, We will absolve them of their evil deeds
and We will give recompense for the fairer
of what they had been doing. (29:7)
And We charged the human being with goodness
to ones who are his parents
and if they struggled with ***you*** *that* ***you*** *ascribe partners with Me,*
that of which for ***you*** *there is no knowledge*
then, obey them no
To Me is your return and I will tell yo
of what you had been doing. (29:8)
And those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
We will, certainly, cause them to enter
among the ones in accord with morality. (29:9)
And of humanity is he who says:
We believed in God.
But, when he was maligned for the sake of God,
he mistook the persecution by humanity for a punishment by God.
And if help drew near from ***your*** *Lord,*
they would, surely, say: We had been with you.
Is not God greater in knowledge
of what is in the breasts of beings? (29:10)
And, certainly, God knows those who believed
and, certainly, He knows the ones who are hypocrites. (29:11)

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTE TO THE TEXT

1. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Reading the Signs."

NOTES TO THE EPILOGUE

1. Waqidi's (748-822 CE) account ends here according to Muir (although it does appear in the .Rizwi Frizer et. al translation of The Life of Muhammad (al-Waqidi's Kitab al-Maghazi. What edition was Muir translating from?) Ibn Hisham (d. 833 CE) adds the following: O people! You have rights demandable of your wives, and they have rights demandable of you. Upon them it is incumbent not to violate their conjugal faith nor commit any act of open impropriety; which things if they do, you have authority shut them up in separate apartments and to beat them with stripes, yet not severely. But if they refrain therefrom, clothe them and feed them suitably. And treat your women well: for they are with you as captives and prisoners. They have not power over anything as regards themselves. And you have verily taken them on the security of God: and have made their persons lawful unto you by the words of God. (Ibn Ishaq with notes from Ibn Hishami p 436. Ibn Ishaq's dates are 704-761-770 CE. As the birth date of Ibn Hisham is not certain, all three, Waqidi, Ibn Hisham and Ibn Ishaq were contemporaries who may or may not have met. Further research needs to be done regarding this passage as it has caused great controvery over the centuries.)

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LALEH BAKHTIAR

CRITICAL THINKING

THE MESSENGER RETURNS TO GOD

AND WHO ARE
PROPHETS, MESSENGERS AND/OR ONES WHO ARE
SENT INCLUDING THEIR MOTHERS, WIVES,
DAUGHTERS AND OTHER FEMALE RELATIONS

THE YEAR
24
OF THE REVELATION
(11 AH/CE 632)

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 24

Critical Thinking
The Messenger Returns to God
The Year
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of the Revelation
(11 AH/CE 632)
and
Prophets, Messengers and/or
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Including Their
Mothers, Wives, Daughters,
and Other Female Relations

Laleh Bakhtiar

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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *The Year 1* to *The Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections (*ruku*) (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter). The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation.

Whereas in the other 23 Years of this series, the chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are given according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran, in this present work, *The Year 24*, only Chapter 110 appears as the last chapter revealed. In the other years, each is followed by the sign(s) of a particular section (*ruku*). Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators. Then, the history at the time of the specific Quranic section in question is given. Finally, at the end of each section (*ruku*) there is an exercise and assessment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they learn HOW the Quran teaches thinking.

The remaining books are: *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud*; *Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job*; *Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr* and *Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.*

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual*. The last, Book 30 has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (*tafsir*) by Sayyid Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran* (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (*tahqiq*) and critical thinking (*furqan*) skills taught by the Quran.

This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran*. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of *The Sublime Quran*, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" does not appear any where in the Quranic text. The Quran refers to the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*), but not specifically to the word "Islam" while it refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the un-

grateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well intentioned a person may be, the use of the word Allah instead of God when speaking English, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (*tawhid*). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: *anta* where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By indicating the pronoun **you** in bold font

indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (*furqan*, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Moral Traits** (belief in One God (*tawhid*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), integrity through moral discipline, empowering courage, persevering in goodness, empathic altruism and being fair and just). The signs (*ayat*) in each section (*ruku*) teach the one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning** or one of the **Seven Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and **consequences**. We use **concepts, ideas** and **theories** to **interpret data, facts** and **experiences** in order to answer **questions, solve problems,** and **resolve issues**.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (*sira*). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning** or **The Seven Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE STANDARDS

1. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: *TABAYYANA*)
2. ACCURACY (TO BE FREE FROM ERROR: *AL-RUSHUDU MINA L-GHAYI*)
3. PRECISION (EXACT TO THE NECESSARY LEVEL, TO BE PRECISE: 'AHKAMA)
4. RELEVANCE (TO MAKE RELEVANT, TO RELATE: QASSA)
5. DEPTH (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: *'ARADA*)
6. BREADTH (INVOLVING MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: *'ARADA*)
7. LOGIC (REASONABLE: *'AQALA*)
8. SIGNIFICANCE (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE WORTHY: *AHL*)
9. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC), TO BE FAIR: (HASAN)

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING

1. EMBODY POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: *TADHAKKUR*)
2. GENERATE PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: *RA'A*)
3. RAISE QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: *TAFAKKARA*)
4. USE INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: *BASIRAH*)
5. MAKE INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: *TABASSUR*)
6. UTILIZE CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: *IDHDHAKARA*)
7. MAKE ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: *ZUNUN*)
8. GENERATE IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: *TADABBUR*)

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING IN DETAIL

1. Embodies **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in

these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generate **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raise **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Use **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Make **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilize **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are. . . ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Make **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are . . . ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generate **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the

implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)
3. INTEGRITY THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: *QANATA*)
4. EMPOWERING COURAGE (*BATASHA*)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: *SABARA*)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: *IHSAN*)
7. BEING FAIR AND JUST (*ADL*, RIGHT-MINDED: *RASHAD*)

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My gratitude to Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali for his permission to use his excellent essay on "Reading the Signs: A Quranic Perspective on Thinking," as the Introduction to this work. His work gave me the courage to publish what I had learned of critical thinking when translating the Quran into English. I realized that not only did the Quran teach me what to think, but more importantly for critical thinking, it taught me HOW to think and Professor Kamali's essay confirmed my intuitions as I hope it does for the readers of this textbook.

I am also grateful to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (*furqan*), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills needed —as active rather than passive thinkers—to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, *In the Shade of the Quran* in this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamist extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

Part One

114. Quranic Chapter 110: The Help (al-Nasr) Signs 110:1-110:3

When the help of God drew near and the victory
and you saw humanity entering into the way
of life of God in units,
then, glorify the praise of your Lord
and ask for His forgiveness.
Truly, He had been ever
The Accepter of Repentance. (110:1-110:3)

History

One of the traditions related about Chapter 110 is that when it was revealed, the Messenger called his daughter, Fatima. He told her that he had received intimations of his approaching end. Fatima burst into tears. He said: Why do you weep, my child? Be comforted for truly you are the first of my people that shall rejoin me. Fatima dried her tears and smiled pleasantly. She was to die within six months from the death of her father. He had called her "the Queen of all the females of Paradise after Mary, the mother of Jesus."[1]

Critical Thinking•

The word "clarification" or to be clear (*bayan*) occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarification in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error.

Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

In order to help students clarify their thinking, have them try to figure out the meaning of what the Quranic message here is saying. Have them explain their understanding of an issue mentioned in the following Quranic section (*ruku*) to someone else to help clarify it in their own mind.

Have them practice summarizing in their own words what the Quranic section or sign(s) is saying. Then ask:

Did you understand the sign(s) correctly?
Did you agree or disagree with what your classmate said before you clearly understood what the Quranic text is saying?

Did you feel that you were thinking clearly?
Did you feel your thinking was vague, muddled, deceptive or misleading?

Have them:

Summarize in their own words what they think the Quran said.
Have them give one point at a time, explain it and elaborate on what they mean.
Mention a life experience that illustrates the point in hand.
Use metaphors or analogies to help them connect their ideas to things they have already understood.

Being clear about what they think when they read a sign(s) of the Quran, helps them understand what the analytic, evaluative and creative process is.

QUESTIONS THAT FOCUS ON CLARITY IN THINKING INCLUDE•

Let me state in my own words what I think you just said.
Am I clear about your meaning?
I hear you saying "____."
Am I hearing you correctly, or have I misunderstood you?
What is the main point of this Quranic section?
Can you explain further its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
Can you give an example of its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
To give you an analogy...(give an illustration of tyrants who kill believers because they say that they believe in God)
To give you an analogy ... (give an illustration of Muslim tyrants who kill other Muslims because they have determined that these people are not Muslim. They are not Muslim because the only Muslims are the ones who follow their ideology.)
Does such a view go against the Quranic sign? Explain.

TO CLARIFY STUDENTS' THINKING, CONSIDER ASKING THE FOLLOWING•

Can you restate the points of the Quranic signs 110:1-110:3 in your own words?
I didn't understand you.
Can you give an example?
Let me tell you what I understand you to be saying.
Did I understand you correctly?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs here. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

After that, they should show how that sign or those signs fit into the entire section. The above questions should help them do that.

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.
When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words),
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.
4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant. In other words, I frequently **stated, elaborated, illustrated** and **exemplified** my points.

Part Two
The Messenger Returns to God

Beginning of the Prophet's Last Illness

Soon after his last pilgrimage, the Prophet became ill. News of this spread in Arabia. Two men, al-Aswad from Yemen and Musaylimah from al-Yamamah, each took advantage of the situation and declared themselves to be Prophets. A short time later, a third man, Tulayhah in the country of Asad, made the same claim. Al-Aswad was a soothsayer and a juggler. He would show people wonderous things to captivate their hearts. Al-Aswad eventually ruled over Yemen for a short time before he was killed while the Messenger was still alive. Both Musaylimah and al-Aswad renounced the Prophet and his leadership. Al-Aswad eventually ruled over Yemen, Musaylimah over al-Yamamah and Tulayhah over Samira. Both Musaylimah and Tulayhah were driven away by the people after the Messenger sent messengers instructing the people to eliminate them.

History

According to Waqidi, the Messenger's last illness began on a Wednesday, two days before the end of Safar, the day after he had appointed Usama to lead the expedition.[2]

According to al-Tabari: During the month of Muharram (some say on the 25th of Safar), the Messenger ordered the people to undertake an expedition to Syria. He put Usama, the son of his freed slave Zayd ibn al-Harithah, in command over them, ordering him to lead the cavalry into the territory of al-Balqa (a name given by early Muslim authors either to the whole of the Transjordanian territory or the middle part of it. Its geographical meaning is restricted to the limestone plateau between the Wadi al-Zarqa and the Wadi al-Muib. EI[2]) and al-Darum (name of a coastal plain of Palestine. EI[2]) in the land of Palestine. As the people, including Abu Bakr, Umar and Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, were preparing for the expedition, the Prophet began to suffer from the sickness by which God took him to what honor and compassion He intended for him.[3]

According to Ibn Ishaq: The Messenger began to suffer from the illness by which God took him to what honor and compassion He intended for him shortly before the end of Safar or in the beginning of Rabi al-Awwal. It began, so I have been told, when he went to Baqi al-Gharqad the middle of the night and prayed for the dead. Then he returned to his family and in the morning his sufferings began.

Abu Muwayhiba, freedman of the Messenger, said: In the middle of the night the Messenger sent for me and told me that he was ordered to pray for the dead in this cemetery and that I was to go with him. I

went and when he stood among them he said: Peace be upon you, O people of the graves! Happy are you that you are so much better off than men here. Dissensions have come like waves of darkness one after the other, the last being worse than the first. Then he turned to me and said: I have been given the choice between the keys of the treasuries of this world and long life here followed by Paradise, and meeting my Lord and Paradise (at once). I urged him to choose the former, but he said that he had chosen the latter. Then he prayed for the dead at Baqi and went away. Then it was that the illness through which God took him began.[4]

Ayisha said: The Messenger returned from the cemetery to find me suffering from a severe headache and I was saying: O my head! He said: Nay, Ayisha, O *my* head! Then he said: Would it distress you if you were to die before me so that I might wrap you in your shroud and pray over you and bury you. I said: By God, it seems to me that if you were to do that you would return to my house and would make a marriage feast with one of your wives. The Messenger smiled and then his pain overcame him as he was going the round his wives until he was overpowered in the house of Maymuna. He called his wives and asked their permission to be nursed in my house. They permitted him, so the Messenger went out walking between two men of his family, Ali ibn Abi Talib and al-Fadl ibn al-Abbas, with the Messenger's feet dragging on the ground while his head was wrapped around until he entered my house.[5]

Then the Messenger's illness worsened and he suffered much pain. He said: Pour seven skins of water from different wells over me so that I may go out to the men and instruct them. We made him sit down in a tub belonging to Hafsa bint Umar and we poured water over him until he cried: Enough, enough!

Abd Allah ibn Masud states: Our beloved Prophet announced his approaching death a month before he died. When the separation drew near, he gathered us in the house of our mother, Ayisha, looked at us intensely while his eyes were shedding tears, and said: Welcome to you. May God treat you with compassion, shelter you, protect you, exalt you, benefit you, give you success, assist you, preserve you, and receive you kindly! I enjoin you to fear God and entrust you to Him. I appoint Him as successor over you and entrust you to Him. *Truly I am a warner to you from Him and a bearer of good tidings.* (11:2) *And rise not up against God.* (44:19) *This is the Last Abode that We will assign to those who want not self-exaltation in the earth nor corruption. And the Ultimate End is for the ones who are Godfearing.* (28:83) *Is there not in hell a place of lodging for ones who increase in pride?* (39:60)

Ibn Abbas states: Thursday, what a Thursday! He said: The Messenger of God's pain became so severe that he said: Give me an inkpot

and a shoulder blade so that I may have something written for you and you will never go astray after me. His companions wrangled over it. They said: Do you see him talking nonsense? The Messenger of God became grieved and annoyed and asked them to leave. It did not befit them to carry on a dispute before a Prophet. Some people said: What is the matter with him? Is he talking nonsense? Ask him for an explanation. When they went back, repeating those remarks to him, he replied: Leave me alone, the state I am in is better than that for which you are calling me. He charged them with three things: Expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula; give presents to the delegations as I used to do. Said ibn Jubayr states that Ibn Abbas became silent about the third command intentionally or that he said that he had forgotten it.[6]

Waqidi: About this time, recognizing Umar and some other chief men in the room, he called out: Bring me ink and a shoulder blade that I may record for you a writing which shall prevent your going astray forever. Umar said: He wanders in his mind. Is not the Quran sufficient for us? When the women were about to bring the writing materials, Umar chided them: Quiet! he said. You behave as women always do. When your master falls sick, you burst into tears and the moment he recovers a little, you begin embracing him. The Messenger, jealous even on his death-bed of the good name of his wives, was aroused by these words and said: Truly, they are better than you are.[7]

In the course of this day, the Messenger called Ayisha to him and said: Where is that gold which I gave you to keep? She replied that it was by her. He said that she should spend it at once in charity. Then he dozed off in a half conscious state. Some time after that, he asked if she had done as he desired. She replied: Not yet. He called for the gold, which was apparently a portion of the tithe income. She placed it in his hand and counted six dinars. He directed that it should be divided among certain indigent families. Then, lying down, he said: Now I am at peace. Verily it would not have become me to meet my Lord and this gold in my possession.

Waqidi: His strength now rapidly sank. He seemed to be aware that death was drawing near. He called for a pitcher of water and wetting his face, prayed, saying: O Lord, I beseech Thee, assist me in the agonies of death! Then, three times he called out earnestly: Gabriel come close to me.[8]

THE MESSENGER OF GOD RETURNS TO GOD

There are many traditions given by Waqidi explaining how the messenger used a form of prayer accompanied by rubbing or blowing. During his last hours he began to blow upon himself repeating a prayer which he had been in the habit of praying over those who were very sick.

When he ceased from weakness, Ayisha took up the task and continued to blow upon him and recite the same prayer. The prayer was: Take away evil and misfortune, O **You** Lord of humanity! Grant a cure, for **You** are the Physician. There is no cure besides **Yours**. It leaves nothing of the disease behind. He prayed in a whisper: Lord, grant me pardon and join me to the companionship on high. Then, at intervals: Eternity in Paradise! Pardon! Yes, the blessed companionship on high! He stretched himself gently. Then all was still.

Yahya ibn Abbad ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr from his father told him that he heard Ayisha say: The Messenger died in my bosom during my turn I had wronged none in regard to him. It was due to my ignorance and extreme youth that the Messenger died in my arms. Then I laid his head on a pillow and got up, beating my breast and slapping my face along with th other women.

When Abu Bakr heard what was happening, he came to the door of the mosque as Umar was speaking to the people. He paid no attention, but went in to Ayisha's house to the Messenger, who was lying covered by a mantle of Yamani cloth. He went and uncovered his face and kissed him, saying: You are dearer than my father and mother. You have tasted the death which God had decreed: a second death will never overtake you. Then he placed the mantle on the Messenger's face and went out. Umar was still talking and he said gently: Umar, be quiet. But Umar refused and went on talking. When Abu Bakr saw that he would not be silent, he bent forward to the people who, when they heard his words, came to him and left Umar. Giving thanks and praise to God he said: O men, if any of you worship Muhammad, Muhammad is dead: if anyone worships God, God is alive, immortal. Then he recited this verse: *And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Surely Messengers have passed away before him. Then if he should die or be slain, will you turn about on your heels? And he who turns about on his heels will not injure God at all. And God will give recompense to the ones who are thankful.* (3:144) It was as though the people did not know that this verse[9] had come down until Abu Bakr recited it that day. The people took it from him and it was (constantly) in their mouths. Umar said: By God, when I heard Abu Bakr recite these words I was dumbfounded so that my legs would not bear me and I fell to the ground owing that the Messenger was indeed dead. It was Monday June 8, 632 CE.

Part Three
Prophets, Messengers and/or Ones Who Are Sent

Segment 1: Prophets and Messengers

In this section we will study the signs that tell us the advantage some of the Prophets and Messengers had over the other; that both Prophets and Messengers were sent to past societies; that in spite of the advantage some have other others, we do not separate and divide between anyone of them; both are commanded to obey God; that God firms the mind of the Prophets by relating to them about the Messengers; how Satan tempts both of them; how some Prophets and some Messengers were killed without right; and how both had enemies.

We will first explore the similarities that Prophets and Messengers share according to the Quranic signs before we look at the particular characteristics of each. Ones who were both Prophets and Messengers include: Ishmael, Noah, Moses, Aaron, Jesus (he is also the Messiah) and Muhammad (he is also the Seal of Prophets).

Advantage of Some Over Others

The advantages given to some of the Prophets and Messengers and not to others has been determined by the environment, nature and scope of their mission. Some were sent to just a single tribe, some to larger nations, some to just a single generation while the mission of some was to all nations and all generations. The other point to be made is that the various advantages depended on the distinct qualities they had that they brought to their people based on the needs of the people of that time.

And your Lord is greater in knowledge of whoever are in the heavens and in and on the earth.
And, certainly, We gave advantage to some of the Prophets over others. And to David We gave Psalms. (17:55)

Commentary°

When God says: *And to David We gave the Psalms*, this is one example of what God gave to one of His Prophets and not to others. The fact is that revelation is more lasting a miracle than any supernatural events that may be witnessed by only a handful of people.

Your Lord knows best all who are in the heavens and the earth, thus endowing them each one with what He wills, according to the measure of their states. Moses, with being spoken to; Abraham, with

friendship; and Muhammad with the night journey; and *We gave David the Psalms.*

These are the Messengers. We gave advantage,
some of them over some others.
Of them are those to whom God spoke and some of them
He exalted in degree.
And We gave Jesus son of Mary
the clear portents and confirmed him
with the hallowed Spirit.
And if God willed, those who were after them
would not have fought one another
after the clear portents drew near them,
except they were at variance.
And some of them believed,
while some of them were ones who are ungrateful.
And if God willed, they would not have fought one another;
except God accomplishes what He wants. (2:253)

And Messengers We related to you before
and Messengers We relate to you not.
God spoke directly to Moses, speaking directly. (4:164)

COMMENTARY°

It is then the same procession moving forward throughout human history, conveying a single message, bringing the same guidance to warn and to give a piece of happy news. It includes a group of chosen men like Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, David, Moses, as well as others whom God spoke about to His Messenger in the Quran and still others about whom He told the Prophet nothing.

It is a procession which includes people from various nations and various countries, living at different times. Nothing gives any of them distinction over others. No consideration of race, nation, place, or time divides them. They all give the same guiding light, to warn and motivate, and they all try to lead human beings towards the light. This applies to those of them who were sent to a particular tribe, community, nation, city, country, or the one who was sent to all humanity, namely, Muhammad, the last and seal of all Messengers.

Every one of them received revelations from God. None of them invented anything of his own accord. If Moses was spoken to directly by God, this was simply one aspect of revelation and none of us knows how it happened. The Quran, which is the only authentic source we have on such matters, has not given us any details. The only thing we know is that God gave this revelation in words. How and in what man-

ner or in what sense or power Moses used to receive it we do not know. All that is part of the knowledge God has kept to Himself. If the Quran does not speak to us about it, then any interpretation is simply guesswork lacking foundation.

BOTH PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS WERE SENT TO ANCIENT SOCIETIES

And how many a Prophet sent We among the ancient ones! (43:6)

And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you
to partisans of the ancient ones. (15:10)

SEPARATE AND DIVIDE NOT AMONG PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

While Quranic signs confirm that both Prophets and Messengers were sent to previous civilizations, the Quran tells us that we should not separate or divide between them, accepting some and rejecting others.

Truly, those who are ungrateful to God and His Messengers
and they want to separate and divide between God
and His Messenger and they say: We believe in some
and we disbelieve in others, they want that they take themselves to a
way between that. (4:150)

Say: We believed in God and what was caused to descend to us,
and what was caused to descend to Abraham and Ishmael
and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes
and whatever was given Moses and Jesus,
and whatever was given to the Prophets from their Lord.
We separate and divide not between anyone of them.
And we are ones who submit to Him. (2:136)

COMMENTARY°

The principle of the unity and universality of faith, and the unity of all Prophets and Messengers all through the ages, is the cornerstone of the faith of those who are in submission to God (*islam*). It lends legitimacy to the Muslim community's claim to the legacy of Abraham and to the right of trusteeship for God's way of life in this world. It is this principle as a fundamental backbone of this way of life that gives it its universal characteristic which brings people together under the same banner, free of all prejudice or discrimination. It makes the Muslim community open to all people in a spirit of genuine love and peace.

This next Quranic sign states that the Messenger Muhammad affirms the truth of what was revealed to him. He makes no distinction between any of God's Messengers.

The Messenger believed in what was caused to descend to him
from his Lord as do the ones who believe.
All believed in God and His angels
and His Books and His Messengers saying:
We separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers.
And they said: We heard and we obeyed,
*so grant **Your** forgiveness, Our Lord!*
*And to **You** is the Homecoming.* (2:285)

BOTH PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS ARE SERVANTS OF GOD

Then, after them succeeded a succession
who wasted the formal prayer and followed their lusts.
So they will meet error, but the ones who repented and believed
and did as ones in accord with morality.
For those will enter the Garden
and they will not be wronged at all,
Gardens of Eden which The Merciful promised His servants
in the unseen. Truly, He, His promise
had been that which is kept.
They will not hear in them idle talk, nothing but: Peace (salam).
And they will have their provision in them
in the early morning dawn and evening.
This is the Garden which We will give as inheritance
to whomever of Our servants who had been devout.
*And we come forth not but by the command of **your** Lord.*
To Him belongs whatever is in advance of us
and whatever is behind us
and whatever is in between that.
*And **your** Lord had not been forgetful,*
the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them!
*So worship Him and maintain **you** patience in His worship.*
*Have **you** known any namesake for Him?* (19:59-19:65)

COMMENTARY°

Yet such highly God-fearing people [as the previous Prophets and Messengers] are succeeded by generations that are distant from God, by people who neglect their prayer and deny it as a duty incumbent on them. Instead, they follow only their lusts and indulge in every loose activity. The difference is so clear and the contrast complete.

Both Prophets and Messengers Are Commanded to Obey God

And whoever obeys God and the Messenger,
those are to whom God was gracious among the Prophets
and just persons and the witnesses
and the ones in accord with morality.
And excellent were those as allies! (4:69)

God Firms the Mind of Prophets by Relating to Them About the Messengers

The stories of the previous Prophets and Messengers (as we will see) were explained to the Messenger and his Companions whose minds became firm in certitude that this was the truth. The stories are a reminder and admonishment for the believers.

And all that We relate to ***you*** *[Muhammad] of the tidings*
of the Messengers is so that We make ***your*** *mind firm by it.*
And The Truth drew near ***you*** *in this,*
and an admonishment and a reminder
for the ones who believe. (11:120)

Satan Tempts Both Prophets and Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent

And We sent not before ***you*** *[Muhammad] any Messenger*
nor Prophet, but when he fantasized.
Satan cast fantasies into him.
But God nullifies what Satan casts.
Again, God set clear His signs.
And God is Knowing, Wise. (22:52)

Commentary°

God says, in effect: We did not send before you (Muhammad) any Messenger or Prophet but that when he recited (the Book) Satan cast something into his recitation. That is, if we recite the Book and our animal soul (*nafs al-ammara*, passions) becomes aware or conscious that we are reciting the recitation, Satan casts something into it, for Satan has a partnership with our animal soul in this, and that noticing of the recitation comes from the desire of our animal soul and its attraction to pleasure (lust).

However, if we then witnesses the One remembered instead of the remembrance itself, our heart will become oblivious to the recitation. We will not witness anything besides our Master. Consequently Satan

will, instead, become one of our captives. Is it not clear how if we are inattentive in our recitation or in our remembrance of our Lord, Mighty and Majestic is He, our heart acquiesces in the basest pleasures of our animal soul and thus can the enemy Satan get at us.

The whispering (*waswas*) is of two kinds, one of which is from the lower self and the other from Satan. That which persists in coming is from the lower self, and assistance against it is sought through fasting, prayer and propriety. However, that which comes, but then withdraws is from Satan, and assistance against it is sought through the recitation of the Quran and remembrance of God.

God may cause whatever aspersion Satan may cast to become a trial for all in whose spiritual hearts have a sickness and all whose spiritual hearts are hardened. Indeed, all who are thus sinning are most deeply in the wrong.

BOTH PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS WERE KILLED UNRIGHTFULLY

The killing of those who command to justice or equity in human life is a reference to those who speak for the implementation of the code God has given for human life, a code based on justice and that, according to the signs, it alone can maintain absolute justice.

Abasement was stamped on them wherever they were come upon
—but those with a rope to God and a rope to humanity
— and they drew the burden of anger from God
and wretchedness was stamped on them.
That is because they had been ungrateful for the signs of God
and kill the Prophets without right.
That is because they rebelled
and had been exceeding the limits. (3:112)

COMMENTARY°

Denying God's revelation, whether it is an attitude adopted outright or a refusal to implement it practically, the killing of prophets without any justification and the killing of people who enjoin fairness and justice, as well as disobedience and transgression, are all reasons for incurring God's wrath and bringing about defeat, disgrace and humiliation upon oneself. These reasons are still present today among the lost offspring of the Muslims who call themselves, without justification, Muslims. They present these very qualifications to their Lord and they get their fair reward: They receive all that God imposes of disgrace and humiliation. Some of them may well ask: Why do we suffer defeat when we are Muslims? Let those who pose such a question

first reflect on what the true nature of Islam is, and who the true Muslims are?

Truly, those who are ungrateful for the signs of God
and kill the Prophets without right
and kill those who command to equity from among humanity,
then, give you to them the good tidings
of a painful punishment. (3:21)

COMMENTARY°

We note that the denial and rejection of God's revelation is coupled in the Quranic statement with the totally unjust killing of the Prophets—for there can be no right respected when a Prophet is killed. Furthermore, the killing of those who enjoin equity in human life is a reference to those who advocate the implementation of the Quran God has laid down for human life, which is based on justice and which alone can maintain absolute justice.

Truly, We will, certainly, help Our Messengers
and those who believed in this present life
and on a Day when the ones who bear witness
will stand up. (40:51)

There will be help for the Prophets and Messengers (40:51) with assistance and victory over the enemies. On the Day of Judgment, the angels (those who stand up and bear witness) will help them with reasons and proof.

To those who said: Truly, God made a compact with us
that we believe not in a Messenger
until He approaches with a sacrifice to be consumed by the fire,
say: Surely, Messengers brought about to you
before me the clear portents and even of what you spoke.
Then, why have you killed them
if you had been ones who are sincere? (3:183)

COMMENTARY°

Muhammad was not the first messenger to be confronted with the charge of falsehood. Many earlier Messengers, especially those sent to the Children of Jacob, were similarly confronted, despite what they had shown of clear evidence and miracles, as well as scrolls containing Divine Commands, described in this sign as books of Divine Wisdom, and with the light-giving revelation, such as the Torah and the Gospel. It is, then, the same story with all Messengers and Divine Messages.

It is the same way they all follow, a way of hardship and sacrifice. It is the only way.

BOTH PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS HAD ENEMIES

The Quranic signs say clearly that every Prophet and every Messenger had to face enemies. The opposition they faced strengthened their resolve to bring the true message. Only those who are true to their beliefs, dedicated to its causes and seeking no personal gain are guided to success in overcoming their enemies.

The Prophets and Messengers faced enemies with a message of truth in order to correct the corruption that finds its way into a community or human life. Any corruption affects our minds (hearts) while those doing the corruption only serve their own interests. They opposed the Prophets and Messengers in order to defend themselves and their own interests.

Whoever had been an enemy of God and His angels,
and His Messengers and Gabriel and Michael,
then, truly, God is an enemy
of the ones who are ungrateful. (2:98)

And, thus, We assigned for every Prophet
an enemy of the ones who sin.
*And **your** Lord sufficed*
as one who guides and as a helper. (25:31)

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

It is important to note that all Messengers are Prophets, but not all Prophets are Messengers because some Messengers are angels and some are human beings. The Quran mentions the names of just some of the Prophets. The Prophets whose names are in bold are also mentioned as human Messengers and as Ones Who Are Sent: Aaron (19:53); **Abraham** (19:41); Adam (); David (17:55); **Elias** (Elijah) (6:85); Elisha (6:85); Enoch (19:56); Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl) "one who remained steadfast" (21:85); Ezra (9:30); **Hud** (Eber) (26:124ff); Isaac (19:49); **Ishmael** (19:54); Jacob (also called Israel) (19:49); **Jesus** (19:30); Job (4:163); **Jonah** (4:163); **Joseph** (6:84); Joshua (Moses' spiritual warrior (*fata*) who accompanied him on his journey to meet Khidr) (18:60-18:65); **Lot** (6:85); **Moses** (19:51); and **Muhammad** (the Seal of the Prophets, his name means "the praised one") (7:158); (**Noah** (19:58); **Salah** (26:142ff); Samuel (nameless) (2:246-2:248); **Jethro** (Shuayb) (26:177ff); Solomon (4:163); Three Nameless "ones who are sent"

(13:36-13:21); Yahya (Yahya (John) means "he lives") (3:39); and Zechariah (whose name means "God has remembered") (6:85). Some commentators such as Ibn Hazm also include Mary as a Prophet.

Four are nameless. One was bestowed to a people for whom Saul was made king (assumed to be Samuel). He said that the Ark of the Covenant will approach the people of this Prophet. In it is tranquility and wisdom from what the people of Moses left and the people of Aaron. Angels will be carrying it: *And their Prophet said to them: Truly, a sign of his dominion is that there would approach you the Ark of the Covenant. In it is tranquility from your Lord, and abiding wisdom of what the people of Moses left, and the people of Aaron. And the angels will carry it. Truly, in that is a sign for you if you had been ones who believe.* (2:246-2:248)

The other three Nameless ones are of a Town, the name of which is not given: And propound a parable for them: *The Companions of the Town when ones who were sent drew near them. When We sent to them two, they denied them both, so We replenished them with the third. And they said: Truly, We are ones who are sent to you. They said: You are nothing but mortals like ourselves and The Merciful caused not to descend anything. You are but lying! They said: Our Lord knows that we are ones who are sent to you. On us is only the delivering of the clear message. They said: Truly, we augured ill of you. If you refrain not yourselves, we will, certainly, stone you. Certainly, a painful punishment will afflict you from us. They said: Ones who auger ill will be with you! Is it because you were reminded? Nay! You are a folk, ones who are excessive. A man drew near from the farther part of the city, coming eagerly. He said: O my folk! Follow the ones who are sent! Follow whoever asks not of you any compensation and they are ones who are truly guided.* (36:13-36:21).

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The following introduces the general characteristics of Prophets and Messengers in the chronological order of the revelation (see chart in Appendix 2).

They glorified God much and remembered God frequently: *Moses said: My Lord! Expand my breast for me.* (20:25).

They were imbued with dynamic energy and insight, sincere, pure, reminders: *And remember Our servants Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, all imbued with dynamic energy and insight.* (38:45)

They were a mercy from God. *And remember Our servant Job when he cried out to his Lord: Truly, Satan afflicted me with fatigue and punishment!* (38:41)

They have nearness to God and goodness of destination: *Truly, for him* (Solomon) *is nearness with Us, and goodness of destination.* (38:40); God bestowed His mercy and gave them a tongue of lofty sincerity: *And We bestowed on them from Our mercy and We assigned them the tongue of lofty sincerity.* (19:50)

God fulfilled His divine blessings on them: *And, thus, your Lord will elect you and teach you of the interpretation of events. And He will fulfill His divine blessing on you and on the people of Jacob just as He fulfilled it on your two fathers before, Abraham and Isaac. Truly, your Lord is Knowing, Wise.* (12:6)

A leader and mercy: *Is he, then, who had been on a clear portent from his Lord, and recounts it from Him as one who bears witness—and before it was the Book of Moses, a leader and a mercy—like them? Those believe in it. Whoever is ungrateful for it among the confederates, he is promised the fire! So be you not hesitant about it. Truly, it is The Truth from your Lord, except most of humanity believes not.* (11:17) *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book, after We caused previous generations to perish as clear evidence for humanity and a guidance and a mercy so that they recollect.* (28:43) *Yet before it was the Book of Moses for a leader and as a mercy. And this is a Book, that which establishes as true in the Arabic language to warn those who did wrong and as good tidings to the ones who are doers of good.* (46:12)

And, certainly We showed Our grace to Moses and Aaron. (37:114) Their good name was with the later ones, as well: *Peace be on Elijah!* (37:130)

They were given advantage over the worlds: *And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. We gave all an advantage over the worlds.* (6:86)

God blessed those of their offspring who were doers of good; God guided them and gave recompense to the doers of good: *And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We guided. And Noah We guided before and among his offspring are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. And, thus, We gave recompense to the ones who are doers of good.* (6:84)

They were given an advantage: *And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. We gave all an advantage over the worlds.* (6:86)

They were among the ones in accord with morality: *And Zechariah and Yahya and Jesus and Elijah—all are among the ones in accord with morality.* (6:85) *And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, those are to whom God was gracious among the Prophets and just persons and the witnesses and the ones in accord with morality. And excellent were those as allies!* (4:69); guided to a straight path: *And from among their*

fathers and their offspring and their brothers/sisters, We elected them and We guided them to a straight path. (6:87)

God caused them to enter into His mercy: *And Ishmael and Enoch and Dhul-Kifl, all were of the ones who remain steadfast.* (21:85)

They were given the criterion, that is, discernment between right and wrong, an illumination and a remembrance for the Godfearing—those who dread their Lord in the unseen, apprehensive about the Hour: *And, certainly, We gave Moses and Aaron the Criterion between right and wrong and an illumination and a Remembrance for the ones who are Godfearing, those who dread their Lord in the unseen while they are ones who are apprehensive of the Hour.* (21:48-21:49)

They were given right judgment: *When he* [Abraham] *said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to?* (21:52) *We left for him a good name with the later ones. Peace be on Elias.* (37:129-37:130)

Some were unexpected gifts to their parents: *And We bestowed Isaac on him and Jacob as an unexpected gift. And We made both of them ones in accord with morality.* (21:72)

They were monotheists: *And they said: Be you ones who are Jews or Christians, you will be truly guided. Say* ***you****: Nay! We follow the creed of Abraham a monotheist. And he had not been of the ones who are polytheists.* (2:135).

They were ones who submitted to God. *Or had you been witnesses when death attended Jacob when he said to his children: How will you worship after me? They said: We will worship* ***your*** *God and the God of* ***your*** *fathers—Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac—One God. And we are ones who submit to Him.* (2:133)

They were given dominion: *Have* ***you*** *not considered him who argued with Abraham about his Lord because God gave him dominion? Mention when Abraham said: My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die. He said: I give life and cause to die. Abraham said: Truly, God brings the sun from the East, so bring* ***you*** *the sun from the West! Then, he who was ungrateful was dumfounded. And God guides not the unjust folk.* (2:258)

God tested them with words and they fulfilled them, leaders for humanity: *And mention when his Lord tested Abraham with words; then, he fulfilled them. God said: Truly, I am One Who Makes* ***you*** *a leader for humanity. He said: And of my offspring? He said: The ones who are unjust attain not My compact.* (2:124)

He gave tenderness and mercy to the hearts of those who follow them: *Again, We sent Our Messengers following their footsteps. And We*

sent following them Jesus son of Mary. And We gave him the Gospel. And We assigned in the hearts of those who followed him, tenderness and mercy. But as for monasticism, they made it up themselves. We prescribed it not for them but they were so looking for the contentment of God. Then, they gave it not the attention giving its right attention so We gave those who believed among them their compensation. And many of them are ones who disobey. (57:27) Muhammad is the *Seal of the Prophets.* (33:40)

The Messengers were sent with the signs of God and with a clear authority; given grace, they were delivered from great distress; God helped them so they became victors; they were given the Manifest Book, guided to a straight path, left with a good name, sympathetic and forbearing: *And had not been Abraham asking for forgiveness for his father only because of a promise he had promised him? Then, when it became clear to him that, truly, he was an enemy to God, he cleared himself from him. Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing.* (9:114)

CRITICAL THINKING•

LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Principle•

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether students are listening to the Quran in a language they understand or listening to their teacher's lesson. They know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into their own.

When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar.

Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, students have to take the words they are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. They have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. They have to be attentive to what the other person is saying.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

In Segment 1 we learn of the commonalities between the Prophets and Messengers. Some were given advantage over some others; God has sent both Prophets and Messengers; we are not to divide and separate among them; both are servants of God; both are commanded to obey God; God firms the minds of the Prophets by relating about the Messengers to them; among both of them were those who were unrightfully killed; both of them had enemies.

Prophets and Messengers:

- glorify God much and remembered God frequently

- had dynamic energy and insight, were sincere, pure, reminders
- were near to God and had goodness of destination
- are a leader and mercy
- were given the Book, critical judgment and prophethood
- had a good name was with the later ones, as well
- were given advantage over the worlds
- were given an advantage
- were among the ones in accord with morality
- were given the criterion: discernment between right and wrong
- were given an illumination
- were a remembrance for the Godfearing—those who dread their Lord in the unseen and are apprehensive about the Hour
- were given right judgment
- were unexpected gifts to their parents
- compensation was given in the present and in the world to come
- were monotheists
- were ones who submitted to God
- were given dominion
- God caused them to enter into His mercy.
- God guided them and gave recompense to the doers of good.
- God blessed those of their offspring who were doers of good .
- God fulfilled His divine blessings on them.
- God tested them with words and they fulfilled them, leaders for humanity.
- God gave tenderness and mercy to the hearts of those who follow them.
- Muhammad is the *Seal of the Prophets.*

All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions. Practice questions are such as:

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is .... Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

Why does an ungrateful person say this?
What examples could I give to illustrate that point?

What is the main point?
How does this detail relate to the main point?
Is the ungrateful using this concept as I would, or somewhat differently?

Application•

Critical thinking is best taught by a teachers who model it, who themselves are active listeners who show students the patience and skill required. Being patient as students learn means taking them seriously as they try to express their thoughts by asking them relevant questions.

We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. (41:53)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What did you understand from the Quranic signs in this segment?
So-and-so, did you follow what your classmate said?
Could you put what she said in your own words?
Or: So-and-so, could you give us an example from your own experience of what your classmate has said?
Do you recall when seeing an outward sign reflected a sign within yourself?

It often happens that students do not understand an assignment. It is an opportunity for teachers to make their assignment an example of critical listening.

*Is he, then, who had been on a clear portent from his Lord, and recounts it from Him as one who bears witness—and before it was the Book of Moses, a leader and a mercy—like them? Those believe in it. Whoever is ungrateful for it among the confederates, he is promised the fire! So be **you** not hesitant about it. Truly, it is The Truth from **your** Lord, except most of humanity believes not.* (11:17)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

Is the Quranic purpose clear? Write a paragraph, or do a research project, or give an oral report, about the purpose as you understand it?
Is the purpose significant or trivial or somewhere in between?
Is the Quranic purpose realistic?
Is it an achievable purpose?
Does the overall goal change, or is it consistent?
Does it have contradictory purposes?

And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, those are to whom God was gracious among the Prophets and just persons and the witnesses and the ones in accord with morality. And excellent were those as allies! (4:69)

QUESTIONS FOR A CLASS DISCUSSION•

So-and-so, did you listen to your classmate's summary?
Could you put what she said in your own words?
Or we can say: Could you give us an example from your own experience of what your classmate has said?
Has anything like that ever happened to you?

And, certainly, We gave Moses and Aaron the Criterion between right and wrong and an illumination and a Remembrance for the ones who are Godfearing, those who dread their Lord in the unseen while they are ones who are apprehensive of the Hour. (21:48-21:49)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs?
Are there multiple points of view?
What do you mean by?
What is your main point?

Truly, those who are ungrateful to God and His Messengers and they want to separate and divide between God and His Messenger and they say: We believe in some and we disbelieve in others, they want that they take themselves to a way between that. (4:150)

QUESTIONS FOR A CLASS DISCUSSION•

I'm not sure I understand you when you explained the Quranic signs.
Could you explain it further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of the signs?
Would you also say ...?'
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is... Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection? Why does she say that?
What examples could I give to illustrate that point?
What is the main point? How does this detail relate to the main point?
That one? Is he using this word as I would, or somewhat differently?

These highly skilled and activated processes are crucial to learning.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood the purpose of the Prophets and Messengers in the revelation of these signs.

I understood the goal of learning according to these Quranic signs.
I understood the purpose of the signs saying that we should not
divide and separate between the Prophets and Messengers..

SEGMENT 2: PROPHETS

In this segment we look at the Quranic signs describing various aspects of the Prophets. What are some of their important specific characteristics such as: Prophethood and what it means; some of their characteristics and duties; the promise they made in their covenant with God to believe in the Messengers. How are they to give judgment? What is their role on the Day of Judgment?

Now we turn to Prophets and a look at some of their characteristics in more detail.

SPECIFIC QURANIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHETHOOD

Those are those to whom We gave the Book
and critical judgment
and prophethood.
So if these are ungrateful for them,
then, surely, We charged a folk with them
who is not of the ones who are ungrateful for them. (6:89)

Prophets have been given God's message for humanity. They then spoke of its implementation. Those who deny God's message, do not hurt God, but only themselves. The sign reassures believers that they and their community are not alone or isolated. They are part of a branch of a larger tree with its roots and branches reaching vertically to the heavens. They are part of a continuous movement of monotheism that began with Adam and that will continue until the Day of Judgment.

It had not been for a mortal that God should give him the Book
and critical judgment and the prophethood and, again,
he say to humanity: Be you servants of me instead of God!
Rather, he would say: Be you masters,
because you had been teaching the Book
and because you had been studying it. (3:79)

And, certainly, We gave the Children of Jacob the Book,
the critical judgment and the prophethood
and We provided them from what is good
and We gave them advantage over the worlds. (45:16)

And We bestowed Isaac and Jacob on him
and We assigned to his offspring prophethood and the Book.

We gave him his compensation in the present.
And, truly, in the world to come he will be, certainly,
among the ones in accord with morality. (29:27)

And how many a Prophet whom, along with him, many thousands
fought, but none lost confidence with what lit on them in the way of
God, nor were they weakened nor were they to give in.
And God loves the ones who remain steadfast. (3:146)

This sign (3:146) does not refer to any specific Prophet who fought, never lost confidence or weakened, giving in. Committing ourselves to a Prophet will mean facing many trials as we tie a relationship with others who follow the same beliefs. Humanity learns that the cause of their belief has been present throughout history.

It had not been for a Prophet that he defraud.
And whoever defrauds, what he defrauded
will approach him on the Day of Resurrection.
Again, the account will be paid in full of every soul
for what he earned and they will not be wronged. (3:161)

COMMENTARY°

This sign refers again to the moral qualities associated with the Prophet, in order to stress the importance of honesty and to forbid deceit and cheating. It reminds people that they will have to account for their deeds and that everyone will be given his fair reward.

Another characteristic of the Prophets is that they teach moral qualities that they themselves practice. They stress the importance of honesty and forbid cheating and deceit. All deeds will be accounted for and everyone will be judged fairly.

SOME OF THE DUTIES OF PROPHETS

Humanity had been of one community. Then, God raised up the
Prophets, ones who give good tidings and ones who warn.
And with them He caused the Book to descend with The Truth
to give judgment among humanity about what
they were at variance in it. None were at variance in it
but those who were given it after the clear portents drew near them
because of their insolence to one another.
Then, God guided those who believed to The Truth
—about what they were at variance in it— with His permission.
And God guides whom He wills to a straight path. (2:213)

What the Quran states here is the definitive [monotheistic] view of the origin and development of religion and religious ideology in the world. Briefly stated, this says that every Prophet came with teachings based on the fundamental principle of God's absolute Oneness. Inevitably, after some time, deviations and myths crept in, causing people to depart from the original authentic traditions and teachings, thereby precipitating the need for a new Prophet and a new set of teachings to revive and restore the preceding one, taking into account the mental, cultural and material developments and changes society had undergone and the new conditions prevailing.

PROPHETS GAVE A SOLEMN PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN THE MESSENGERS

Mention when We took a solemn promise from the Prophets
and from you [Muhammad] and from Noah and Abraham and
Moses and Jesus son of Mary.
We took an earnest solemn promise from them. (33:7)

The link between the Prophets and the Message is based on the solemn promise or covenant that the Prophets made with God. The covenant states that if a Prophet is followed by a Messenger who confirms his own message, the Prophet is required to state his belief in the Messenger, support him and follow his faith no matter what Book was given the Prophet when he was given prophethood and critical judgment. God has made this binding agreement with every Prophet and Messenger He sent. This covenant committed Prophets to deliver God's Message. God's Message contained His code for human life. Prophets implemented and advocated it to their respective communities.

As this has been done, people are now responsible for their own attitude toward divine guidance and for their belief or disbelief. They are each accountable for their own "self" without being able to justify or offer excuses to themselves as to why they do not follow divine guidance. Each Prophet took the pledge to receive God's revelations, deliver the message and establish His code, being faithful to what God had entrusted to him.

PROPHETS ARE TO GIVE JUDGMENT BY WHAT IS SENT

Truly, We caused the Torah to descend
wherein is guidance and light.
The Prophets give judgment with it, those who submitted to God,

for those who became Jews and the rabbis and
learned Jewish scholars who committed to memory the Book of God
and they had been witnesses to it.
So dread not humanity, but dread Me.
And exchange not My signs for a little price.
And whoever gives not judgment by what God caused to descend,
those, they are the ones who are ungrateful. (5:44)

Every divinely revealed religion is meant to be a way of life. It is meant for the followers of that faith to take the leadership of humanity, organize it and protect it. Therefore, every divine revelation has been revealed as a way of life. The size of the community to which it is directed is not important.

This Quranic sign (5:44) refers to the Torah. It is revealed as a guidance and light not only for the minds (hearts) and consciences as a system of belief and the rituals that it provides, but in order to be a guidance and light, it has to have a code of law that regulates practical, everyday life and protects by the system that God provides.

THE ROLE OF PROPHETS ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

And the earth will shine with the Light of its Lord
and the Book will be laid down
and the Prophets and the witnesses will be brought about.
And it will be decided among them with The Truth.
And they, they will not be wronged. (39:69)

Prophets will bear witness on the Day of Judgment along with the witness-angels. All will be judged with fairness and no one will be wronged.

CRITICAL THINKING•

RAISE QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES (REFLECT)

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. There are many issues that end with a question, many rhetorical, the answer to which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to understand how the Quran raises questions.

In addition to understanding how to raise questions, four strategies have been included in this part that are specific to raising questions. As previously stated above with the element of purpose, each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions for the students and classroom discussion.

Assessing skills of mastery of raising questions test the ability of students:

HOW TO RAISE QUESTIONS•

Formulate a question in a clear and relevant way
Choose from among alternative expressions
Discuss the advantages of different types of the question at issue
Recognize key common elements in statements of different questions
Structure the articulation of problems so as to make a possible solution more apparent.

Humanity had been of one community. Then, God raised up the Prophets, ones who give good tidings and ones who warn. And with them He caused the Book to descend with The Truth to give judgment among humanity about what they were at variance in it. None were at variance in it but those who were given it after the clear portents drew near them because of their insolence to one another. Then, God guided those who believed to The Truth—about what they were at variance in it— with His permission. And God guides whom He wills to a straight path. (2:213)

STUDENTS ASK THEMSELVES

What is the key question in this Quranic message?
How does the Quranic message reply to its own question?
Details are very important. Who are ones who deny this way of life?

Critical thinkers learn to be skilled at analyzing questions to determine what, precisely, it is asking and how to go about rationally responding to it.

And mention when his Lord tested Abraham with words; then, he fulfilled them. God said: Truly, I am One Who Makes you a leader for humanity. He said: And of my offspring? He said: The ones who are unjust attain not My compact. (2:124)

REMINDER TO STUDENTS REGARDING QUESTIONING THE ABOVE SIGN•

What are the questions we are asked?
What are the questions we are not asked?
What questions did you ask?
Should you have asked?

SEGMENT 3: MESSENGERS

NOT ALL MESSENGERS MENTIONED IN THE QURAN

And Messengers We related to you (Muhammad) *before*
and Messengers We relate to you not (4:164)

And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you
among whom We related to you
and of whom We relate not to you. (40:78)
*****

We turn now to Messengers who are two types as described in the Quranic signs: Angel Messenger and Human Messengers. We begin looking at Angel Messenger who they are, how they are described, what their duties are: Drawing near with the truth; bringing good tidings and warning of impending danger and then what Angel Messenger Angels.

ANGEL MESSENGERS

The Arabic word for Angel Messengers is the same word that is used for Human Messengers (*rusul*). It depends upon the context whether the Quranic signs are referring to an angel or a human being.

God favors from the angels, messengers.... (22:75)

Say: If there had been angels on earth walking around,
ones who are at peace, then, We would certainly have sent down
for them from heaven an angel as a Messenger. (17:95)

God might have willed to have angels inhabit the earth. He could have made them in the form of human beings. However, He willed to set laws of nature into operation and made His creatures able to live according to the laws of nature, laws He has made permanent and unalterable. His purpose for creation is fulfilled through the operation of His laws of nature.

COMMENTARY°

Believing in angels is a component of Islamic faith which requires every Muslim to believe in God, His angels, books, messengers, the Last Day and destiny, believe in an imperceptible world represents a great departure in man's life, helping him to break out of his limited and narrow physical existence and to perceive the existence of a world beyond.

The Quran tells us about some of the qualities and attributes of the angels. These are sufficient for us to formulate a proper concept of them and of our relationship with them. They are a species of God's creation who submit themselves totally to God and who obey Him all the time without hesitation. They are near to God although we do not know what sort of proximity is meant here: *And they said: The Merciful took to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! Nay! Honored servants! They precede Him not in saying and they act by His command. He knows what is in advance of them and what is behind them and they intercede not but for him with whom He was content. And they are dreading Him, ones who are apprehensive.* (21:26-21:28) *And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And whoever is near Him, they grow not arrogant to worship Him, nor they be weary. They glorify Him nighttime and daytime. They never decrease.* (21:19-21:20)

They carry God's Throne and surround it on the Day of Judgement. We do not know how this happens, because we only know what God has revealed to us of the world beyond: *Those who carry the Throne and whoever is around it glorify the praises of their Lord and believe in Him.* (40:7) *And you will see the angels as ones who encircle around the Throne glorifying their Lord with praise. And it would be decided in Truth among them.* (39:75)

They provide the keepers of the heavens and hell, receive the inhabitants of the first with greetings and prayer, while they receive those bound to hell with reproach and warnings of great suffering. *Those who were ungrateful will be ones driven to hell in troops until when they drew near it, then, the doors of it will be flung open. Ones who are its keepers will say to them: Approach not Messengers from among you who recount to you the signs of your Lord to warn you of the meeting of this your Day? They would say: Yea. But the word of punishment was realized against the ones who are ungrateful. It will be said: Enter the doors of hell as ones who will dwell in it forever. Miserable it will be as a place of lodging for the ones who increase in pride. Those who were Godfearing will be ones driven to their Lord in the Garden in troops until when they drew near it and its doors were let loose, ones who are its keepers will say to them: Peace be on you! You fared well! So enter it, ones who dwell in it forever.* (39:71-39:73) *We assigned none but angels to be wardens of the Fire.* (74:31)

The angels deal with people on earth in various ways. They watch over them by God's decree and they follow their deeds and keep a record of everything that human beings do or say. They also cause them to die when their time is over: *And He is The One Who Is Omniscient over His servants. And He sends over you recorders until when death drew near one of you. Our messengers gathered him to them-*

selves and they neglect not. (6:61) *For him there are Ones Who Postpone from before him and from behind him to keep him safe by the command of God.* (13:11) *When the two receivers are ones who receive, seated on the right and on the left, he utters not a saying but that there is one ready, watching over near him.* (50:17-50:18)

Angels also deliver God's revelations to His messengers. God has also informed us that Gabriel is the one chosen among them to fulfil this task: *He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command on whom He wills of His servants to warn that there is no god but I, so be Godfearing of Me.* (16:2) *Say: Whoever had been an enemy of Gabriel knows then, truly, it was sent down through him to your hear with the permission of God, that which establishes as true what was before it, and as a guidance and good tidings for the ones who believe.* (2:97) God describes Gabriel as one who has been endowed with power. He confirms that His Messenger, Muhammad, has seen Gabriel in his angelic form twice, while he has seen him in various shapes and forms when he gave him other revelations: *By the star when it hurled to ruin, neither your companion went astray, nor he erred nor speaks he for himself out of desire. It is but a revelation that is revealed, taught to him by The One Stronger in Strength, Possessor of Forcefulness. Then, he stood poised while he was on the loftiest horizon. Again, he came to pass near and hung suspended until he had been at a distance of two bow lengths or closer. Then, He revealed to His servant what He revealed. The mind lied not against what it saw. Will you altercate with him about what he sees? And, certainly, he saw it another time near the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary near which is the Garden of the Place of Shelter,* (53:1-53:15)

The angels also join the believers giving them support and help, steadying their feet in their great, unabating battle against evil and tyranny. They busy themselves with what happens to the believers. They glorify their Lord, pray to Him to forgive the sins of those who believe in Him. In their supplication for the believers, which is mentioned in the Quran, they appear to be so caring, kind and loving. They also give the believers, at the time of their death, the happy news that they are going to heaven. When they arrive in the next world, they also give them their happy news and greet them in heaven.

On the other hand, they receive the ungrateful in hell with reproach and warning of their impending suffering. They may also fight against them in the battle that rages on between truth and falsehood. When they die, they pluck out their souls in a manner which afflicts and humiliates the ungrateful.

THE MESSENGER ANGEL IS A GENEROUS MESSENGER

Truly, the Quran is a saying from a generous Messenger. (81:19)

This is the first that the early Muslims hear of a Messenger Angel. The generous Messenger is Gabriel.

By ones who are sent successively. (77:1)

COMMENTARY°

God swears by the many angels who are sent one after another. It is also said that these are the angels who are sent with the good, i.e. Gabriel, Michael and Seraphiel. (72:27)

The Praise belongs to God, One Who is the Originator
of the heavens and the earth, the One Who Makes
the angels Messengers imbued with wings
by twos and in threes and fours.
He increases in creation what He wills.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (35:1)

COMMENTARY°

According to commentators, the wings refer to God's will that is continuously manifested throughout the universe through the laws of nature, here described as on the wings of angels.

THE MESSENGER ANGELS DUTIES DESCRIBED

RECORD THE DEEDS OF HUMANITY

And when We caused humanity to experience mercy
after tribulation afflicted them,
that is when they conspired against Our signs.
Say: God is Swifter in planning.
Truly, Our messengers write down what you plan. (10:21)

And He is The One Who Is Omniscient over His servants.
And He sends over you recorders until
when death drew near one of you.
Our messengers gathered him to themselves
and they neglect not. (6:61)

COMMENTARY°

This balance or standard bestowed by God is the only guarantee of safety for humanity in the midst of tempests, earthquakes and other turmoil that overwhelms it as it finds itself in the middle of an ocean

of conflicting desires and sentiments, competition and selfishness. Hence it is imperative that people should have an accurately balanced and steady standard that points them to the truth, justice and fairness with no favoritism whatsoever. The purpose of this balance, then, is *that humanity may uphold justice.*

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts
and their conspiring secretly?
Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

Certainly, We sent Our Messengers with the clear portents
and We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance
so that humanity may uphold equity.... (57:25)

DRAW NEAR WITH THE TRUTH

And they will say: The Praise belongs to God
Who truly guided us to this!
And we would not have been guided if God guided us not.
Certainly, the Messengers of our Lord drew near us with The Truth.
And it was proclaimed to them that this,
the Garden, was given to you as inheritance
for what you had been doing. (7:43)

Did they look on for nothing but its interpretation?
The Day its interpretation approaches,
those who forgot it before will say:
Surely, Messengers of our Lord drew near us with The Truth.
Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us?
Or will we be returned so we do
other than what we had been doing before?
Surely, they lost themselves.
Went astray from them what they had been devising. (7:53)

ANGEL MESSENGERS BRING GOOD TIDINGS

And, certainly, Our messengers
drew near Abraham with good tidings.
They said: Peace.
He said: Peace.
And he presently brought about a roasted calf. (11:69)

ANGEL MESSENGERS WARN OF IMPENDING DANGER

They said: O Lot! Truly, we are Messengers of your Lord.
They will not reach out to you
so set you forth with your people in a part of the night
and let not any of you look back, but your woman.
Truly, that which lights on them will light on her.
Truly, what is promised to them is in the morning.
Is the morning not near? (11:81)

COMMENTARY°

They said, '... *but your woman*': as her being an exception among his 'family.' In other words: Do not take her along when you travel, lo! she shall be smitten by that which smites them. It is said that he did not take her along with him. It is also said that she did set out with them and turned round, and so exclaimed: 'Woe is my people!', at which point a stone struck her and killed her. When he, Lot, asked them about the time of their destruction, the Angel Messengers replied: *Truly what is promised to them is in the morning.* When Lot said, 'I want it to be sooner', they said: *Is the morning not near?'*

ANGEL MESSENGERS ASK QUESTIONS

Then, who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie
against God or denied His signs?
Those, they will attain their share from the Book.
When Our Messengers drew near to gather them to themselves,
they [messenger angels] will say:
Where are who you had been calling on other than God?
They [the ungrateful] will say: They went astray from us.
And they bore witness against themselves that,
truly, they had been ones who are ungrateful. (7:37)

And when We caused humanity to experience mercy
after tribulation afflicted them,
that is when they conspired against Our signs.
Say: God is Swifter in planning.
Truly, Our messengers write down what you plan. (10:21)

And He is The One Who Is Omniscient over His servants.
And He sends over you recorders until
when death drew near one of you.
Our messengers gathered him to themselves
and they neglect not. (6:61)

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts
and their conspiring secretly?
Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

The Praise belongs to God,
One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth,
the One Who Makes the Angel Messengers
imbued with wings by twos and in threes and fours.
He increases in creation what He wills.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (35:1)

Human Messengers

General Characteristics of Human Messengers

What are their duties? Why were Messengers denied, maligned and ridiculed? What is their role with those who are ungrateful to God? What do Messengers say?

Messengers are they who bear witness: *Truly, We sent you a Messenger, one who bears witness to you.* (73:15)

There is no fallacy in them: *He said: O my folk! There is no fallacy in me. I am only a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.* (7:61)

There is no foolishness in them: He said: *O my folk! There is no foolishness in me. I am only a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.* (7:67)

They say nothing but the truth: *And Moses said: O Pharaoh! Truly, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.* (7:104) *Messenger(s) command to what is moral and prohibit that which is immoral; permit what is good and forbid deeds of corruption; they remove severe tests from them and yokes: those who follow the Messenger—the unlettered Prophet—whom they will find with them that which is a writing in the Torah and the Gospel. He commands them to that which is honorable and prohibits them from that which is unlawful. And He permits to them what is good and forbids them from deeds of corruption. And He lays down for them severe tests, and the yokes that had been on them. So those who believed in him and supported him and helped him and followed the light that was caused to descend to him, those, they are the ones who prosper.* (7:157)

They are devoted: *And remember Moses in the Book. Truly, he had been one who was devoted and he had been a Messenger, a Prophet* (19:51).

They are sincere in their promise: *And remember Ishmael in the Book. Truly, he had been one who is sincere in his promise, and he had been a Messenger, a Prophet* (19:54).

They eat food and walk in the market: *And they said: What Messen-*

ger is this that he eats food and walks in the markets? Why was an angel not caused to descend to him to be a warner with him? (25:7)

They are Messenger(s) of the Lord of the worlds: *And both of you approach Pharaoh and say: We are the Messengers of the Lord of the worlds,* (26:16) *And, certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his Council. So he said: Truly, I am a Messenger of the Lord of the worlds.* (43:46); trustworthy: *Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you* (26:107); *truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you.* (26:125)

Messenger(s) deliver messages from God: *Unless I be delivering messages from God, His messages. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger, then, for him is the fire of hell, ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally.* (72:23)

God is content with them: *But a Messenger with whom He was content.* (72:27) They recount God's signs: *Thy Lord had not been One Who Causes towns to perish until He raises up to their mother-town a Messenger who recounts Our signs to them. We never had been Ones Who Cause towns to perish unless their people are ones who are unjust.* (28:59)

They come with clear portents: *And, certainly, Joseph drew near you before with the clear portents, but you ceased not in uncertainty as to what he brought about to you. Until when he perished you said: God will never raise up a Messenger after him. Thus, God causes him to go astray, one who is excessive, one who is a doubter* (40:34).

They bring the signs with the permission of God: *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before* ***you*** *among whom We related to* ***you*** *and of whom We relate not to* ***you****. And it had not been for any Messenger that he bring a sign, except with the permission of God. So when the command of God drew near, the matter would be decided rightfully. And lost here are these, the ones who deal in falsehood.* (40:78)

They reveal by God's permission what God wills: *And it had not been for a mortal that God speak to him, but by revelation or from behind a partition or that He send a Messenger to reveal by His permission what He wills. Truly, He is Lofty, Wise.* (42:51)

They are mortal: *And nothing prevented humanity from believing when the guidance drew near them, but that they said: Raised God up a mortal as a Messenger?* (17:94)

It is revealed to them that there is no god but God so worship God: *And We sent not before* ***you*** *any Messenger, but We reveal to him that there is no god but I, so worship Me.* (21:25)

Human Messenger(s) are monotheists who are given the Book, clear portents, and Jesus confirmed with the hallowed spirit: *And, certainly,*

We gave Moses the Book and We sent Messengers following after him. And We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear portents, and confirmed him with the hallowed Spirit. Is it that whenever a Messenger drew near you with what you yourselves yearn not for, you grew arrogant, and you denied a group of people, and you kill a group of people? (2:87)

They recount God's signs, teach the Book and wisdom and purify those who follow them: *Our Lord! And raise **You** up, then, in the midst of them, a Messenger from among them who will recount to them **Your** signs and teach them the Book, and wisdom and make them pure. Truly, **You**, **You** alone are The Almighty, The Wise.* (2:129)

They are a witness to humanity: *And, thus, We made you a middle community that you be witnesses to humanity, and that the Messenger be a witness to you.* (2:143)

Messenger(s) teaches us what we know not: *We sent to you a Messenger from among you who recounts Our signs to you, and makes you pure, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you be knowing not.* (2:151)

They ask for God's help and say: God's help is near: *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while approaches you not the likeness of those who passed away before you? Desolation and tribulation afflicted them. And they are so convulsed that even the Messenger says, and those who believed with him: When will there be help from God? No doubt, truly, the help of God is Near.* (2:214)

Whoever does not forsake usury there will be war from God and His Messenger: *But if you accomplish it not, then, give ear to war from God and His Messenger. And if you repented, you will have your principal capital, doing no wrong to others nor will you be wronged.* (2:279)

Messengers believe in what is sent forth to them; believe in God, His angels, His Books and His other Messengers and separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers: and they believe in what was sent forth to them from their Lord: *The Messenger believed in what was caused to descend to him from his Lord as do the ones who believe. All believed in God and His angels and His Books and His Messengers saying: We separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers. And they said: We heard and we obeyed, so grant Thy forgiveness, Our Lord! And to **You** is the Homecoming.* (2:285) God sends Messenger(s) to be obeyed: *Say: Obey God and the Messenger. Then, if they turned away, then, truly, God loves not the ones who are ungrateful.* (3:32)

Jesus was a Messenger to the Children of Jacob. He had been taught the Book, Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. He drew near with a sign

from the Lord; created the likeness of a bird from clay; breathed into it and it became a bird with God's permission; cured one who was blind from birth and the leper; gave life to dead mortals with the permission of God; told the people of his time what they eat and what they store up in their houses; established as true what was before him of the Torah and permitted some of what had been forbidden to the people before; and drew near with a sign from the Lord: *To be a Messenger to the Children of Jacob saying: Surely I drew near you with a sign from your Lord that I will create for you out of clay a likeness of a bird. Then, I breathe into it and it will become a bird with the permission of God. And I cure one who is blind from birth and the leper and give life to dead mortals with the permission of God. And I tell you what you eat and what you store up in your houses. Truly, in that is a sign for you if you had been ones who believe.* (3:49)

Prophets made a solemn promise to follow a Messenger who drew near to them with that which establishes as true what is with him, will believe in him and will help him: *And mention when God took a solemn promise from the Prophets: Whatever I gave you of the Book and wisdom, again, if a Messenger drew near you with that which establishes as true what is with you, you will believe in him and you will help him. He said: Are you in accord? And will you take on My severe test? They said: We are in accord. He said: Then, bear witness and I am with you among the ones who bear witness.* (3:81)

Messenger(s) bring clear portents: *How will God guide a folk who disbelieved after their belief? And they bore witness to The Truth of the Messenger after the clear portents drew near them. And God guides not the unjust folk.* (3:86)

They bring mercy if one believes in them: *And obey God and the Messenger so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (3:132)

Messenger(s) pass away: *And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Surely, Messengers passed away before him. Then, if he died or be slain, will you turn about on your heels? And he who turns about on his heels will not injure God at all. And God will give recompense to the ones who are thankful.* (3:144)

They receive grace from God; they recite the signs, purify those who follow them, teach them the Book and wisdom: *Certainly, God showed grace to the ones who believe when he raised up among them a Messenger from themselves who recounts His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and wisdom. And, truly, before that they had been, certainly, clearly wandering astray.* (3:164)

Messengers have authority; if people contend with one another, they should refer it to God and the Messenger: *O those who believed! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those imbued with authority among you. Then, if you contended with one another in anything, refer it to God and the Messenger if you had been believing in God and the Last Day. That is better and a fairer interpretation.* (4:59) Messenger(s) ask for forgiveness for those who repent: *And We never sent a Messenger, but he is obeyed with the permission of God. And if, when they did wrong themselves, they drew near to you and asked for the forgiveness of God and the Messenger asked for forgiveness for them, they found God Accepter of Repentance, Compassionate. (4:64) They are given this Book and the Books sent before.* (4:136)

They draw near with the Truth: *O humanity! Surely, the Messenger drew near you with The Truth from your Lord. So believe, it is better for you. And if you are ungrateful, then, truly, to God is whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:170)

They receive a part of the spoils of war: *And what God gave as spoils of war to His Messenger from them, you spurred not an animal for an expedition, neither any horse nor riding camel but God gives authority to His Messengers over whomever He wills. And God is Powerful over everything.* (59:6)

Some have been driven out: *O those who believed! Take not My enemies to yourselves and your enemies as protectors, giving a proposal of affection towards them while they were ungrateful for what drew near you of The Truth. They drive out the Messenger and you because you believe in God, your Lord. If you had been going forth struggling in My way and looking for My goodwill, you keep secret affection for them. Yet I am greater in knowledge of what you concealed and what you spoke openly. And whoever accomplishes that among you, surely, he went astray from the right path.* (60:1)

They are good, fair examples: *Surely, in the Messenger of God there is for you a fairer, good example for those whose hope had been in God and the Last Day and remembered God frequently.* (33:21)

They are sincere: *When the ones who believe saw the confederates, they said: This is what God and His Messenger promised us and God and His Messenger were sincere. And it increased them not but in belief and to resign themselves to submission to God.* (33:22)

They are given spouses and offspring: *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you and We assigned for them spouses and offspring. And it had not been for a Messenger to bring a sign but with the permission of God. For every term there is a Book.* (13:38)

They give judgment against ones who believe not: *And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside.* (24:48)
They give permission to those who ask for permission: *The ones who believe are only those who believe in God and His Messenger. And when they had been with him on a collective matter, they go not until they asked his permission. Truly, those who ask **your** permission, those are those who believed in God and His Messenger. So when they ask **your** permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom **you** had willed of them, and ask God for forgiveness for them. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (24:62).

They supplicate: *The supplication of the Messenger among you is not as the supplication of some of you on some other. Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover. And let those who go against his command beware so that a test should not light on them or a painful punishment not light on them.* (24:63).

They recount the signs of God, ones that are made manifest to bring out those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality from the shadows to the light: *A Messenger who recounts to you the signs of God, ones that are made manifest, that he brings out those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality from the shadows to the light. And whoever believes in God and does as one in accord with morality, He will cause him to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. Surely, God did good with provision for him.* (65:11).

They recount the purified scrolls wherein are truth-loving Books: *A Messenger from God, who recounts to them purified scrolls.* (98:2)
They fantasize, but God nullifies what Satan casts: *And We sent not before thee any Messenger nor Prophet, but when he fantasized, Satan cast fantasies into him. But God nullifies what Satan casts. Again, God set clear His signs. And God is Knowing, Wise.* (22:52) They are a witness against us and we against humanity: *And struggle for God in a true struggling. He elected you and made not for you in your way of life any impediment. It is the creed of your father Abraham. He named you the ones who submit to God before and in this Recitation that the Messenger be a witness over you and you are witnesses over humanity. So perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and cleave firmly to God. He is your Defender. How excellent a Defender and how excellent a Helper!* (22:78)

They ask for forgiveness of others: *And when it was said to them: Approach now. The Messenger of God asks forgiveness for you. They*

twist their heads and you had seen them dissuading while they are ones who grow arrogant (63:5).

They are a light sent forth from God: *So believe in God and His Messenger, and in the Light which We caused to descend. And God is Aware of what you do.* (64:8)

They had torment inflicted on them: *And when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Why malign me while, surely, you know that I am the Messenger of God to you? So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* (61:5)

The Messenger Jesus established as true what was in advance of him in the Torah and gives good tidings of one to approach after him: *And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of God to you, one who establishes as true what was in advance of me in the Torah and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger to approach after me. His name will be Ahmad. But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery!* (61:6)

They are sent with guidance and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it over all other ways of life: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it over all other ways of life even though the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* (61:9) Messenger(s) are given tranquility and fastened with the Word of God-consciousness: *Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing.* (48:26)

They are sent with guidance and way of life of The Truth that God may uplift over all of the ways of life: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth that He uplift it over all of the ways of life. And God sufficed as a witness.* (48:28)

Some are unlettered, from among the people; they recount God's signs to them, purify and teach the Book and wisdom: *He it is Who raised up among the unlettered a Messenger from among them who recounts His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and wisdom even though they had been before certainly, clearly going astray.* (62:2)

They makes manifest what was being concealed of the Book and pardon much: *O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you. He makes manifest to you much of what you had been concealing*

of the Book and pardons much. Surely, from God drew near you a light and a clear Book. (5:15)

They make manifest the way of life: *O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you. He makes manifest to you the way of life—after an interval without Messengers—so that you say not: There drew not near us either a bearer of good tidings or a warner. Then, surely, drew near to you a bearer of good tidings and a warner. And God is Powerful over everything.* (5:19)

They are protectors; perform the formal prayer; give the purifying alms; and are ones who bow down: *Your protector is only God and His Messenger and those who believed and those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and they are ones who bow down.* (5:55) *They state what was sent forth to them from the Lord: O Messenger! State what was caused to descend to **you** from **your** Lord, for if **you** have not accomplished it, then, **you** will not have stated His message. And God will save **you** from the harm of humanity. Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful* (5:67); they eat food: *The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger. Surely, Messengers passed away before him. And his mother was a just person (f). They both had been eating food. Look on how We make manifest the signs to them. Again, look on how they are misled!* (5:75)

They are sent to deliver the message: *What is with the Messenger is not but the delivering of the message. And God knows whatever you show and whatever you keep back* (5:99).

They call to what gives life: *O those who believed! Respond to God and to the Messenger when He called you to what gives you life. And know, truly, that God comes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will assemble.* (8:24)

They disassociate themselves from those who made a contract with the polytheists who violated it: God and His Messenger declare disassociation from those with whom you made a contract among the ones who were polytheists who violated it: (9:1) *They are free from polytheists* (9:3); they struggle in God's way: *Say: If had been your fathers and your children and your brothers/sisters and your spouses and your kinspeople and the wealth you gained and the transactions you dread slacken and the dwellings with which you are well-pleased were more beloved to you than God and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then, await until God brings His command. And God guides not the folk, ones who disobey* (9:24)

They receive tranquility and receive armies: *Again, God caused His tranquility to descend on His Messenger and on the ones who believed*

and caused armies you see not to descend and punished those who were ungrateful. And this is the recompense of the ones who were ungrateful. (9:26)

They are sent with guidance and way of life of The Truth: *It is He Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the way of life of The Truth so that He may uplift it over all ways of life, even if the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* (9:33)

They give of God's grace: *Better if they were well-pleased with what God gave them and His Messenger. And they had said: God is Enough for us. God will give to us of His grace and so will His Messenger. Truly, to God we are ones who quest.* (9:59)

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They were about to hound you from the region
that they drive you out of it.
Then, they would not linger
in expectation behind you but for a little while.
This is, surely, a custom with whomever
We sent before you of Our Messengers.
And you will not find in Our custom any revision. (17:76-17:77)

COMMENTARY°

Driving a Messenger of God out of his land is a great offense that incurs severe punishment. God operates certain natural laws in this universe that are not altered for individual cases. This universe is not subject to coincidences that influence its existence; it is subject to constant natural laws.

In the case of the Quraysh, why were they not destroyed? When the situation is analyzed, it becomes clear that while they wanted to throw the Prophet out of Makkah, he eventually left voluntarily.

Whoever was truly guided is truly guided only for his own soul.
And whoever went astray, then, only goes astray against it.
And no burdened soul bears the heavy load of another,
nor would We have been ones who punish
until We raised up a Messenger. (17:15)

COMMENTARY°

Whoever is guided is guided only to the good of his own soul, because the reward of his guidance will be for him; and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its his soul's detriment, because the sin thereof will be held against it. No burdened, no sinful, soul shall bear the burden of another, soul. And We never chastise, anyone, until We

have sent a messenger, to make clear to him that which is his obligation....

Yet as a sign of God's grace, He does not leave human guidance dependent only on the signs that are available in the universe. Nor does He leave him to the covenant God has made with human nature before a person is born. He has sent Messengers to warn and remind. This is certainly an aspect of God's grace which gives everyone ample opportunity to follow His guidance. Only when they have been properly warned and still persist in error does He punish them, if He so wills.

So assume not that God will be one who breaks His promise
to His Messengers.
Truly, God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital. (14:47)

COMMENTARY°

What the ungrateful devise is of no consequence. It cannot obstruct the fulfillment of God's promise to His Messengers to grant them victory and to inflict a mighty punishment on the ungrateful. He does not let injustice escape punishment. Those who resort to scheming and devising foul plans will not be spared. The word "requital" is especially suitable here as it gives the meaning that counters both injustice and wicked scheming. A perpetrator of such injustice and wickedness deserves to suffer God's vengeance, which is, from God's point of view, the exercise of divine justice.

God prescribed: I will prevail, truly, I and My Messengers.
Truly, God is Strong, Almighty. (58:21)

And it had not been for a mortal that God speak to him,
but by revelation or from behind a partition
or that He send a Messenger to reveal by His permission
what He wills.
Truly, He is Lofty, Wise. (42:51)

COMMENTARY°

God speaks to people in one of three ways. First, by revelation, which is given directly and the recipient knows that it comes from God. Secondly, from behind a veil, as God spoke to Moses whose request to see God was denied. In fact, he was unable to stand firm when God's glory was revealed to the mountain. The third form of address is that God sends a messenger, who is an angel, to reveal by His command what He will. This takes different forms, which the Prophet explained as follows:

1. The angel would impart to him something he recognized within himself, without seeing the angel. The Prophet said: The Holy Spirit

has imparted to me that no soul will ever die until it has had whatever provisions assigned to it. Therefore, remain God-conscious and moderate your requests.

2. The angel would come to the Prophet in the form of a man who spoke to him and made sure that he understood what was being said to him.

3. The angel would give him the revelation in a way that sounded like a bell ringing in his ear. This was the hardest form for the Prophet. He would be perspiring even on a very cold day. If he was riding a camel, his camel would fall to the ground. The Prophet would see the angel in the angel's own form, giving him whatever God bid him give. This happened to him twice as mentioned in verses 53:7 and 52:13. Such were the different forms of contact and revelation. He bestows His revelation from on high, to whomever He chooses, according to His wisdom.

God had not been forsaking the ones who believe
to what you are in until He differentiates
the bad from what is good.
And God will not inform about the unseen,
but God elects from His Messengers whom He wills.
So believe in God and His Messengers.
And if you believe and are Godfearing,
then, for you there is a sublime compensation. (3:179)

So have you patience as endured patiently
those imbued with constancy of the Messengers
and let them not seek to hasten the Judgment. (23:51)

COMMENTARY°

Messengers are ... required to *do good deeds*. While taking action is common to all human beings, insisting on doing good is the characteristic of goodly people, providing a measure of control and a clear goal for their deeds. Again such people look up to the their society when they embark on anything.

No Messenger of God was ever required to abandon his humanity. Rather, what they were asked to do was to elevate this humanity to the highest standard God has made possible for human beings to achieve. Thus, the Prophets provided the role model and the ideal that other people should try to emulate. It is left to God to judge their actions according to His own fine measure.

And when they heard
what was caused to descend to the Messenger,
you have seen their eyes overflow with tears
because they recognized The Truth.
They say: Our Lord! We believed
so write us down with the ones who bear witness. (5:83)

COMMENTARY°

And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth that they recognize. These were the priests and monks from whom people would seek blessings and anointment due to their knowledge of the religion. They came to the Prophet and the Quran was recited for them. They were deeply moved by it so that their eyes overflowed with tears, and they were not haughty, due to God's protecting them from pride.

Certainly, there drew near to you a Messenger
from among yourselves. It was grievous to him
that you fell into misfortune. He is anxious for you
and to the ones who believe, gentle, compassionate. (9:128)

COMMENTARY°

There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves, that is, one of you—Muhammad—for whom it is grievous, hard, that you should suffer, that is, your suffering, your experiencing hardship and encountering harm is hard on him; who is full of concern for you, that you should be rightly guided; to the believers full of pity, profoundly compassionate, merciful, desiring good for them.

A MESSENGER FOR EVERY COMMUNITY

Every community has its Messenger.
So, then, when their Messenger drew near,
it would be decided between them with equity.
And they, they will not be wronged. (10:47)

COMMENTARY°

And for every community, of the communities of this world, there is a Messenger. And when their Messenger comes to them, and they deny him, judgment is passed between them justly, fairly, such that they are punished and the Messenger, and all those who accepted his truthfulness, are delivered. They are not wronged by being punished for no crime.

METHOD OF REVELATION

And it had not been for a mortal that God speak to him,
but by revelation or from behind a partition
or that He send a Messenger to reveal
by His permission what He wills. Truly, He is Lofty, Wise. (42:51)

COMMENTARY°

And it is not possible for any human that God should speak to him except that He should reveal to him by revelation, in sleep or by inspiration, or, except, from behind a veil, where He makes the person able to hear His speech but without seeing Him—as was the case with Moses; or, except, that He should send a messenger, an angel, such as Gabriel, and he, the messenger, then reveals, to the person to whom he has been sent, that is to say, and then he speaks to him, with His permission, that is, God's, whatever He, God, will. Truly He is Exalted, above the attributes of created beings, Wise, in His actions.

What will there be as a reminder for them?
A clear Messenger drew near them. (44:13)

COMMENTARY°

God, exalted be He, says: How can there be a reminder for them, that is to say, faith will not benefit them once the chastisement has been sent down, when already there has come to them a manifest Messenger, whose Message is plain to understand.

GOD RESCUES THE MESSENGERS

Again, We rescue Our Messengers and those who believed.
Thus, it is an obligation upon Us
to deliver the ones who believe. (10:103)

COMMENTARY°

This passage is then concluded with the final outcome of every message and every opposition to it, making plain the lessons of the histories reported in the sign: This is the promise God has made: the seed of faith will retain its healthy function. It will be safe after every type of persecution to which its advocates are subjected. It will survive every denial and every torture inflicted on its advocates.

MESSENGERS DELIVER THE CLEAR MESSAGE

Messengers are ones who give good tidings
and ones who warn so that humanity not be in disputation

against God after the Messengers.
And God had been Almighty, Wise. (4:165)

COMMENTARY°

Messengers bearing good tidings of reward for those that believe and warning of punishment for those that disbelieve; We sent them, so that people might have no argument, to make, against God after, the sending of, the Messengers, to them; thus We sent them to preempt such excuses. God is ever Mighty, in His kingdom, Wise, in His actions.

And ask ones whom We sent before you of Our Messengers:
Made We gods other than the Merciful to be worshiped? (43:45)

COMMENTARY°

And ask those of Our Messengers whom We sent before you: Did We ever appoint, besides the Compassionate One, that is to say, any other than Him, gods to be worshipped?

And those who ascribed partners with God said:
If God willed neither would we have worshiped other than Him
anything, we nor our fathers, nor would we have held sacred
anything other than what He forbade.
Thus, accomplished those who were before them.
Then, what is upon the Messengers,
but the delivering of the clear message?
And, certainly, We raised up in every community a Messenger
saying that: Worship God and avoid false deities.
Then, of them were some whom God guided
and of them were some upon whom their fallacy was realized.
So journey through the earth;
then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who deny.
If you be eager for their guidance,
then, truly, God will not guide whom He causes to go astray.
And they will have no ones who help. (16:35-16:37)

People's acceptance of divine guidance is not the result of the Prophet's deliberations and efforts. This is not his task. His mission is only to deliver the message God gave him. Guidance and error are subject to God's law that never fails, bringing the same results every time. Whoever deserves to remain in error according to God's law shall not receive His guidance. That is because of the operation of the laws God has set in nature. This is His will that is always done. Hence, "they

shall have none to support them." Besides, who can support them against God?

And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you to their own folk.
They drew near them with the clear portents.
Then, We requited those who sinned.
And it had been an obligation
on Us to help ones who believe. (30:47)

COMMENTARY°

Similar to sending the winds bearing good news is the sending of messengers with veritable signs of the truth. Yet people did not receive this aspect of God's grace, which is much greater and further reaching than the wind that brings the prospect of rain. Nor did they benefit by them as they did by rain, even though their messages were far more beneficial and longer lasting. Essentially, they took two different attitudes towards God's Messengers. Some of them refused to believe or reflect on God's messages (or blamed God for their transgression) and continued to inflict harm on the Messengers and to turn people away from God's path. Others, who believed, recognized God's signs, offered thanks for His grace, and bore with patience the harm inflicted on them by the other group. Furthermore, they were confident that God's promise would come true. The outcome was in accordance with divine justice and in fulfillment of His certain promise.

God's support may appear, in people's reckoning, to be slow in coming, because they have a measure and a perspective that are different from His. He, in His knowledge and wisdom, fulfills His promise at the time He chooses in accordance with His law. People may or may not be able to appreciate the wisdom of His timing. Yet His will brings the best; it is His timing that is the most appropriate, and it is His promise that will most certainly be fulfilled. Believers who reflect the quality of patience in adversity await its fulfillment with unshakeable confidence.

These signs (30:47; 38:14; 35:4; 40:70; 6:34) speak of the patience and perseverance of the Messengers when faced with denial, ridicule and mockery. As a commentator states: The majority of people reject the message as false and inflict hardship on its advocates who, in turn, face all this with patience and perseverance. The ultimate outcome, however, is victory, which comes at the time determined by God. That outcome is not precipitated by the fact that honest and devoted advocates have to bear hardship and rejection, or that hardened criminals are able to inflict torment on innocent, defenseless people. Nor is it hastened by the fact that a totally dedicated advocate of faith is keen to see his people follow divine guidance, simply because he loves them

and feels distressed when he sees them in their erroneous ways, knowing what punishment awaits them in the life to come. God does not hasten things because anyone of His creatures is over enthusiastic to see the end. There is simply no way that God's words can be altered, whether they relate to the ultimate victory or the appointed time. What we have here is a statement combining seriousness and decisiveness with consolation and reassurance.

Messengers Denied, Maligned and Ridiculed

All of them denied the Messengers
so My repayment was realized. (38:14)
And if they deny you, surely, Messengers before you were denied.
And to God all affairs are returned. (35:4)
Those who denied the Book and that with which We sent
Our Messengers? Then, they will know. (40:70)

And, certainly, Messengers before you were denied
yet they endured patiently that they were denied
and they were maligned until Our help approached them.
And no one will change the Word of God.
And, certainly, there drew near you
tidings of the ones who are sent. (6:34)

Commentary°

Advocates of God's message have continued along the same difficult way, overcoming numerous hurdles. They move along with steady steps, opposed by wrongdoers of all sorts, rejected by those who have chosen to go astray and their followers. Harm may be inflicted on some of those advocates, pressure, torture, and death. Yet the advocates of the truth will move on, maintaining their way, undeterred. The outcome remains the same, long as it may take.

We cannot appreciate fully the whole idea unless we recall vividly that these are words addressed by God, the Lord of all worlds, to his noble Prophet who has shown maximum perseverance and who is one of the Messengers endowed with the strongest resolve. He patiently endured all that his people tried to inflict on him. He never uttered a prayer akin to that of the Prophet Noah, despite his long and arduous suffering. He is being told how God's law works. If he finds their rejection and aversion too much to cope with and wants to bring them a miraculous sign, then he is free to do so. He may, in the process, try to find a chasm to go deep into the earth or a ladder to ascend to heaven for the purpose.

MESSENGERS AND THOSE WHO WOULD NOT BELIEVE

....and the companions of Midian. And Moses was denied,
but I granted indulgence to the ones who are ungrateful.
Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval! (22:44)

COMMENTARY°

The sign ends with a rhetorical question that stresses the frightening effect of God's punishment: *How had been My disapproval*! The Arabic word, *nakir*, used here for 'rejection', carries added connotations of violent change. The question needs no answer, as it is well known: it was a rejection demonstrated through great floods, destruction, earthquakes, fearful hurricanes, and the like....

Numerous indeed were those towns and cities which suffered their inevitable doom as a result of their evildoing.... Roofs are caved in as walls are made to collapse, leaving a depressing sight of total, lifeless ruin. The scene invites contemplation, because ruins have a very strong effect on people, causing them to reflect. Next to these desolate remains of destroyed cities lie abandoned wells, reminding visitors of past days when people gathered around them for fresh water. And next to these are deserted palaces that once stood proudly in the past, but which now lie empty, evoking only images and memories of a glorious past....

Emphasis is here placed on the location of hearts in people's bodies, which serves to amplify the blindness of those hearts in particular. Had those hearts been able to reflect on the scenes portrayed, they would have remembered and people's eyes would have been tearful. They would have moved towards faith, at least as a result of fearing an end like the ones that befell other communities.

The use of a rhetorical question is also often found in the Quranic signs. They require a deep probing into their meaning to uncover what things appear to be. Not only do the signs ask questions, but they also appropriately follow up the questions that they ask.

MESSENGERS SAY

Their Messengers said: Is there any uncertainty about God,
One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth?
He calls you so that He would forgive you your impieties
and postpone for you a term, that which is determined.
They said: You are only mortal like us.
You want to bar us from what our fathers had been worshipping.
Then, bring us a clear authority.
Their Messengers said to them: We are only mortals like you

except God shows His grace on whom He wills of His servants.
And it had not been for us that we bring you an authority,
but by the permission of God.
And in God let the ones who believe put their trust. (14:10-14:11)

COMMENTARY°

He calls you so that He may forgive you your sins and grant you respite for an appointed term. With this call to forgiveness, God does not demand an immediate positive response, nor does He inflict His punishment immediately when they make their first rejection. He grants them another favor by giving them a period of grace, either for a time He sets in this life or to the Day of Reckoning. During this respite they may reflect on various signs and indicators, and on the Messengers' warnings. Such respite is an act of grace, considering their negative response to His call.

Yet those ignorant people revert to their baseless objection: They replied: *You are mortal like us. You want to bar us from what our fathers had been worshipping.*

The phrase, *shows His grace*, is used here so that the dialogue fits in harmoniously with the general atmosphere of the sign. It is an atmosphere generated by speaking about God's grace which He bestows on whomever He chooses of His servants. His grace is limitless. It is not granted only to God's messengers, but rather affects humanity as a whole. For humanity has been honored by the choice of one of its number to undertake this great task of receiving a message from on high.

We sent a Messenger to them from among them saying that:
Worship God! You have no god other than Him.
Will you, then, not be Godfearing? (23:32)

COMMENTARY°

The stories of earlier Prophets and Messengers are not meant to give a full account or to provide details. They are meant to emphasize the unity of the message given to all of them, and to make clear that they received the same response from all their different communities. Therefore, these accounts commence with Noah to indicate the starting point, and finish with Moses and Jesus to define the last point before the final message. No names are mentioned in between the start and the finish of this long chain. This serves to indicate the similarity of all intervening episodes. However, in every new case the essence of the message and the way it was received are clearly mentioned.

....when their brother Salih said to them:
Will you not be Godfearing?

Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you,
so be Godfearing of God and obey me.
And I ask you not
for any compensation for it. My compensation is
only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:142-26:145)

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....when their brother, Lot, said to them:
Will you not be Godfearing?
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you
so be Godfearing of God and obey me.
And I ask you not for any compensation for it.
My compensation is only
from the Lord of the worlds. (26:161-26:164)

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When Shuayb said to them: Will you not be Godfearing?
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you
so be Godfearing of God and obey me.
And I ask you not for
any compensation for it. My compensation is
only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:177-26:180)

And, truly, Elijah was of the ones who are sent when he said
to his folk: Will you not be Godfearing? (37:123-27:124)

COMMENTARY°

These Quranic signs (23:32; 26:143-145; 26:162-164; 26:177-180; 37:123-124) indicate the critical vocabularly that defines monotheism.

Say: O humanity! Truly, I am the Messenger of God to you all
of Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes to die.
So believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet,
who believes in God and His words and follow him
so that perhaps you will be truly guided. (7:158)

COMMENTARY°

This sign (7:158) makes some important, though subtle, points which should be outlined. To start with, this address implies an order to believe in God and His Messenger. This is the same implication as the declaration that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger. This is certainly the essence of faith. This order is preceded by an outline of God's essential attributes: It is to Him *to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes to die.* Hence, it

is an order to believe in God, having learned His true and essential attributes, and learned that this message applies to all humanity.

It also implies that the unlettered Prophet believes in God and His word. While this goes without saying, drawing attention to it here is quite important. Before a person advocates a certain cause, he himself must believe in it and must have its essentials clear in his mind so that he knows the true nature of what he advocates. Hence, the Prophet sent as God's Messenger to all humanity is described as one *who believes in God and His words.* This is exactly what he calls on people to believe.

The address also refers to the practical requirements of the faith which the Messenger calls on people to accept. When they have accepted faith, they are required to abide by its law and to follow its teachings. This is stated clearly in God's own words: ... *and follow him so that perhaps you will be truly guided.* There is simply no way that people can benefit by the guidance given to them through God's Messenger unless they follow in practice what that Messenger says. It is not sufficient that they should believe in it, unless that belief is endorsed by practice. Had the faith been merely a matter of beliefs only, it would have been sufficient to say: *to believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet.* But God has followed this by the order to follow the Prophet in everything that he has given us.

Having commanded the Prophet to declare that his message applies to all humanity, the Quranic [signs] continue to make it clear that the Prophet's role is to make people fully aware of who is their true Lord.

CRITICAL THINKING•

QUESTIONING DEEPLY: RAISING AND PURSUING SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS

Principle•

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

Application•

This Quranic Studies program has been developed to clarify and settle questions peculiar to itself. Teachers should use such questions to organize and unify details covered in Quranic studies. The basic questions everyone faces include the nature of right and wrong, how we know things, and so on. In order to develop a framework for organizing details, both general and specific Quranic ideas should be continuously raised.

Allow students to have extended discussions on thought-provoking ideas. Maintain a focus in the discussion so that multiple issues are discussed. Help students be clear about their objectives and made to feel that they are moving towards them in an affective way.

The class can begin exploration of an important topic in the Quranic sign below. Help them divide up the task of reading and taking notes on the references. The class can then discuss the Quranic signs, and ask questions to guide further understandings. They should then share their research with each other or each student could write an essay putting all of the ideas together.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

Messengers:

- were sent with the signs of God and with a clear authority.
- were given grace, they were delivered from great distress.
- God helped them so they became victors.
- were given the Manifest Book.
- were guided to a straight path.
- were left with a good name, sympathetic and forbearing.
- bear witness
- have no fallacy in them
- have no foolishness in them
- say nothing but the truth
- are devoted
- are sincere in their promise
- eat food and walk in the market
- are Messengers of the Lord of the worlds
- deliver messages from God
- God is content with them
- bring the signs with the permission of God
- reveal by God's permission what God wills
- are mortal
- receive the revelation that there is no god but God so worship God
- are monotheists who are given the Book, clear portents
- are a witness to humanity
- teach us what we know not
- ask for God's help and say: God's help is near
- will war with God against those who practice usury
- believe in what is sent forth to them; believe in God, His angels, His Books and His other Messengers and separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers: and they believe in what was sent forth to them from their Lord
- Prophets made a solemn promise to follow a Messenger who drew near to them with that which establishes as true what is with him, will believe in him and will help him:
- bring mercy if one believes in them

- receive grace from God; they recite the signs, purify those who follow them, teach them the Book and wisdom
- have authority; if people contend with one another, they should refer it to God and the Messenger
- ask for forgiveness for those who repent
- draw near with the Truth
- receive a part of the spoils of war
- some have been driven out
- are sincere
- are given spouses and offspring
- give judgment against ones who believe not
- give permission to those who ask for permission
- recount the signs of God, ones that are made manifest to bring out those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality from the shadows to the light
- recount the purified scrolls wherein are truth-loving Books
- are a witness against us and we against humanity
- ask for forgiveness of others
- are a light sent forth from God
- had torment inflicted on them
- Messenger Jesus established as true what was in advance of him in the Torah and gives good tidings of one to approach after him
- are given tranquility and fastened with the Word of God-consciousness
- are sent with guidance and way of life of The Truth that God may uplift over all of the ways of life
- some are unlettered, from among the people
- recount God's signs to them, purify and teach the Book and wisdom
- makes manifest what was being concealed of the Book and pardon much
- make manifest the way of life
- are protectors; perform the formal prayer; give the purifying alms; and are ones who bow down
- are sent to deliver the message
- call to what gives life
- disassociate themselves from those who made a contract with the polytheists who violated it: God and His Messenger declare disassociation from those with whom you made a contract among the ones who were polytheists who violated it
- receive tranquility and receive armies
- are sent with guidance and way of life of The Truth
- give of God's grace
- sent to every community

- receive revelation from behind a partition or from an angel messenger
- God rescues them
  - God sends His disapproval on those who believe not in Messengers
    - say: worship God. You have no god other than Him.
- Jesus was confirmed with the hallowed spirit
- Jesus was a Messenger to the Children of Jacob
- Jesus had been taught the Book, Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel.
- Jesus drew near with a sign from the Lord
- Jesus created the likeness of a bird from clay
- Jesus breathed into it and it became a bird with God's permission
- Jesus cured one who was blind from birth and the leper
- Jesus gave life to dead mortals with the permission of God
- Jesus told the people of his time what they eat and what they store up in their houses; established as true what was before him of the Torah and permitted some of what had been forbidden to the people before; and drew near with a sign from the Lord

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING•

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Help students discover the structure of their own thought.
Help students develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Help students arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Help students note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

TO PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY IN QUESTIONING, ONE MUST•

Listen carefully to what the Quranic sign is saying.
Take it seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence in it.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.

Then, after that succeeded successors who inherited the Book. They take advantage of this nearer world, and they say: We will be forgiven. If an advantage approaches them like it, they will take it. Is not a solemn promise taken from them with the Book that they would say about God only The Truth? Did they not study what is in it, and know that the Last Abode is better for those who are Godfearing? Will you not, then, be reasonable? (7:169)

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Seek Quranic examples and analogies to these signs.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of those who are unjust to themselves.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.

Truly, those whom the angels gathered to themselves—ones who are unjust to themselves—they [the angels] *will ask: In what condition had you been?*

They [those where were unjust to themselves] *will say: We had been ones taken advantage on the earth due to our weakness.*

They [the angels] *will say: Be not the earth of God that which is extensive enough to emigrate in it?*

Then, for those, their place of shelter will be hell. How evil a Homecoming! (4:97)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*) and analyze it or them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

SEGMENT 4: THE ONES WHO ARE SENT

Among the mentioned as ones who are sent are: Elijah, Lot, David, Salih, Hud, Solomon, Jonah and Muhammad.

And We sent not before you any ones who are sent
but that, truly, they eat food and walk in the markets.
And We made some of you as a test for some others.
Will you endure patiently, and your Lord had been Seeing. (25:20)

COMMENTARY°

This sign addresses the Prophet consoling and reassuring him, telling him that his was not a special case among God's Messengers. They all shared the same essential attributes: If the ungrateful voice objections, these are not made against the Prophet in person; rather, they are objections to God's words that are put in place for a definite purpose. Thus, those who do not appreciate God's wisdom and plans will object, while those who have full trust in His wisdom and support will persevere and remain reassured. The divine message will continue the struggle using human means and methods, so that those who have faith will demonstrate their patience in adversity. He sees human nature, and what is in people's inner thoughts. He sees to what end each one is driving. We note here the use of the possessive pronoun, *your Lord*, to give the Prophet a feeling of comfort and reassurance. God knows what best affects people's hearts and feelings.

DUTIES OF ONES WHO ARE SENT

Abraham said: O ones who are sent,
what is your business? (51:31)

We send not the ones who are sent,
but as ones who give good tidings and ones who warn.
So whoever believed and made things right,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (6:48)

COMMENTARY°

When this passage of warning has reached its peak, having portrayed several scenes, making inspiring comments on each of them and giving serious warnings that have their effect on people's hearts, it is concluded with a statement outlining the task of the Ones Who Are Sent by God. Their communities demand supernatural miracles but their duty is merely to convey a message, bringing happy news and giving stern warnings. They have no say in people's fate, which is

determined by the attitudes people choose to adopt for themselves.

THE ONES WHO ARE SENT ARE DENIED, MOCKED

We send not the ones who are sent,
but as ones who give good tidings and as ones who warn.
And those who were ungrateful dispute with falsehood
in order to refute The Truth by it.
And they took My signs to themselves
—and what they were warned of—in mockery. (18:56)

CRITICAL THINKING•

PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

QUESTIONS HELP STUDENTS LEARN•

How to think
How to expand their ideas before they are evaluated
How to confront new ideas
How to relate new ideas to their own experience
How to determine the implications of their ideas and their consequences

Another important point to note for students is that Quranic critical thinkers are not made uncomfortable by questions. They do not consider someone asking them questions to be offensive or even intimidating. They actually welcome questions.

WAYS FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN TO QUESTION•

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what they are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what they are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question themselves and others.

FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION•

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.
Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.
Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a

way to get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.
Do not negate or embarrass the students.
Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.
Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Any thought-provoking questions can start a discussion. To follow up responses, use questions like the following:

Right after a classroom discussion, have the students write a 5-minute summary of the key points, raising new questions and adding examples or clarifying points mentioned. Or, divide the students into pairs and have them practice questioning each other about the points raised. It helps if the teacher summarizes and rephrases the main points from time to time during the classroom discussion.

But he who would say to ones who are his parents a word of disrespect to both of them: Do you promise me that I will be brought out when generations before me passed away? They will both cry to God for help: Woe unto you! Believe! Truly, the promise of God is true. But he said: This is only the fables of the ancient ones. (46:17)

If you want to teach them how to ask a question of clarification, explain to them that whenever they are dealing with a complex problem, they should form the question in several different ways until they find the most precise question to ask. Or whenever the class is going to discuss a Quranic sign, write out beforehand the most significant questions. Be prepared to change the question if the discussion moves in another direction. Lead the discussion in such a way that the dialogue among the students moves towards an answer that makes sense.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I routinely ask questions to fill in the missing pieces in my learning.
I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

Segment 5: The Mothers, Wives, Daughters of the Prophets, Messengers and the Ones Who Are Sent, the Woman Who Saved Moses and Other Female Relationships

And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you and We assigned for them spouses and offspring (13:38) clearly states that Messengers were given spouses and offspring, yet most often in books written on the history of the Messengers and Prophets, reference is not made to them and the roles that they played. However, fair-mindedness requires they be mentioned—the good among them as well as those who were ungrateful. The following are brief descriptions of their mention in the Quran.

The Mother of Cain and Abel Implied

He (Abel) *said: Truly, God receives only*
from the ones who are Godfearing.
If you were to extend your hand against me
so that you would kill me,
I would not be one who stretches out my hand
towards you so that I kill you
I fear God, Lord of the worlds.
Truly, I want that you will draw the burden
of my sin and your sin,
then, to be among the Companions of the Fire.
That is the recompense of the ones who are unjust.
Then, his soul prompted him (Cain) *to kill his brother.*
And he killed him and became
among the ones who are losers.
Then, God raised up a raven to scratch the earth,
to cause him to see how to cover up
the naked corpse of his brother.
He says: Woe to me! Was I unable to be like this raven
to cover up the naked corpse of my brother?
Then, he became among
the ones who were remorseful. (5:27-5:31)

Commentary°

[Eve's] two sons were in a situation that gives no rise to any thought of aggression in a good person's mind. The situation is one of obedience to God and offering a sacrifice to draw closer to God.
We note that the passive mode is used here to indicate that the accept-

ance or rejection of the offered sacrifice is done by a higher power in a metaphysical way. This mode of expression suggests to us two points. The first is that we should not try to determine how exactly the offering was accepted. The second point suggests that the one whose offering was accepted had not committed any crime that might cause anyone else to be angry with him to any extent, let alone that that person should plot a murder..

The latter declaring that he will kill the other is a statement of confirmed intention which is met by our disapproval because it is totally unjustified. Indeed, it could only be the result of blind envy that is alien to a good heart. Thus, from the very first moment, we take an attitude of total disapproval of aggression. The sign, however, greatly enhances the ghastliness of this act of aggression by showing the peaceful, good-natured attitude of the other brother.

THE WOMAN WHO SAVED MOSES

And the woman of Pharaoh said:
*He will be a comfort to our eyes for me and for **you**.*
Kill him not. Perhaps he may profit us
or we may take him to ourselves as a son.
But they are not aware. (28:9)

COMMENTARY°

Yet how will all this come about when the child is so helpless? The chapter tells us straightaway: (28:9) God's hand not only delivers the child into Pharaoh's fortified palace by way of an open challenge, it also takes him right into his wife's heart, thus providing him with loving protection. It thus gives him a thin, transparent cover of love overflowing from a woman's heart. Thus, he needs neither weapons, authority nor money for his protection. Such love defies Pharaoh, his despotism and his fear for his kingdom. Pharaoh is too small and humble in God's measure: the child needs no more than this thin covering of love to enjoy complete protection from him.

*A comfort to our eyes for me and for **you**.* (28:9) This is how she describes the child brought to them, the one who will become their enemy and bring them all, except for the woman herself, much grief. *Kill him not*! yet it is he who will bring about Pharaoh's end. *Perhaps he may profit us or we may take him to ourselves as a son,* when it will be through him that their fate will be sealed. *But they were not aware* (of what was to happen). (28:9)

And God propounded an example for those who believed:
Behold the woman of Pharaoh; she said: My Lord, build for me near
***You** a house in the Garden and deliver **You** me from Pharaoh and*

his actions and deliver me from the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (66:11)

COMMENTARY°

Pharaoh's wife was living in the midst of sweeping ingratitude, but that did not deter her from seeking her own personal safety. She disowned all connection with Pharaoh's palace, praying to God to grant her a home in heaven. She disavowed any relation with Pharaoh, praying that God grant her safety from him. Realizing that as Pharaoh's wife she was the closest person to him and his actions, she feared that some blame might attach to her. She, therefore, made it clear that she had nothing to do with all this, further praying to God that He keep her away from it. She disowned Pharaoh's people while at the same time living in their midst.

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Pharaoh's wife, the woman took Moses from the Nile, is an example of thinking independently. She realized that the beliefs that Moses was teaching were far more meaningful than worshipping the Pharaoh as the Pharaoh demanded. She was not limited by following those around her and their accepted ways of doing things. She strove to determine for herself what she believed and when to pray for what she desired, a place in heaven.

THE MOTHER OF ISHMAEL IMPLIED

And when Abraham saia
My Lord! Make this land that which is safe
and cause me and my children [family]
to turn away from worshipping idols.
Our Lord! I caused some of my offspring
to dwell in an unsown valley. (14:35-14:36)

COMMENTARY°

The name of the mother of Ishmael, Hagar, is not mentioned in the Quran. There is an indirect mention in (14:35) where one would logically include her, having been the mother of Ishmael. It is only in the commentaries that we learn about her.

Ibn Ishaq also said: Ishmael's mother, Hagar, the mother of the Arabs, came from a town in Egypt facing the town of Farama.[10]
The Prophet had said: When you conquer Egypt treat its people well, for they can claim our protection and kinship. Ibn Ishaq asked al-Zuhri what the Prophet meant by making them our kin. He replied: Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, was of their stock.

*****

A contemporary writer describes Hagar based on the Traditions: To the west of the Kabah is an addition, changing its shape and giving a direction to it. What is this? A short, arched wall facing the Kabah.

What is it named? The *hijr* of Ishmael!

Hijr? What does that mean? Skirt! And it actually resembles a skirt. The skirt of a dress, the dress of a woman!

Yea. An Egyptian woman. A slave! A black slave. The slave of another woman! A slave, so humble, that the other woman chose her as her husband's mistress. That is, she was so abased that she will never be considered as being a rival wife. And her husband slept with her for her to bear a child.

A woman who in human systems lacked every dignity, every honor, and then God united the mystery of her skirt with the mystery of His existence. This is the skirt of Hagar's dress! The skirt which nourished Ishmael.

Here is Hagar's home. Hagar is buried near the third pillar of the Kabah. Amazing![11]

No one, not even a Prophet should be buried in the mosque. And here, the House of God, wall to wall with the house of a female slave. And the House of God, the burial place of a mother.

What am I saying? God's non-direction is only directed from her skirt! The Kabah has extended towards her! There is only a small space between this arch and the house.

One can pass through this space when circling the House. But circling around the Kabah, the mystery of monotheism, without circling around her skirt is not accepted. It is not a *hajj*. It is a command. A Command of God.

All of humanity, in the always of the ages, all who believe in monotheism, all who have accepted God's invitation, should, in their circumambulation of love around God, around the Kabah, circumambulate around the skirt of her dress as well.

Her house, her grave, her skirt, also, are part of the circumambulation, are a part annexed to the Kabah. For the Kabah, this absolute, non-direction is only directed towards this skirt. The Kabah is directed towards the skirt of an African slave, a good mother. The perpetual place of circumambulation of humanity.

The God of monotheism, seated alone upon His Omnipotent Throne, rejecting all galaxies behind Him, beyond everything which exists, He is Alone, and, in His heavenly kingdom, Unique. But it seems as if from among all His creatures, in His infinite Creation, He selected one.

The noblest of His creatures, the human being. And among all? A woman. And among all? A black woman. And among all? A black

slave woman. And among all? A black female slave of a woman. The most humiliated of His creatures! He has placed her beside Himself, a place beside His House. Becomes her neighbor.

And now Under the roof of this House, two: One, God, And the other, Hagar. The unknown soldier has been so chosen in the nation of monotheism. All of the hajj is joined to the memory of Hagar.

And *hijrah* or migration, the greatest deed, the greatest command is derived from the word *hajar*. And *muhajir* or emigrant/immigrant, the greatest divine-like human being, a Hagar-like person.

And what is migration? A Hagar-like deed. .

In the words of Islam, it means to return to *kufr* after having found faith. Thus, *kufr* means savagery and religion means civilization. And *hjr*, an Ethiopian word, means town or city in the language of Hagar and Hagar, a black African, Ethiopian slave woman. The manifestation of a pre-civilization human being and yet, here, the root of civilization.

Thus, a Hagar-like human being means a civilized one. A Hagar-like movement means the movement of humanity towards civilization. And now, in the movement of humanity around God's House, again, Hagar. Your place of circumambulation, O migrator who has resolved on God, is the Kabah of God and the skirt of Hagar.

What do we see? Our understanding cannot contain it! The sensitivities of a human being in the age of liberation and humanism hav not the power to bear this meaning! God in the house of a blac African, female slave!!!

Abraham makes reference to his offspring here. when he asks tha the land of Makkah be safe for he and his family, his family including the mother of Ismael, Hagar. We see yet another strong woman. Hagar was a woman who explored the implications and consequences of her situation to the extent that she became the founder of the city of Makkah, exchanging water from the Zamzam well to merchants traveling through that land for food and other goods that she and her son, Ishmael, needed.

THE MOTHER OF ISAAC

Then, his woman came forward with a loud cry.
She slapped her face and said:
I am an old barren woman! (51:29)

COMMENTARY°

Then his wife, Sarah, came forward clamoring, shouting and smote, slapped, her face, and said: *A barren old woman*! who has never given birth to a child, aged ninety-nine, with Abraham being one hundred years old; or alternatively he was a hundred and twenty years old and she was ninety years old.

This Quranic signs in reference to Sarah, the mother of Isaac, speaks to clarifying issues, conclusions or beliefs. The Messengers who appeared to Abraham to announce that he and Sarah would have a son, accurately stated their mission, but it was a difficult message for Sarah to accept as she had been barren throughout her life. The Messengers reassure her.

While Ishmael became the father of the Arab people, Isaac became the father of the Jewish people, both being the sons of Abraham.

Abraham's woman, one who is standing up,
laughed when We gave her good tidings
of Isaac and besides Isaac, Jacob. (11:71)

COMMENTARY°

And his wife, that is, Abraham's wife, Sarah, standing by, serving them, laughed.

THE MOTHER OF MOSES

Certainly, We showed grace on you another time
when We revealed to your mother what is revealed:
Cast him adrift in the ark. Then, cast it adrift into the water of the
sea. Then, the water of the sea will cast him up on the bank
and he will be taken by an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his.
And I cast on you fondness from Me
that you be trained under My Eye. (20:37-20:39)

COMMENTARY°

But this is not all. Not only was Moses taken care of, but his mother could not be left at home worrying about her child. The two were soon reunited. (20:40) That was part of God's design.

28:7-28:13 THE STORY CONTINUES: COMMENTARY°

The story begins and we are told how God's hand works directly, and not through anyone else. Moses was born under the sort of difficult circumstances the chapter has described a newborn baby in great danger. We almost see the knife being taken out to cut his throat. His mother is so worried, fearing that the news of his birth might reach the despotic authorities. She is well aware that if it did she would not be able to protect or hide him. How could she prevent him from crying and so betraying his presence? She knew herself to be helpless and powerless.

At this point God's hand intervenes, making direct contact with

the worried mother, and inspiring her with what to do. *And We revealed to the mother of Moses: Breast feed him. But if you had feared for him, then, cast him into the water of the sea and neither fear nor feel remorse. Truly, We will be ones who restore him to you, ones who make him among the ones who are sent.* (28:7)

What sort of inspiration is this? A caring mother suckling her child is told to cast him into the river should she fear for his life. She is told, however, not to fear or grieve for him. He will be under the care of the One who provides all security and dispels all fear. He will be looked after by the hand that makes the fire a cool and relaxing place, and makes the sea a place of shelter and repose. No Pharaoh dare come near anyone this hand protects. You need not fear for his life or worry about his being taken away from you. (28:7) This is a promise for the future, and God's promise is certain to come true.

This is the first scene showing a worried mother as she received a clear, reassuring revelation that promises a bright future. The revelation removes all fear and worry from her heart, giving her peace and reassurance. The chapter does not mention how she reacted or how she carried out the instructions. Instead, the curtains fall only to rise again bringing us the next scene. *Then, the people of Pharaoh picked him out to be an enemy to them and a cause of grief. Truly, Pharaoh and Haman and their armies had been ones who are inequitable* (28:8)

Is this the security promised her? Does it augur the fulfillment o the happy news she has been given? How, when she feared for her son none other than Pharaoh and his household? It is they that now have him. Nothing could have worried her more than her child falling into their hands. Here, we see the challenge thrown down openly, in full view of all. It is a challenge to Pharaoh, Haman and their hosts. They were chasing down every newborn male in Moses' community because of fear for their own positions. Their spies were everywhere, so that no newly born boy could escape their watchful eyes. Now God's hand effortlessly puts into their very own midst such a child. It is indeed the child who will bring about their downfall. He is now in their hands and he is helpless, unable to fend for himself. Indeed, he cannot cry for help, should he be in danger. The purpose behind delivering the child to Pharaoh is also clearly stated. (28:8) He will certainly be an open foe, challenging them, and bringing grief and sorrow. Pharaoh, Haman and their armies had been ones who are inequitable....

What about his mother though, who must have been justifiably apprehensive? (28:10) She did as she was told and threw her child into the river. Where is he now? Where has the river carried him? She might well have asked herself how she could have done such a thing. How

could she even hope that he would find security in the midst of such danger?

The chapter portrays a telling picture of a poor mother's anxious heart. It is a one whereby she is unable to think or act. We can imagine her being driven in a moment of despair to give the whole thing away. (28:10) She needed to have faith in God's promise, to be patient in the adversity she was faced with and to continue to follow His guidance.

Here we see the working of God's will completing its scheme to thwart Pharaoh. It brings the child to them, they pick him up, and furthermore they are made to love him from the very first moment. Thus, they look for a suckling mother for him, but God made him refuse all breasts to increase their confusion and helplessness. Every time a new breast was offered to him he refused it. Thus they feared for the child's life. They continued in this situation until his sister saw him at a distance and recognized him. She soon realized how eager they were to find someone who could take care of him. She carefully approached them: Shall I direct you to a family who might bring him up for you and take good care of him? *And We forbade any breast feeding female for him before. Then, she* (the sister of Moses) *said: Shall I point you to the people of a house who will take control of him for you and they will be ones who will look after him?* (28:12) They were delighted with what she said, hoping that it could be true and that the child would be saved.

And We had forbidden him to take to the breasts of foster-mothers from before, that is to say, we prevented him from taking to the breasts of any suckling mother other than his own mother. Therefore he would not accept the breasts of any of the foster-mothers brought for him. So she, his sister, said, *Shall I point you to the people of a house*—having seen their affection for her brother— *who will take control of him for you* and they will be ones who will look after him— by having him suckled and so on, and who will act in good faith towards him?' Her suggestion was accepted. So she brought his mother and he took to her breast. She explained to them that he had taken to her breast because of her pleasant scent and the wholesome taste of her milk. Permission was given to her to breast-feed him in her own house and so she returned with him. . . .

This fourth scene is over, and the next one starts immediately, showing the child back with his mother, thriving, well protected by Pharaoh and cared for by his wife. While fear was everywhere around him, he enjoyed complete security: Thus We restored him to his mother, so that she might rejoice in him and grieve no more, and that she might know that God's promise always comes true; even though most people do not know this. *So We returned him to his mother that her eyes settle down and she not feel remorse and that she knows that the Promise of God is true. But most of them know not.* (28:13)

THE MOTHER OF MARY

Chapter 19 of the Quran is named for Mary. Her story and that of her son, Jesus Christ, is quite extensive in this chapter and others, as well. Of note at this point is that unlike other Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent, Jesus is given the name of Jesus son of Mary, Isa ibn Maryam, in the Quran.

Truly, God favored Adam and Noah
and the people of Abraham
and the people of Imran above all the worlds,
some of one another's offspring.
And God is The Hearing, The Knowing.
Mention when the woman of Imran (Hanna, Mary's mother) *said:*
My Lord! I vowed to ***You*** *what is in my womb—*
that which is dedicated—so receive ***You*** *this from me.*
Truly, ***You, You*** *alone are The Hearing, The Knowing.*
Then, when she brought forth she said:
My Lord! Truly, I brought her forth, a female.
And God is greater in knowledge of what she brought forth.
And the male is not like the female.
And, truly, I named her Mary.
And, truly, I commend her to ***Your*** *protection*
and her offspring from the accursed Satan. (3:33-3:36

COMMENTARY°

The vow made by Imran's wife reveals to us the fact that she is a woman with a heart full of faith. She looks up to her Lord making an offering of the dearest thing to her, namely, the child she is bearing. She dedicates the child to her Lord, free of all conditions and all partnerships, free of all claims that may be made by anyone other than God. The Arabic term used here to denote that the offering is made absolutely purely to God is derived from the root meaning "freedom" or "liberation." This in itself is very significant. No one is truly free unless he devotes himself totally to God, liberating himself from servitude to anyone, anything, or any value.

When submission to God alone is total, it indicates total freedom. Any other situation is a form of slavery although it may appear in the guise of freedom.

This shows that to believe in God as the only Lord is perfect freedom. No human being is truly free if he recognizes any degree of authority that belongs to anyone other than God. When Islam preaches the Oneness of God, it preaches the only true form of human freedom.

These Quranic signs (3:33-3:36) shows the good faith and integrity exhibited by Hanna, the mother of Mary. She clearly recognized the need to be true to her own thought—that her child would be dedicated to the temple; to be consistent in the standards she applied: she gave birth to a female. Under Jewish law a female was not able to serve in the temple. Hanna honestly admitted the discrepancies between what she thought of doing and what she was actually able to do.

The devoted prayer of Hanna addresses to her Lord to accept her offering is an indication of her total submission to God. She appears to us free from all shackles. Her only motivation is to seek God's pleasure and acceptance:

She was hoping for a male child, because only male children were devoted for service in temples, so that they may free themselves from any preoccupation with anything other than worship and prayer. When she discovered that she had given birth to a daughter, she addressed her Lord in a sorrowful tone: *My Lord! Truly, I brought her forth, a female.*

She realizes that God is fully aware of the fact. She, however, makes the offering with what she has, and appears to apologize for not having a male child who might have been better able to fulfill the mission for which the baby was devoted.

This address sounds close, familiar, made by one who feels to be having a private conversation with her Lord, explaining what is on her mind and making her offering gently and directly. This is the type of relationship that God's chosen people have with their Lord: it is a relationship of friendship, closeness and simple address, free of all complications. They feel they are speaking with the One Who is near, loving and certain to respond.

THE MOTHER OF YAHYA (JOHN)

He was named Yahya, the Living, because he breathed life into his barren mother's womb.

And, truly, I (Zechariah) *feared for my defenders after me.*
And my woman had been a barren woman.
So bestow on me from that which
proceeds from Thy Presence a protector.
He will inherit from me and inherit from the family of Jacob.
And make him, my Lord, pleasing. (19:5-19:6)

COMMENTARY°

The assumptions and inferences of Zechariah, Yahya's father, are

based on a natural law so they seem to be plausible. However it was divine intervention that interceded to give he and his wife a child even though his wife had been barren all of her life.

(Zechariah) *said: My Lord!*
How will I have a boy while my wife had been a barren woman
and surely I have reached an advanced old age? (19:8)

THE MOTHER OF JESUS

And remember Mary in the Book
when she went apart from her people to an eastern place.
Then, she took to herself a partition away from them,
so We sent Our Spirit to her
and he presented himself before her as a mortal without
She said: Truly, I take refuge in The Merciful from ***you;***
come not near me if ***you*** *had been devout.*
He said: I am only a messenger from ***your*** *Lord*
that I bestow on ***you*** *(f) a pure boy.*
She said: How will I have a boy when no mortal touches me,
nor am I an unchaste woman?
He said: Thus, it will be. ***Your*** *Lord said: It is for Me insignificant.*
And: We will assign him as a sign for humanity
and as a mercy from Us.
And it had been that which is a decreed command.
So she conceived him
and she went apart with him to a farther place.
And the birth pangs surprised her at the trunk of a date palm tree.
She said: O would that I had died before thi
and I had been one who is forgotten, a forgotten thing.
So he cried out to her from beneath her:
Feel not remorse!
Surely, ***your*** *Lord made under* ***you*** *(f) a brook.*
And shake towards ***you*** *(f) the trunk of the date palm tree.*
It will cause ripe, fresh dates to fall on ***you.***
So eat and drink and ***your*** *eyes be refreshed.*
If ***you*** *have seen any mortal, say:*
I vowed formal fasting to The Merciful
so I will never speak to any human being this day.
Then, she approached her folk with him, carrying him.
They said: O Mary!
Surely, ***you*** *had drawn near a monstrous thing!*
O sister of Aaron! ***Your*** *father had not been a morally evil man*

nor had your mother been an unchaste woman.
Then, she pointed to him.
They said: How speak we to one
who had been in the cradle, a lad?
Jesus said: Truly, I am a servant of God.
He gave me the Book and He made me a Prophet.
And He made me one who is blessed wherever I had been
and He bequeathed to me
the formal prayer and the purifying alms
as long as I continue living,
and He makes me pious toward one who is my mother
and He makes me not haughty nor disappointed.
And peace be on me the day I was given birth
and the day I die and the day I am raised up, living.
That is Jesus son of Mary, a saying of The Truth.
They contest what is in it. (19:16-19:34)[12]

COMMENTARY°

"There is no question," contemporary women scholars write, "that Mary (19:16-34; 3:45-47; 5:75) is the female figure to whom the greatest attention is given in the Quran. There are 70 verses that refer to her, and she is named specifically in 34 of these (24 in relation to Jesus, son of Mary). Only three other persons—Moses, Abraham, and Noah, noted respectively 169, 69, and 43 times—are mentioned by name more frequently than is Mary. She is, in fact, the only woman who is identified by name in the Quran and she enjoys the special honor of having one of its 114 chapters titled after her (Maryam, Chapter 19). This chapter includes the narrative about Mary and her family, leading to the annunciation and birth of Jesus."[13]

The story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as told through the Quranic signs (19:23-36) again teach critical thinkers good faith and integrity much as the previous women had done.

She is both shocked and shaken, which is only the normal reaction.... Her immediate reaction is to seek God's protection and to appeal to Him for support. She appeals to the person's sense of fearing God. She reminds him of God so that he may be restrained from attempting anything evil. So she seeks refuge in God from him and tells him not to come near her if he fears God. Should he be a God-fearing person, he would respond to the mere mention of God's name and His attribute of mercy. He would then resist any evil motive and restrain his desire.

For all she knew, he might have been an assailant playing a trick on her, exploiting her innocence. Yet what he tells her, in the privacy of that place, well away from others, is that he wants to give her a

child. How shocked must Mary have been? We cannot even begin to imagine. That is the second great shock for Mary.

Now she speaks frankly and plainly to him asking how she might have a child when no man has touched her. She is all alone with him, and the reason why he surprised her is now clear. She does not know yet how he will give her a child. Nor does it make matters any easier or less worrying for her that he has declared himself to be God's emissary. Nothing that he says about that child, stating that he will be pure and that nothing evil will be attached to his birth or moral conduct, is sufficient to reassure her. It is a situation where modesty is completely out of place. She must have the matter out and clear at once. How, then, could she have a child when she is a virgin, untouched by any man? She is not an unchaste woman about to agree to a sexual act that could produce a child.

Her questioning in this fashion suggests that up to that moment she could not conceive of any way by which that person could give her a child except the familiar way of sexual contact between a male and a female. This is the natural way, according to human perception.

Now the question arises as to whether the reference in these two different chapters is to the same thing or not. From our point of view, the references would appear to be different on each occasion. In the present chapter, Mary, it refers to Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, who was God's emissary to Mary. In Chapter 66 it refers to the spirit that Go breathed into Adam when He created him to make of him a huma being. He again breathed of it into Mary to bring about her conception. It is this divine breathing of the spirit that gives life with all its human characteristics. These include the qualities and faculties that enable the human being to be in contact with the Supreme Society, while also giving him his human feelings, intellect, thought, emotions and inspiration.

In Mary's case, Gabriel carried this breath of the spirit from God to place it into her. We must also add however that we do not know anything about the nature of the spirit, neither when it refers to Gabriel himself, nor when it has a different connotation. Both belong to the realm which is beyond our perception. We simply try to understand the relevant text in the two chapters and consider that the usage differs in each case.

As we read on, we see Mary in a remote place, away from her family and community. She is now in a far more terrible situation. Previously, she was up against all that her upbringing has instilled in her of moral values; but that was an internal struggle with herself. Now she is about to be faced with a public scandal. Besides, she was in great physical pain added to her psychological distress. In the midst of labor and childbirth she is driven to lean against the trunk of a palm tree.

Then she is told how to deal with her predicament when she meets other people. She need only impart to anyone by signal, not words, that she has made a vow not to speak to anyone. She is in full and complete devotion which prevents her from answering any questions. We imagine that her surprise lingered long, and that she took a while to take stock of her situation and stretch her hand to the trunk of the tree and shake it for her meal of dates. But when she fully realized what was happening, she was reassured that God would not abandon her. Indeed, He had given her all the proof she needed. He gave her a child who spoke from the moment of his birth to explain the miracle that had brought him into being.

Mention when the angels said:
O Mary! Truly, God gives you (f) good tidings
of a Word from Him. His name is the Messiah
—Jesus son of Mary—
well-esteemed in the present and the world to come
and among the ones who are brought near.
And he will speak to humanity from the cradle
and in manhood and be among the
ones in accord with morality.
She said: My Lord! How is it I will be with child
when no mortal touches me?
He said: Thus, God creates whatever He wills.
When He decreed a command, then,
He only says to it: Be! Then, it is! (3:45-3:47)

COMMENTARY°

Mary is a young, virgin woman, a saint whose mother vowed, when she was still an unborn baby, that she would serve in the temple. No one had ever witnessed from her anything other than perfect purity and chastity. In fact people associated her with Aaron, the first of the temple's devout servants. For generations, her family were renowned for being God-fearing and a model of piety.

We see this young woman going off to be alone. The signs do not specify why she wanted to be alone, but there must have been something to so require her to be by herself, unseen by anyone else.

Once she is alone, screened from everyone and assured of complete privacy, she receives a great shock. She finds in front of her a Messenger Angel appearing as a man in his prime.

We can visualize this young woman ... and what she might have gone through in that moment when she was surprised by a young man appearing before her in her place of privacy. This was her first shock.

Yet what answer does she receive? The Messenger Angels tells

her something she could never have imagined—that he is from her Lord to give her a pure boy. We can imagine the panic and shock that must have overwhelmed Mary when that Messenger Angel, whom she did not yet know to be an emissary from her Lord, spoke to her.

He said: Thus, it will be. Your Lord said: It is for Me insignificant. And: We will assign him as a sign for humanity and as a mercy from Us. And it had been that which is a decreed command.

This miraculous event that Mary cannot even begin to imagine is easy for God to accomplish. His is the power that says to anything, 'Be,' and it immediately exists. Hence, everything is easy for Him, whether it is accomplished according to natural laws that are familiar to humanity or in some other fashion.

The angel, who is referred to in this instance as 'the Spirit' tells her that it is God who says that it is easy for Him, and that He wants this unique and remarkable event to be a sign for all humanity, making clear to them His power and free, unshackled will. He also wants this child to be a mercy and a blessing to the Children of Jacob in the first place and to all humanity thereafter. It is by showing them this miraculous event that they know Him, believe in Him and worship Him, seeking to earn His pleasure.

Thus ends the dialogue between the trusted angel and the Virgi Mary. The signs do not mention what happened after that exchang leaving a gap in the story, which frequently happens in the Quran. Bu it does mention that what the angel said to Mary about the birth of her son is a matter that has been settled and finalized. "*that which is a decreed command.* But how? Nothing is mentioned here by way of explanation.

However, we can refer here to the use of the phrase, Our Spirit, which is mentioned in this instance and in another sign. In the other context, the phrase occurs as follows: *And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her private parts, so We breathed into it of Our Spirit and she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been among the ones who are morally obligated.* (66:12)

The story then continues, and we are shown the outcome of all this. We see this baffled virgin going through something much harder for her: *So she conceived him and she went apart with him to a farther place. And the birth pangs surprised her at the trunk of a date palm tree. She said: O would that I had died before this and I had been one who is forgotten, a forgotten thing!* (66:22-66:23) This was the third great shock Mary received.

She is all alone ... suffering the pains of childbirth, not knowing about how to cope with the situation and having none to give her even moral support. In her anguish she cries: *She said: O would that I had died before this and I had been one who is forgotten, a forgotten thing!*

We almost see her face, feel her confusion, and sense her agony as she wishes herself into oblivion.

In the midst of all this anguish, she is confronted with the greatest surprise: *So he cried out to her from beneath her: Feel not remorse! Surely, your Lord made under you (f) a brook. And shake towards you (f) the trunk of the date palm tree. It will cause ripe, fresh dates to fall on you. So eat and drink and your eyes be refreshed. If you have seen any mortal, say: I vowed formal fasting to The Merciful so I will never speak to any human being this day.* (19:24-19:26)

O God! What is happening here! A child born this very moment crying out to her, comforting her and reaffirming her bond with her Lord, directing her as to how to obtain food and drink, and providing her with the argument and evidence to use when she sees people.The first thing the voice says to her is that she must not grieve. God has not forsaken you. Indeed, He has made this brook run at your feet, which most probably started its course at that very moment, either from a spring or from a high point nearby. Besides, the palm tree against which she leant provided food. She only need to shake it and it will drop you fresh ripe dates. Thus she has essential food and water.

Then we glimpse a highly dramatic scene when she goes to her people carrying the child. We can easily imagine the great surprise on their faces. Most probably, these were her immediate family. They had known their daughter, Mary, to be exemplary in her purity. She was indeed a virgin dedicated to worship in the temple; but there she was with a baby in her arms. Hence their exclamation. They start by reproaching her: *Sire;u you have drawn near a monstrous thing!* (19:27) But then their reproach takes a different tone, adding sarcasm and ridicule. They call her: *O sister of Aaron*! (19:28) Aaron was a prophet who was in charge of the Temple, passing this duty to his offspring. Mary was often associated with Aaron because of her exemplary devotion in the service of the Temple. How ironic that the girl associated with Aaron's perfect devotion should perpetrate such an enormity: *Your father had not been a morally evil man nor had your mother been an unchaste woman.* (19:28)

In her own defense, Mary says nothing other than carrying out what her amazing child has instructed her to say. But she pointed to the child. Again we are left to imagine their amazement, anger and fury at this young woman ... , carrying her child openly in her arms, and then refusing to answer their questions, only pointing to the child and indicating that they should ask him. But then a supernatural event occurs again and the baby speaks out.

The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger.
Surely, Messengers passed away before him.

And his mother was a just person (f).
They both had been eating food.
Look on how We make manifest the signs to them.
Again, look on how they are misled! And she was obedient
to He Who is far transcendent and majestic'. (5:75)

COMMENTARY°

[This sign] then puts the people face to face with this clear fact in the hope that they will reason properly and bring themselves to understand things as they are. This is coupled with amazement that even after this exposition, they continue to reject the facts: The sign describes both mother and son as people who ate ordinary food. This was a simple fact in the lives of Jesus Christ and his saintly mother. Eating food is a characteristic of living creatures that proves the humanity of Christ and his mother. Food is normally eaten to satisfy an undeniable physical need. Whoever needs to eat food in order to live cannot be a deity. God's life needs no food to support it because He lives and remains alive by Himself. He does not need to have any created thing like food to enter or leave his body. Limitless is He in His glory.

THE MOTHERS OF THE BELIEVERS

The Prophet is closer to the ones who believe than their own souls.
And his spouses are their mothers
and those imbued through the wombs, blood relations,
some of them are closer to some other
in what is prescribed by God than the other ones who believe
and ones who emigrate,
but accomplish what you may for your protectors
as ones who are honorable—
that which had been inscribed in the Book. (33:6)

COMMENTARY°

This sign makes the wives of the Prophet the mothers of the believers and, therefore, unable to marry anyone after the Prophet dies. The Prophet only had children from his first wife, Khadija, and his temporary wife, Mariya, the Christian Copt.

This sign (33:6) is an example of comparing analogous situations and reframing them. As we have seen, in pre-Quran Arabia, the most important social connection was one's connection to a tribe. Here, the sign reinforces that as human beings we need social relationships, but instead of it being based on the tribe, it is based on belief in the Oneness of God. They are now related to the wives of the Prophet as their mothers. This is yet another example of how the Quran reframed the common practices of the people.

*****

THE WIFE OF ADAM

Then, We said: O Adam!
Truly, this is an enemy to you and to your spouse,
so let him not drive you both out from the Garden
so that you would be in despair. (20:117)

COMMENTARY°

It is clear from these Quranic signs (20:117; 20:121; 20:123; 7:19) and the use of the dual pronoun in Arabic that both Adam and Eve forgot God's command. Even though God forgave them, they were expelled from the Garden because of it.

We know from the Quran and the use of the dual pronoun that both Eve and Adam acted on the temptation of Satan. This is very different from the Biblical interpretation that places the blame solely on Eve.

Then, they both ate from that
so the intimate parts of both showed to both themselves.
Both of them took to doing stitching together over both
from the leaves of the Garden.
And Adam rebelled against his Lord and he erred. (20:121)

***

He said: Get you both down from here altogether,
some of you an enemy to some others.
Then, if guidance approaches you from Me,
then, whoever followed My Guidance,
neither will he go astray, nor will he be in despair. (20:123)

And: O Adam! Inhabit you and your spouse the Garden
and both eat from where you both willed,
but neither of you come near this tree
or you both will be of the ones who are unjust. (7:19)

COMMENTARY°

The signs remain silent about what kind of tree it was, because providing any specific information on this point does not add any particular information about the purpose of its prohibition. Withholding such information lends weight to the view that the prohibition itself was the objective. God has permitted Adam and his wife the enjoyment of what He has made lawful, and commanded them to steer away from

what has been forbidden. It was necessary to identify something as forbidden so that the human race could learn that people must not exceed their limits. Thus the human will is restrained such that he or she controls desires and caprices. [We] are thus able to elevate [ourselves] above the level of animals who respond involuntarily to their desires and cannot control them. This is indeed the quality that distinguishes humans from animals.

Now Satan begins to play the role for which he dedicated himself. This against a unique creation whose birth God so graciously announced Himself before the society in grand celebration. Furthermore, He ordered the angels to prostrate themselves to him, and expelled Satan from heaven on his account. We are told how God created humans with a dual nature, capable of following both the right and wrong paths. He has inherent weaknesses and desires that can lead astray, unless God's commandments are observed.

O humanity! Be Godfearing of your Lord
Who created you from a single soul and, from it,
created its spouse and from them both
disseminated many men and women.
And be Godfearing of God
through Whom you demand rights of one another
and the wombs, the rights of blood relations.
Truly, God had been watching over you. (4:1)

COMMENTARY°

This sign states that the human being was created from a singl soul and from it, God created its mate. Had humanity appreciated this fact, they would have spared themselves all those grievous mistakes under which they have long suffered. They would not have coined such absurdities about women, branding them as the source of impurity and the origin of evil. The truth is that in her nature and temperament, the woman is created from the first human soul in order to be its mate and, thereafter, for numerous men and women to issue forth from them both. There is no difference between man and woman, then, in their nature or origin.... Humanity has groped blindly in this maze of absurd beliefs for a very long time. Women were deprived of their human status, all human characteristics together with all the rights to which their humanity entitles them for no other reason than an absurd, groundless belief that temporarily took hold of man's mind. When humanity recognized its gross mistake and set about correcting it, we find that the other extreme was adopted, one whereby women were left without any check or control. They had forgotten that man and woman are two mu-

tually complementary human beings. They are not identical individuals, but a pair, each part of which complements the other. The divine constitution brings humanity back to this elementary fact after it has strayed far from it.

This opening sign also suggests that the family is the cornerstone of human life. God's will has determined that this new creation on earth begins with one family. He created first a single soul, before creating from it its mate. Together, they formed a family and a married couple. Had He so wished, God could from the very outset have created many men and women, and paired them in couples to form different families. This could have been accomplished without any relationship between them except that they all derive their existence from the will of God, the single deity in the universe. He—limitless is He in His glory—has willed, for a definite purpose of His own, to complement one's tie with his Lord, which is the one from which all ties and relationships are derived, with the tie of kinship. He, therefore, formed the first family from a male and female who came from one soul and shared a single nature. From this first family He spread a multitude of men and women who all share in their tie with their Lord and in their family tie upon which human life is built. It is for this reason that the Islamic system takes so much care of the family and tries to strengthen its ties. It protects the family structure against all influences that may weaken it. Most prominent of these is deviation from human nature that leads to neglecting the abilities and potentials of both man and woman and the essential harmony that makes of these abilities and potentials a complete and coherent whole.

Emphasis is laid in this and other verses on the numerous aspects of the care the Islamic system takes of the family. Indeed, the family cannot establish its solid foundation when women are treated with the cruelty and degradation they receive in every ignorant society. For this reason, Islam tries hard to remove that cruelty and elevate women to a position of dignity.

Finally, we are called upon to look at that great variety in people's characteristics and abilities, after they have all spread out of a single soul and a single family. No two individuals are exactly the same although as many generations as we can imagine have come and gone and despite the creation of a great many individuals in every generation. There is a great variety in shapes and features; in habits, temperaments, manners and feelings; as well as in abilities, concerns and functions. A glance at this great variety exhibited by humanity demonstrates God's creative ability which is without parallel and which designs its creation on the basis of its knowledge and wisdom. It is enough to cast our minds and eyes around that remarkable living pa-

rade of humanity, looking at that ever-renewing multitude of forms that could not have been made except by God. Indeed, no one has dared to attribute his or her creation to anyone other than God. It is only an absolute, limitless will that can achieve such an endless variety from a single source and origin.

To reflect on the creation of people in this way is enough to give a pleasant feeling to our hearts. It strengthens our faith and enhances our sense of fearing God. This is no trifling gain.

At the end of this opening verse, which stimulates all these thoughts, human beings are given a reminder to fear God in whose name people appeal to one another, and to be mindful of their ties of kinship which makes of them all a single entity. It is in the name of God that we make pledges and covenants with one another, and in His name we ask one another to fulfill our duties and obligations, and with His name we swear to one another in order to confirm what we are saying. Hence, we must fear Him in your approach to whatever exists between us of relationships, contacts and transactions.

When we speak of fearing God and of being mindful of our duties towards Him, we speak of something we know well because it is frequently mentioned in the signs. This sign uses the same verb in reference to ties of kinship, as if it says that we must "fear" our ties of kinship. This is a remarkable expression which imparts certain connotations that one can hardly find words to explain. "Fear" your ties of kinship. Enhance your feelings so that you may appreciate the relationships they create and the obligations they constitute. You can then take care never to do any injustice to your kinsfolk and never to treat them badly. Be mindful lest you cause harm to your kinsfolk or offend them. Value your ties of kinship as we value our treasures.

THE WIFE OF ABRAHAM: HAGAR

We have already looked at the lives of the two mothers of Ishmael and Isaac and now we look at mention of them as mothers as well as wives of Abraham.

> *And when Abraham said: My Lord! Make this land that which is safe and cause me and my children to turn away from worshipping idols. My Lord! Truly, they caused to go astray many among humanity; so whoever heeded me, truly, he is of me. And whoever rebelled against me, then You are truly, Forgiving, Compassionate.* (14:35-14:36)

THE WIFE OF ABRAHAM: SARAH

Abraham's woman (Sarah), *one who is standing up, laughed*
when We gave her good tidings of Isaac
and besides Isaac, Jacob. (11:71)
Then, his woman came forward with a loud cry.
She slapped her face and said:
I am an old barren woman! (51:29)

THE WIFE OF NOAH

God propounded an example for those,
ones who are ungrateful
like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot.
They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants,
ones who are in accord with morality.
But they both (f) betrayed them
so they avail them not against God at all.
And it was said:
Enter the fire along with ones who enter. (66:10)

THE WIFE OF LOT

God propounded an example for those,
ones who are ungrateful
like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot.
They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants,
ones who are in accord with morality.
But they both (f) betrayed them
so they avail them not against God at all.
And it was said:
Enter the fire along with ones who enter. (66:10)

COMMENTARY°

Reports speaking of the betrayal of Noah and Lot by their wives (whereas Pharaoh had betrayed his wife to such an extent that she prayed to be released from him) suggest that it was a betrayal of their messages, rather than their being unfaithful to their marriage bonds. Noah's wife used to join the unbelievers in his community in making fun of him, while Lot's wife used to inform his people when he received guests, knowing what they tried to do with such visitors.

Having made an order to believers to protect themselves and their families from incurring punishment in hell, the chapter now highlights

the principle of individual responsibility. The Prophet's wives, and indeed wives of all believers, are told here that ultimately they are personally accountable for what they do and the decisions they make. Their individual responsibility cannot be waived merely because they are married to a prophet or to a devout believer.

The Wife of Moses

When Moses went to Midian, he met Shuayb (Jethro) and his daughters. After Moses' encounter with Shuayb's daughters at the well where the daughters were trying to draw water for their herds, when one of the daughters returned to their father, she suggested that Shuayb ask the man to stay and marry one of his daughters.

When of his own accord he turned his face
toward Midian he said:
Perhaps my Lord guides me to the right way.
And when he went down to the well of Midian,
he found a community there of personages drawing water
and he found other than them two women who keep away.
He said: What is your business?
They both said: We draw not water
until the ones who are shepherds move on.
And our father is an aged, old man
So he drew water for them
Again, he turned away to the shade and said.
My Lord! Truly, I am, certainly, of
*whatever **You** caused to descend of good to me, in need.*
Then, drew near him one of the two women, walking bashfully.
*She said: Truly, my father calls to **you***
*that he may give **you** recompense of compensation*
*because **you** had drawn water for us.*
So when he drew near him and related to him the narrative,
he said: Fear not.
***You** were delivered from the folk, ones who are unjust.*
One of the two women said: O my father!
*Employ him. Truly, best is that **you** would employ*
the strong, the trustworthy. (28:22-28:26)

*He said: Truly, I want to wed **you** to one of my two daughters*
*if that **you** will hire **yourself** to me for eight years.*
*But if **you** were to fulfill ten years, then, it will be from **you**,*
for I want not to press thee hard.
***You** will find me, if God willed,*
among the ones in accord with morality. (28:27)

COMMENTARY°

The old man acted on his daughter's advice. He probably sensed a mutual liking between his daughter and Moses, one that could be the basis for a happy family. It is only natural that a young woman with a healthy, uncorrupted nature be inclined towards a man in whom she discerns strength and honesty. Hence, the old man combined the two purposes, suggesting to Moses that he marries one of his daughters in return for eight years work. Should Moses increase the period to ten years, this would be an added favor, not a commitment to which he would be held: Frankly and simply the old man offered one of his daughters, without naming her, as a wife for Moses, but he might have felt that the intended girl was known to him as they seemed inclined towards each other. He stated this without any embarrassment, for the offer was one of marriage. There is after all nothing to be embarrassed about when the aim is to build a home and establish a family. It is only when people move away from sound, natural values, to observe unhealthy traditions, that they are unnecessarily restricted.

THE WIFE OF PHARAOH

And God propounded an example for those who believed:
Behold the woman of Pharaoh;
she said: My Lord, build for me near Thee a house in the Garden
and deliver You me from Pharaoh
and his actions and deliver me from the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (66:11)

COMMENTARY°

Similarly, reports concerning Pharaoh's wife make it clear that she lived in his palace as a believer in God Almighty, and suggest that she was of Asian origin following a divine religion that was revealed before Moses' time. Historical reports mention that the mother of Eminhuteb IV, the Pharaoh who advocated belief in one god, making the sun a symbol of the divine being, calling himself Ekhnaton, was Asian and believed in a religion other than that known in Egypt. God only knows if she is the one referred to in this chapter, or whether the reference is made to the Pharaoh challenged by Moses and his wife. Moses' Pharaoh is definitely different from Eminhuteb IV. We need not, however, be particularly concerned about the exact identity of Pharaoh's wife. What is important is that the Quranic statement confirms a permanent fact in which individual people are only examples.

She was living in the midst of sweeping unbelief, but that did not deter her from seeking her own personal safety. She disowned all con-

nection with Pharaoh's palace, praying to God to grant her a home in heaven. She disavowed any relation with Pharaoh, praying that God grant her safety from him. Realizing that as Pharaoh's wife she was the closest person to him and his actions, she feared that some blame might attach to her. She, therefore, made it clear that she had nothing to do with all this, further praying to God that He keep her away from it: *And God propounded an example for those who believed: Behold the woman of Pharaoh. She said: My Lord, build for me near **You** a house in the Garden and deliver **You** me from Pharaoh and his actions* ... (66:11)

Pharaoh's wife's prayer and her overall position is a shining example of rejecting all temptation that the life of this world can offer, even at its most splendid. Pharaoh was the most powerful king on earth, and his palace offered the best that a woman could desire. Yet his wife chose faith in preference to all this. She did not merely treat it with contempt; she considered it evil and sought refuge with God from yielding to it, praying to be saved from it and its consequences. Yet Pharaoh's wife was a woman standing on her own in the midst of a great kingdom, which makes her all the more admirable and gives her an even greater position. This woman, on her own, resisted the pressures exerted by society, the palace, the throne, the courtiers and her own royal position, lifting her head to heaven seeking its light. She certainly provides a great example of submission to God, resisting all temptations and overcoming all impediments. Hence she deserved he special mention in God's book, the words of which are echoed throughout the universe as they are revealed from on high.

THE WIFE OF SOLOMON

She said: My Lord! Truly, I did wrong to myself
and I submitted with Solomon to God,
the Lord of the worlds. (27:44)

COMMENTARY°

She was told to enter the court. When she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she bared her legs. Said he: It is but a court smoothly paved with glass! (27:44)

THE WIFE OF JOB

*And take in **your** hand a bundle of rushes*
*and strike with it and fail not **your** oath.*
Truly, We found him one who remains steadfast.
How excellent a servant. Truly, he was penitent. (38:44)

COMMENTARY°

We are then given more of the story of tests, patience in adversity, followed by favors bestowed from on high. This time, the prophet who is tested is Job:

This sign (38:44) is most often translated as "*And take in your hand a bundle of rushes and strike with it and fail not your oath.*" It is clearly unspecific as to what aspect of Job's life this sign refers to. According to the Old Testament, Job's faithful and long-suffering wife, Rahmah, at some point in Job's patiently bearing his afflictions, tells him to end his suffering by means of suicide.

This Biblical story behind this sign is used in the interpretation of 4:34. As a result of this, translators and interpreters of 4:34 add in parenthesis the word (lightly) after: "beat them" while this is an addition to the sign, as if to say that "beat them" (*nushuz* wives) is sanctioned because it is to be done (lightly).

Quranic commentators pictured her differently saying that at some point out of desperation for money, she sold her hair in order to buy bread for Job. Satan hurried to Job and to increase his grief and anguish, saying that his wife had committed adultery and as a punishment, her hair was cut off. Once Rahmah returned to Job, Job saw her hair was cut. He became angry and swore an oath to beat her with 100 strokes. His wife was in despair because Job, whom she dearly loved and whom she vowed she would leave, has falsely accused her. Once God healed Job and returned his fortune to him, Job became reluctant to carry out his oath. Muslim commentators then say that the angel Gabriel then told Job of her innocence and that Job should honor his oath by striking his wife lightly with a bundle of 100 rushes.

It does not take much for one to see how outside the pale of the Quran this story from commentators and interpreters is that Gabriel would tell Job that it was more important to carry out his oath than to beat an innocent person, even lightly. Rahmah had been the most exemplary wife. Once Job lost all of his material wealth, she did not leave him as his other two wives did, but instead began earning money as a cleaning woman in order to be able to provide food for her husband. When others in the village found Job's state so disgusting, they were not even prepared to help Rahmah carry him to a garbage heap. Yet she remained faithful throughout his long ordeal and then to be punished by a bundle of 100 rushes for whatever someone may have said that she had said or done goes against so many Quranic verses that listing them would only be tiresome to the reader!

To apply any aspect of this story as rationalization for *darab* in 4:34 being interpreted as "beat" (lightly) goes against the rest of the verse for another reason as well. The first statement in 4:34 is that husbands are supporters of their wives because God has given some of them an advantage over others and because they shared their wealth.

In the case of Job, his wife Rahmah was the support of the family so the rest does not apply to their situation.

That is a strong enough in argument to be the basis for some commentators to suggest that Job was supposedly told to strike his wife lightly in order not to fail his oath whereas 5:89 says that God "*will not take you to task for what is unintentional in your oaths*" or Job could have chosen the more humane way and paid an expiation for an oath that he could not fulfill. In addition, the root letters in the first form mean not only "fail not in your oath," but also according to *Taj al-Arus*, "to retract or revoke one's oath." As we have seen the root letters *daraba* also mean to cast, throw or fling to the ground, the verse can be translated as: "*And take in thy hand a bundle of rushes and cast them upon the ground and retract thy oath.*"

Therefore it is a misinterpretation for commentators to use the story of Job and his faithful wife in any sort of justification for a husband to beat his wife even lightly. In *The Old Testament: An Islamic Perspective*, Jay R. Crook (Muhammad Nur) adds in conclusion to this story: "Nevertheless there will always remain a suspicion that the original oral tradition of the story of Rahmah and Job was lost or distorted and the later Muslim commentators, unable to retrieve it, adopted the story of Job's wife from the later Jewish Job cycle to meet their exegetic needs."[14]

THE WIFE OF ZECHARIAH

So We responded to him and We bestowed Yahya (John) on him.
And We made things right for his spouse and for him.
Truly, they had been competing with one another in good deeds
and they would call to Us with yearning and reverence.
And they had been ones who are humbled before Us. (21:90)

COMMENTARY°

So We responded to him, in his call, and gave him John, as a son, and We restored fertility to his wife for him, and so she bore a child, having been barren. Truly they, those Prophets that have been mentioned, would hasten to, they would hurry to perform, good works, namely acts of obedience, and supplicate Us out of desire, for Our mercy, and in awe, of Our chastisement, and they were submissive before Us, humble in their worship.

He said: My Lord! How will I have a boy
while my woman had been a barren woman
and, surely, I reached an advanced old age? (19:8)

COMMENTARY°

In other words, he had reached extreme old age, 120 years; and his wife had reached the age of 98.

THE WIVES OF MUHAMMAD

O wives of the Prophet!
Whoever of you (f) approaches a manifest indecency
her punishment will be multiplied for her twofold.
And that would have been easy for God.
And whoever of you (f) is morally obligated
to God and His Messenger
and do as ones (f) in accord with morality,
We will give her her compensation two times over.
We made ready a generous provision for her.
O wives of the Prophet!
There is not among the wives any like you.
If you (f) were Godfearing, then, be not soft in your saying
so that he become desirous he in whose heart is a sickness,
but say (f) a saying of one who is honorable.
And settle down (f) in your (f) houses
and flaunt (f) not your (f) finery as those who flaunted their finery
in the previous Age of Ignorance.
And perform (f) the formal prayer and
give (f) the purifying alms and obey (f) God and His Messenger.
God only wants to cause disgrace to be put away from you—
People of the House—and purify you
with a purification. (33:30-33:33)

COMMENTARY°

God Almighty then instructs His Messenger to issue an order to his wives ... generally requiring them, when they leave their homes, to cover their bodies and heads with an outer garment. In this way, they would be recognized and he protected from the machinations of transgressors. Their modest appearance would distinguish them as chaste women, which embarrasses those who might follow his wives to tease and malign them.

O Prophet! Say to your spouses (f) and your daughters
and the females, ones who believe, to draw closer their (f) outer gar-
ments over themselves (f). That is more fitting
so that they (f) be recognized and not be maligned.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (33:59)

COMMENTARY°

God Almighty then instructs His Messenger to issue an order to his wives, daughters and female believers requiring them, when they leave their homes, to cover their bodies and heads with an outer garment. In this way, they would be recognized and he protected from the machinations of transgressors. Their modest appearance would distinguish them as chaste women, which embarrasses those who follow women to tease and malign them.

Commenting on this verse, al-Suddi says: "Some wicked people in Madinah used to go out at nightfall to make indecent remarks to women. Houses in Madinah were small. Therefore, women went out at night to relieve themselves. However, they were maligned by such wicked remarks. When such people saw a woman wrapped in her outer cover, they refrained from maligning her as they recognized her as free and chaste. A woman who did not have such a cover was subjected to their affronts as they thought her to be a slave."

Based on this sign (33:59), the question of covering or not covering is clearly up to the females, ones who believe as the Prophet's wives and daughters were told to cover themselves, as they did.

The question for the females, ones who believe, becomes one of choice depending upon where they are living. It is a decision they have to make based on the constant human battle between following one's instinct or reinforcing one's free will.

Whether or not one believes in God and follows God's laws, one is obliged to follow the laws of nature, laws that are both voluntary and involuntary. This is to follow one's instincts based on one's pursui of one's whims and desires.

When one chooses to follow God's suggestions one is exercising one's free will by acting against one's instinct. This is the constant battle that one faces in one's lifetime.

A commentator describes the battle in the following way: Achieving a proper balance between the clay (instinct) and the sublime elements (free will) is the highest level human beings are called on to achieve. That is the stage of human perfection. They are not required to shed either element of their constitution so as to become either angel or animal. To attempt a rise that disturbs the balance is a shortcoming that does not suit their essential characteristics, or the purpose of their creation in this unique fashion. People who try to suppress their basic physical instincts are the same as ones who try to suppress their free spiritual powers. Both go beyond straight human nature, imposing on themselves something that God does not sanction....

Quranic critical thinking has formulated its own laws for human life taking into account the constitution of human beings. It established a human system that does not suppress a single aspect of human po-

tential. The whole purpose of this system is to establish a perfect balance between these powers, so that they all work in concert, without allowing anyone of them to encroach on another. Any such encroachment leads to the negation of the other, and every dominance leads to destruction. Human beings are responsible for the maintenance of the essential characteristics of their nature and their accountability to God. The system submission to God (*islam*) establishes for human life is geared to promote these characteristics which God has given to humanity for a clear purpose.

Probing deeply into the issue, it would appear that females, ones who believe, need to be able to freely choose to engage themselves in this battle of consciousness in making decisions to control both aspects of their human self instead of being compelled by others to do so.

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THE DAUGHTERS OF LOT

Lot said: These are my daughters
if you had been ones who do something. (15:71)

They said: Certainly you knew we have no right
to your daughters and, truly,
you know well what we want. (11:79)

COMMENTARY°

Lot was aware of the perversity of the men in his community, who preferred to satisfy their sexual desires with men instead of women. In so doing they rebelled against nature, which avails itself of God's wisdom in creating all species in pairs so that procreation and regeneration can take place. Undistorted nature finds true pleasure in conforming to this wisdom, naturally and instinctively.

THE DAUGHTERS OF MUHAMMAD

O Prophet! Say to your spouses (f) and your daughters
and the females, ones who believe,
to draw closer their (f) outer garments over themselves (f).
That is more fitting
so that they (f) be recognized and not be maligned.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (33:59)

THE OTHER FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS
THE SISTER OF MOSES

*Mention when **your** sister walks saying:*
Shall I point you to one who will take control of him?
*So We returned **you** to **your** mother that her eyes*
settle down and she not feel remorse.... (20:40)

And she said to his sister: Track him.
So she kept watching him from afar
while they are not aware.
And We had forbidden any breast feeding female for him before.
Then she (the sister of Moses) *said:*
Shall I point you to the people of the house
who will take control of him for you
and they will be ones who will look after him? (28:11-28:12)

COMMENTARY°

The mother of Moses nevertheless exerted her own efforts so as to know what had happened to the child: She said to his sister: Track him. (28:11) She asked her daughter to follow the child in his bo floating along the river, so as to know whether he survived or not. Th girl did as instructed, seeking to establish what happened to her bab brother. She went into different quarters and markets, and she soon saw him from a distance, carried by some of Pharaoh's servants who were looking for someone to suckle him. At this point things regain an air of calm. So she watched him right from the very beginning from a distance, while they were unaware until the time was right to suggest that they give the baby Moses to his own mother, unbeknownst to them, to nurse him. (28:11-28:12)

MARY, THE DAUGHTER

And mention when the angels said: O Mary!
*Truly, God favored **you** (f), and purified **you** (f),*
*and favored **you** (f) above women of the world.*
*O Mary! Be **you** morally obligated to **your** Lord*
and prostrate yourself (f) and bow down (f)
with the ones who bow down. (3:43)

COMMENTARY°

"Islamic tradition does not specify much of what occupied Mary in these child- hood days except to say that she was generally busy with the kinds of service possible for a pious young woman. It is clear

from 3:43 that God instructed Mary to pray with others in a group ("prostrate yourself and bow down with those who bow down ..."). A question has been raised about the nature of that common prayer experience and whether it could have taken place within the confines of the temple. Some have asked whether it would have been legitimate for her to pray in the place where congregations of men were gathered praying, others believe that the prescriptions of Jewish law at the time were not exactly the same as those of the Islamic community and thus that she probably would have been able to pray in the temple." In any case it is clear that Mary was considered to have been free from the taint of worldly associations."[15]

And Mary, the daughter of Imran,
who guarded her private parts,
so We breathed into it of Our Spirit
and she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been
among the ones who are morally obligated. (66:12)

COMMENTARY°

And Mary, the daughter of Imran, provides an example of total dedication. Her story is given from its early beginnings elsewhere in the Quran. Her distinctive quality mentioned here is her purity. Thus, her innocence is made absolutely clear, refuting the vile accusations the Jews leveled at her. It was from this breathing of God's Spirit into her that Jesus, her son, was born.

Both Mary and Pharaoh's wife are splendid examples of women who combined firm faith with purity of behavior and total devotion. God sets these two examples for the Prophets own wives in the context of the event reported in the first section of the chapter. They are also examples set before believing women in all generations.

The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger.
Surely, Messengers passed away before him.
And his mother was a just person (f).
They both had been eating food.
Look on how We make manifest the signs to them.
Again, look on how they are misled!
And she was obedient to He Who
is far transcendent and majestic'. (5:75)

COMMENTARY°

This verse then puts them face to face with this clear fact in the hope that they will reason properly and bring themselves to understand things as they are.

MARY, THE FOSTER DAUGHTER OF ZECHARIAH

So her Lord received her with the very best acceptance.
And her bringing forth caused the very best to develop in her.
And Zechariah took charge of her.
Whenever Zechariah entered upon her in her sanctuary,
he found her with provision.
*He said: O Mary! From where is this for **you** (f)?*
She said: This is from God.
Truly, God provides to whom He wills without reckoning. (3:37)

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*That is tidings from the unseen We reveal to **you**.*
*And **you** had not been present with them*
when they cast their pens
as to which of them would take control of Mary,
*nor had **you** been present with them*
when they strive against one another. (3:44)

MARY, THE FIRST COUSIN OF PROPHET YAHYA (JOHN), THE NIECE OF THE MOTHER OF YAHYA (JOHN)

COMMENTARY°

In the case of Yahya (John the Baptist), the Messengers announced it to his father, Zechariah. We know little about his mother except that she was the sister of Hanna (Anna), the mother of the virgin Mary. Mary and Yahya were then first cousins. The announcement came to Zechariah after he had seen his foster-daughter, Mary, in her retreat. He found that she had food that he had not brought to her. He asked her where it came from and she replied: *God provides to whom He wills without reckoning*. Zechariah is then encouraged to ask for a defender of his family honor once he was no longer able to defend his family members.

Similar to the story of the mother of Mary, Elizabeth (Hanna's sister) and her husband, Zechariah, are praised for a special quality that they had of good faith and integrity: they competed with one another in good deeds and they called to their Lord with yearning and reverence.

FEMALES, THE ONES WHO BELIEVE

*O Prophet! Say to **your** spouses (f) and **your** daughters*
and the females, ones who believe, to draw closer their (f) outer garments over themselves (f). That is more fitting
so that they (f) be recognized and not be maligned.

And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (33:59)

God was well-pleased with the ones who believe (f) when they take the pledge of allegiance to you beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand. (48:18)

O those who believed! When the females, ones who believe,
drew near to you, ones who emigrate (f),
put them (f) to a test.
God is greater in knowledge as to their (f) belief.
Then, if you knew them (f) as ones who believe (f),
return them (f) not to the ones who are ungrateful.
They (f) are not allowed to them (m)
nor are they (m) lawful for them (f).
And give them (m) what they (m) have spent.
There is no blame on you that you (m) marry them (f)
when you have given them (f) their compensation.
And hold back conjugal ties with the ones who are ungrateful
and ask for what you (m) spent
and let them ask for what they (m) spent.
That is the determination of God.
He gives judgment among you.
And God is Knowing, Wise. (60:10)

Perhaps if he divorced you (f),
his Lord will cause in exchange for him spouses better than you (f),
ones who submit (f) to One God,
ones who believe (f),
ones who are morally obligated (f),
ones who repent,
ones who worship (f),
ones who are inclined to fasting (f),
women previously married and virgins. (66:5)

CRITICAL THINKING•

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

The seven moral traits studied in this Quranic Studies course are the following:

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)
3. INTEGRITY THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: *QANATA*)

4. EMPOWERING COURAGE (*BATASHA*)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: *SABARA*)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: *IHSAN*)
7. BEING FAIR AND JUST (*ADL*, RIGHT-MINDED: *RASHAD*)

We understand and develop critical thinking when we reflect on Segment 5 that we have just studied:

Moral traits are interdependent affective strategies. They are described as having:

The traits of mind and character necessary for right action and thinking;
The traits of mind and character essential for fair-minded rationality;
The traits that distinguish the narrow-minded, self-serving critical thinker from the open-minded, truth-seeking critical thinker.

Insight refers to the ability to see and clearly and deeply understand the inner nature of things. In the Quranic perspective, this is something that extremists would disagree with whereas instruction for Quranic critical thinking fosters insight rather than mere performance; it cultivates the achievement of deeper knowledge and understanding through insight. Thinking our way into and through a sign (*ayah*) leads to insights as we synthesize what we are learning, relating one sign to other signs and all signs to personal experience.

Only when we gain analyzed experiences of working and reasoning our way out of prejudice can we gain the higher order abilities of a fair-minded Quranic critical thinker. What we gain is somewhat procedural or sequential in that there is a process we must go through; but we also see that the process cannot be followed out based on a formula or an algorithm, it depends on principles. The somewhat abstract articulation of the moral traits will take on concrete meaning in the light of analyzed experiences. Their true meaning to us will be given in and by these experiences. We will often return to them to recapture and rekindle the insights upon which our moral traits depend.

Generally, to develop moral traits, we must create a collection of analyzed experiences that represent to us intuitive models, not only of the pitfalls of our own previous thinking and experiencing but also processes for reasoning our way out of or around them. These model experiences must be charged with meaning for us. We cannot be indifferent to them. We must sustain them in our minds by our sense of their importance as we sustain and guide ourselves in our thinking.

Intuition can be defined as the direct knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning. We sometimes seem to know or learn things without recognizing how we came to that knowledge. When this occurs, we experience an inner sense that what we believe is true. The problem is that sometimes we are correct (and have genuinely experienced an intuition) and

sometimes we are incorrect (having fallen victim to one of our prejudices or our imagination). A critical thinker does not blindly accept that what one thinks or believes but cannot account for is necessarily true. A critical thinker realizes how easily we confuse intuitions and prejudices. As critical thinkers we may follow our inner sense that something is so, but only with a healthy sense of humility.

Our own minds and experiences must become the subject of our study and learning. Indeed, only to the extent that the content of our own experiences becomes an essential part of study will the usual subject matter truly be learned. By the same token, the experiences of others must become part of what we study. But experiences of any kind should always be critically analyzed, and we must do our own analyses and clearly recognize what we are doing. This entails that we become explicitly aware of the logic of experience. All experiences have three elements, each of which may require some special scrutiny in the analytic process:

1. Something to be experienced (some actual situation or other);
2. An experiencing subject (with a point of view, framework of beliefs, attitudes, desires, and values); and
3. Some interpretation or conceptualization of the situation.

To take any experience apart, then, we must be sensitive to three distinctive sets of questions:

1. What are the raw facts? What is the most neutral description of the situation? If I describes the experience this way, and another disagrees, on what description can we agree?
2. What interests, attitudes, desires, or concerns do I bring to the situation? Am I always aware of them? Why or why not?
3. How am I conceptualizing or interpreting the situation in light of my point of view? How else might it be interpreted?

We must also explore the interrelationships of these parts:

How did my point of view, values, desires, etc., affect what
I noticed about the situation?
How did they prevent me from noticing other things?
How would I have interpreted the situation had I noticed
those other things?
How did my point of view, desires, etc., affect my interpretation?
How should I interpret the situation?

If we are given many assignments that require us to analyze our experiences and the experiences of others along these lines, with ample opportunity to dialogue among ourselves about which interpretations make the most sense and why, then we will begin to amass a catalogue of critically analyzed experiences.

If the experiences illuminate the pitfalls of thought, the analysis and the models of thinking we suggest will be the foundation for our moral traits and character.

We will develop moral traits because we had thought our way to them and internalized them as concrete understandings and insights, not because we took them up as slogans. Our basic moral traits or values and our thinking processes will be in a symbiotic relationship to each other. Our intellectual and affective lives will become more integrated. Our standards for thinking will be implicit in our own thinking, rather than from teachers, or the authority of a peer group.

As critical thinkers know: The more completely, clearly, and accurately an issue or statement is formulated, the easier and more helpful the discussion of its settlement or verification. Given a clear statement of an issue, and prior to evaluating conclusions or solutions, it is important to recognize what is required to settle it. And before we can agree or disagree with a claim, we must understand it clearly. Critical thinkers recognize problematic claims, concepts, and standards of evaluation, making sure that understanding precedes judgment. They routinely distinguish facts from interpretations, opinions, judgments, or theories. They can then raise those questions most appropriate to understanding and evaluating each.•

Critical thinkers question deeply raising and pursuing root or significant questions. When reading a passage, we look for issues and concepts underlying the claims expressed. We come to our own understanding of the details we learn placing them in the larger framework of the subject and their overall perspe tives.•

These qualities indicate that as critical thinkers, we need to be true to ou own thought, to be consistent in the intellectual standards we apply, to hold ourselves to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which we hold others, to practice what we advocate for others, and to honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and action. We believe most strongly what has been justified by our own thought and analyzed experience. We have a commitment to bringing the self we are and the self we want to be together.•

APPENDIX: MADINAH SIGNS PLACED IN EARLIER MAKKAH CHAPTERS

QURANIC SIGNS 68:17-68:33

Truly, We tried them as We tried the Companions of the Garden
when they swore an oath that they would pluck fruit,
in that which is happening in the morning.
They make no exception by saying if God wills.
*Then, a visitation from **your** Lord visited it*
while they were ones who sleep,
in that which is happening in the morning,
it was like a plucked garden!
And they called to one another in that which is morning:
Set forth in the early morning dawn to your cultivation
if you had been ones who pluck fruit.
So they set out and they whisper, saying:
There will, truly, not enter it today on you any needy person.
And they set forth in the early morning, designing,
assuming they were ones who have the power.
But when they saw it, they said: We are, certainly, ones who go astray!
Nay! We are ones who are deprived.
The most moderate of them said:
Say I not to you: Why glorify you not God?
They said: Glory be to God, our Lord!
Truly, we had been ones who are unjust.
Then, they came forward, some with some others blaming one another.
They said: O woe be to us! Truly, we had been ones who are defiant.
Perhaps our Lord will cause to exchange for us better than it.
Truly, we are ones who quest our Lord.
Thus, this is the punishment of this present life,
but the punishment of the world to come is greater,
if they had been knowing! (68:17-68:33

QURANIC SIGNS 68:48-68:50

*So be **you** patient until the determination of **your** Lord*
and be not like the Companion of the Great Fish (Jonah)
when he cried out, one who is suppressed by grief.
If a divine blessing not followed him one after another,
from His Lord he would be cast forth on the naked shore
while he was one who is condemned.
But his Lord elected him and made him
among the ones in accord with morality. (68:48-68:50)

QURANIC SIGNS 73:10-73:11

And have you patience with regard to what they say
and abandon them with a graceful abandoning.
Forsake to Me the ones who deny, those imbued with prosperity
and respite them for a little. (73:10-73:11)

QURANIC SIGNS 107:4-107:7

So woe to ones who formally pray,
ones who are inattentive to their formal prayers,
those who make display,
yet they repulse giving the assistance. (107:4-107:7)

QURANIC SIGN 53:32

Those who avoid the major sins and the indecencies but the lesser offenses, truly, your Lord is One Who is Extensive in forgiveness.
He is greater in knowledge of you when He caused you to grow
from the earth and when you were an unborn child
in the wombs of your mothers.
So you make not pure yourselves.
He is greater in knowledge of him who was Godfearing. (53:32)

QURANIC SIGN 77:48

When it will be said: Bow down, they bow not down. (77:48)

QURANIC SIGN 50:38

And, certainly, We created the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between in six days,
and no exhaustion afflicted Us. (50:38)

QURANIC SIGNS 54:44-54:46

Or say they: We are aided altogether.
Their multitude will be put to flight and they will turn their backs.
Nay! The Hour is what is promised them and the Hour will be more
calamitous and more distasteful. (54:44-54:46)

QURANIC SIGNS 7:163-7:170

And ask them about the town—that which had been bordering the sea—
when they disregarded the Sabbath, when their great fish
would approach them on the day of the Sabbath,
one that was visible on the shore.
And the day they keep not the Sabbath,
they approach them not.

Thus, We try them because they had been disobeying.
And mention when a community of them said: Why admonish a folk
whom God is One Who Causes them to Perish
or One Who Punishes them with a severe punishment.
They said: To be free from guilt before your Lord
and so that perhaps they will be Godfearing.
So when they forgot of what they were reminded,
We rescued those who prohibited evil and We took those who did wrong
with a terrifying punishment because they had been disobeying.
Then, when they defied what they were prohibited We said to them: Be
you apes, ones who are driven away.
*And mention when **your** Lord caused to be proclaimed*
that He would, surely, raise up against them
until the Day of Resurrection who cause an affliction to befall on them of
*a dire punishment. Truly, **your** Lord is Swift in repayment.*
And, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate.
And We sundered them in the region into communities.
Some of them were the ones in accord with morality
and others were other than that. And We tried them with benevolence and
evil deeds so that perhaps they will return to obedience.
Then, after that succeeded successors who inherited the Book.
They take advantage of this nearer world, and they say:
We will be forgiven.
And if an advantage approaches them like it, they will take it.
Is not a solemn promise taken from them with the Book
that they would say about God only The Truth?
And studied they not what is in it, and know that the Last Abode
is better for those who are Godfearing?
Will you not, then, be reasonable?
And those who keep fast to the Book and performed the formal prayer,
We will not waste the compensation
of the ones who make things right. (7:163-7:170)

QURANIC SIGN 36:45

And when it was said to them: Be Godfearing of what is in advance of you
and what is behind you, so that perhaps you will find mercy, (36:45)

QURANIC SIGNS 25:68-25:70

Those who call not to another god with God nor kill the soul
which God forbade but rightfully, nor commit adultery.
And whoever disregards and commits this will meet sinfulness.
The punishment will be multiplied for him on the Day of Resurrection.
And he will dwell in it forever, as one who is despised.

Whoever has repented and believed and whose actions were done
as one in accord with morality, for those God will substitute
for their evil deeds benevolence.
And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (25:68-25:70)

QURANIC SIGNS 19:58

Those are those to whom God was gracious from among the Prophets
of the offspring of Adam and whomever We carried with Noah
and of the offspring of Abraham and Israel, Jacob,
from among whomever We guided and elected.
When are recounted to them the signs of the Merciful
they fell down, crying, ones who prostrate themselves.

QURANIC SIGN 19:71

There is none of you, but ones who go down to it.
*This had been a thing decreed, that decreed by **your** Lord.* (19:71)

QURANIC SIGNS 20:130-20:131

*So have **you** patience with what they say*
*and glorify the praises of **your** Lord*
before the coming up of the sun and before sunset
and during the nighttime night watch
and glorify at the end of the daytime
*so that perhaps **you** will be well-pleased*
*And stretch not out **your** eyes*
for what We gave of enjoyment in this life
to spouses among them as the luster of this present life
so that We try them by it.
*And provision of **your** Lord is Best*
and that which endures. (20:130-21:131)

QURANIC SIGNS 56:81-56:82

Then, is it this discourse that you are ones who scorn?
And you make it your provision that you,
you deny the Recitation. (56:81-56:82)

QURANIC SIGN 26:197

Would it not be a sign for them that is known to the knowing
among the Children of Israel? (26:197)

QURANIC SIGNS 26:224-26:227

As for the poets, the ones who are in error follow them.

Have you not considered that they wander in every valley
and that they say what they accomplish not?
But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality
remembered God frequently and helped themselves
after they were wronged.
And those who did wrong will know
by which overturning they will be turned about! (26:224-26:227)

QURANIC SIGNS 28:52-28:55

Those to whom We gave the Book before it, they believe in it.
And when it is recounted to them, they say:
We believed in it. Truly, it is The Truth from our Lord.
Truly, even before it we had been ones who submit to God.
Those will be given their compensation two times
because they patiently endured and drive off evil deeds
with benevolence and they spend out of what We provided them.
And when they heard idle talk, they turned aside from it
and said: To us are our actions and to you are your actions.
Peace be to you! We are not looking for
the ones who are ignorant. (28:52-28:55)

QURANIC SIGNS 17:26

And give to the possessor of kinship his right
and to the needy and to the traveler of the way.
And spend not extravagantly an extravagant spending. (17:26)

QURANIC SIGNS 17:32-17:33

And come not near committing adultery.
Truly, it had been a great indecency! How evil a way!
And kill not a soul that God forbade, but rightfully.
And whoever was slain as one who is treated unjustly, surely,
We assigned for his protector, authority,
but he should not exceed all bounds in killing.
Truly, he would be one who is helped by the Law. (17:32-17:33)

QURANIC SIGN 17:57

Those are those to whom they call to,
they are looking for an approach to their Lord—
whoever is nearer—and they hope for His mercy
and they fear His punishment.
Truly, the punishment of your Lord had been one to beware. (17:57)

QURANIC SIGNS 17:73-17:80

*And, truly, they were about to persecute **you***
*for what We revealed to **you***
*so that **you** would devise against Us other than it.*
*And, then, they would take **you** to themselves as a friend.*
*And if We made **you** not firm, certainly,*
***you** were about to incline to them a little.*
*And, then, We would have caused **you** to experience a double of this life*
and a double after dying.
*Again, **you** would find for **yourself** no helper against Us.*
*They were about to hound **you** from the region*
*that they drive **you** out of it.*
*Then, they would not linger in expectation behind **you***
but for a little while.
*This is, surely, a custom with whomever We sent before **you***
of Our Messengers.
*And **you** will not find in Our custom any revision.*
Perform the formal prayer from the sinking sun until the darkening
of the night and the recital at dawn.
Truly, the dawn recital had been one that is witnessed.
*And keep vigil with it in the night as a work of supererogation for **you**.*
*Perhaps **your** Lord will raise **you** up to a station*
of one who is praised
And say: My Lord! Cause me to enter a gate in sincerity
And bring me out as one who is brought out in sincerity.
*And assign me from that which proceeds from **Your** Presence*
a helping authority. (17:73-27:80)

QURANIC SIGNS 10:40

And of them are some who believe in it
and of them are some who believe not in it.
*And **your** Lord is greater in knowledge*
of the ones who make corruption. (10:40)

QURANIC SIGNS 10:94-10:96

*So if **you** had been in uncertainty about*
*what We caused to descend to **you**,*
*then, ask those who recited the Book before **you**.*
*Certainly, The Truth drew near **you** from **your** Lord*
*so **you** have not been among the ones who contest.*
***You** have not been among those who denied the signs of God,*
*for, then, **you** would be among the ones who are losers.*
*Truly, those against whom the Word of **your** Lord has been realized,*
will not believe. (10:94-10:96)

QURANIC SIGN 11:12

*So would **you** perhaps be one who leaves*
*some of what is revealed to **you**?*
*Or is **your** breast that which is narrowed by it because they say:*
Why was a treasure not caused to descend to him
or an angel drew near him?
*Truly, **you** are only a warner. And God is a Trustee over everything.*
Or they say: He devised it. 11:12*

QURANIC SIGN 11:17

Is he, then, who had been on a clear portent from his Lord,
and recounts it from Him as one who bears witness—
and before it was the Book of Moses, a leader and a mercy—like them?
Those believe in it. Whoever is ungrateful for it among the confederates,
*he is promised the fire! So be **you** not hesitant about it.*
*Truly, it is The Truth from **your** Lord,*
except most of humanity believes not. (11:17)

QURANIC SIGN 11:114

And perform the formal prayer at the two ends
of the daytime and at nearness of the nighttime.
Truly, benevolence causes evil deeds to be put away.
That is a reminder for the ones who remember. (11:114)

QURANIC SIGNS 12:1-12:3

Alif Lam Ra. That are the signs of the clear Book.
Truly, We caused to descend a Recitation in Arabic
so that perhaps you will be reasonable.
*We relate to **you** the fairer of narratives through what We revealed*
*to **you** of this, the Quran, although **you** had been before this*
among the ones who are heedless. (12:1-12:3)

QURANIC SIGN 12:7

Certainly, there had been in Joseph
and his brothers signs for the ones who ask. (12:7)

QURANIC SIGN 15:87

*And, certainly, We gave **you** seven often repeated parts*
of the sublime Quran. (15:87)

QURANIC SIGNS 6:20

Those to whom We gave the Book recognize it

as they recognize their own children.
But those, they who lost themselves, they believe not. (6:20)

QURANIC SIGN 6:23

Again, their dissent will not be but that they would say:
By God! Our Lord! We had not been ones who are polytheists. (6:23)

QURANIC SIGN 6:91

And they measured not God with His true measure
when they said: God caused not to descend anything to a mortal.
Say: Who caused the Book to descend that was brought about for Moses
as a light and guidance for humanity?
You make it into parchments.
You show them some of it and conceal much of it.
And you were taught what you know not, you nor your fathers.
Say: God revealed it. Again, forsake them playing,
engaging in their idle talk. (6:91)

QURANIC SIGN 6:93

And who does greater wrong than he who devised lies against God
or said: It was revealed to me, when nothing is revealed to him.
Or who said: I will cause to descend the like of
what God caused to descend.
*And if **you** would see when the ones who are unjust*
are in the perplexity of death and the angels—
the ones who stretch out their hands will say: Relinquish your souls.
Today, you will be given recompense with the humiliating punishment for
what you had been saying about God other than The Truth.
And you had been growing arrogant to His signs. (6:93)

QURANIC SIGN 6:114

Will I be looking for an arbiter other than God
while it is He Who caused to descend to you the Book,
one that is distinct?
And those to whom We gave the Book,
*they know that it is one that is sent down by **your** Lord with The Truth. So*
***you** have not been among the ones who contest.* (6:114)

QURANIC SIGN 6:141

And it is He Who caused gardens to grow, trellised
and without being trellised and the date palm trees
and a variety of harvest crops and the olives and the pomegranates

resembling and not resembling one another.
Eat of its fruit when it bore fruit and give its due
on the day of its reaping and exceed not all bounds.
Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive. (6:141)

QURANIC SIGNS 6:151-153

Say: Approach now. I will recount what your Lord forbade you.
Ascribe nothing as partners with Him.
And show kindness to the ones who are your parents.
And kill not your children from want.
We will provide for you and for them.
And come not near any indecencies
whether these were manifest or what was inward.
And kill not a soul which God forbade, unless rightfully.
He charged you with that so that perhaps you will be reasonable.
And come not near the property of the orphan but with what is fairer
until one reaches the coming of age.
And live up to the full measure and balance with equity.
We will not place a burden on any soul, but to its capacity.
And when you said something, be just,
even if it had been with possessors of kinship
and live up to the compact of God.
Thus, He charged you with it so that perhaps you will recollect.
And that this is My straight path, so follow it.
And follow not the ways that will split you up from His way.
He charged you this with it,
so that perhaps you will be Godfearing. (6:151-6:153)

QURANIC SIGNS 31:27-31:29

And if trees on the earth were only pens
and the sea causes to increase after that with seven more seas
that were ink, yet the Words of God would not come
o an end. Truly, God is Almighty, Wise.
Your creation and your Upraising are not but like that of a single soul.
Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing.
Have you not considered that God causes
the nighttime to be interposed into the daytime
and causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime
and caused the sun to become subservient and the moon,
each run for a term, that which is determined
and that God is Aware of what you do? (31:27-31:29)

Quranic Sign 34:6

And consider those who were given the knowledge
*that what was caused to descend to **you** from **your** Lord.*
It is The Truth and it guides to a path of
The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise. (34:6)

Quranic Signs 39:52-39:54

Know they not that God extends the provision for whomever He wills and
tightens it for whom He wills?
Truly, in this are, certainly, signs for a folk who believe.
Say: O My servants who exceeded all bounds against themselves,
despair not of the mercy of God.
Truly, God forgives all impieties.
Truly, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.
Be penitent to your Lord and submit to Him
before the punishment approaches you.
Again, you will not be helped. (39:52-39:54)

Quranic Signs 40:56-40:57

Truly, those who dispute about the signs of God
without any authority having approached them
there is nothing but having pride in their breasts
They will never be ones who reach its satisfaction.
So seek refuge in God. Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.
Certainly, the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater
than the creation of humanity,
yet most of humanity knows not. (40:56-40:57)

Quranic Signs 42:23-42:25

That is what God gives as good tidings to His servants
who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality.
Say: I ask you not for compensation, but for the affection for any kin.
And whoever gains benevolence, We will increase for him goodness in it.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Most Ready to Appreciate.
Or they say: He devised against God a lie.
*But if God wills He would have sealed over **your** heart.*
And God blots out falsehood and verifies The Truth by His Words.
Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts.
And He accepts the remorse of His servants and pardons their evil deeds. And
He knows what you accomplish. (42:23-42:25)

Quranic Sign 42:27

And if God extended the provision for His servants,
they would be insolent in the earth,
but He sends down by measure whatever He wills.
Truly, He is The Aware, The Seeing of His servants. (42:27)

QURANIC SIGN 45:14

Say to those who believed: Forgive those who hope not
for the Days of God that He give recompense to a folk
according to what they had been earning. (45:14)

QURANIC SIGN 46:10

Say: Considered you if this had been from God
and you were ungrateful for it and bore witness
as one who bears witness from among the Children of Israel
to its like and believed in it, yet you grew arrogant,
how unjust you are; truly,
God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust. (46:10)

QURANIC SIGN 46:15

And We charged the human being with kindness
to ones who are his parents.
His mother carried him painfully and she painfully brought him forth.
And the bearing of him and the weaning of him are thirty months.
When he was fully grown, having come of age and reached forty years he
said: My Lord! Arouse me that I may give thanks
*for **Your** divine blessing, that with which **You** were gracious to me*
and to ones who are my parents
and that I do as one in accord with morality
*so that **You** be well-pleased and make things right for me*
and my offspring.
*Truly, I repented to **You***
and, truly, I am of the ones who submit to God. (46:15)

QURANIC SIGN 46:35

*So have **you** patience as endured patiently those imbued with constancy*
of the Messengers and let them not seek to hasten the Judgment.
As, truly, on a Day they will see what they are promised
as if they lingered not in expectation but for an hour of daytime.
This is delivering the message!
Will any be caused to perish but the folk, the ones who disobey? (46:35)

QURANIC SIGN 18:28

*And have **you** patience **yourself** with those who call to their Lord*
in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.
*And let not **your** eyes pass over them*
wanting the adornment of this present life.
And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance
and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

Quranic Signs 18:83-18:101

Say: I will recount to you a remembrance of him.
Truly, We established him firmly on the earth
and gave him a route to everything.
So he pursued a route until when he reached the setting of the sun.
He found it beginning to set in a spring of muddy water.
And he found near it a folk.
We said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn! Either you will punish them
or you will take them to yourself with goodness.
He said: As for him who did wrong, we will punish him.
Again, he will be returned to his Lord
Who will punish him with a horrible punishment.
But as for him who believed and did as one in accord with morality,
he will have the fairer recompense.
And we will say to him of our command with ease.
Again, he pursued a route until
when he reached the rising place of the sun.
He found it coming up on a folk
for whom We make not any obstruction against it.
Thus, We, surely, enclosed whatever was near him
through awareness.
Again, he pursued a route until when he reached
between two embankments.
He found behind them a folk
who would almost not understand any saying.
They said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn! Truly, Gog and Magog are
ones who make corruption in and on the earth.
Will we assign to you payment if you have made an embankment
between us and between them?
He said: What my Lord established firmly for me is better,
so assist me with strength.
I will make a fortification between you and between them.
Give me ingots of iron, until when he made level between the two cliffs.
He said: Blow, until when he made it a fire.
He said: Give me molten brass to pour out over it.
So they were not able to scale it
nor were they able to dig through it.
He said: This is a mercy from my Lord.
So when the promise of my Lord drew near, He will made it powder.
And the promise of my Lord had been true.
And that Day We will leave some of them
to surge like waves on some others.
And the trumpet will be blown,
then, We will gather them altogether.
We will present the depths of hell on that Day in plain view

to ones who are ungrateful, to those whose eyes had been screened
from My Remembrance
and who had not been able to hear. (18:83-18:101)

QURANIC SIGNS 16:126-16:128

And if you chastised, then, chastise
with the like of that with which you were chastised.
But if you endured patiently, certainly,
it is better for the ones who remain steadfast.
*And have **you** patience and **your** patience is only from God.*
And feel not remorse over them,
*nor be **you** troubled about what they plan.*
Truly, God is with those who were Godfearing
and those, they are ones who are doers of good. (16:126-16:128)

QURANIC SIGNS 14:28-14:29

*Have **you** not considered those who substituted ingratitude*
for the divine blessing of God
and caused their folk to live in abodes of nothingness?
They will roast in hell.
Miserable will be the stopping place! (14:28-14:29)

QURANIC SIGNS 32:16-32:20

[Those] *whose sides deliberately avoided their sleeping places*
to call to their Lord in fear and hope.
And they spend of what We provided them.
No soul knows what was concealed for them of comfort for their eyes
as a recompense for what they had been doing.
Is he who had been one who believes
like he who had been one who disobeys?
They are not on the same level.
As for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality,
for them are Gardens as places of shelter,
hospitality for them for what they had been doing.
And as for those who disobeyed, their place of shelter will be the fire.
Every time they would want to go forth from there,
they would be caused to return to it.
And it will be said to them:
Experience the punishment of the fire
which you had been denying! (32:16-32:20)

QURANIC SIGN 30:17

So glory be to God at the time of the evening hour
and at the time when it comes to be the morning! (30:17)

QURANIC SIGNS 29:1-29:11

Alif Lam Mim.Assumed humanity that they will be left
because they say: We believed and they will not be tried
And, certainly, We tried those who were before them.
Then, certainly, God knows those who were sincere
and knows the ones who lie.
Or assumed those who do evil deeds that they will out do Us?
How evil is that about which they give judgment!
Whoever had been hoping for the meeting with God,
then, truly, the term of God is that which arrives.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.
Whoever struggled, he struggles only for himself.
Then, truly, God is Sufficient for the worlds.
And those who believed and do as ones in accord with morality,
certainly, We will absolve them of their evil deeds
and We will give recompense for the fairer of what they had been doing.
And We charged the human being with goodness
*to ones who are his parents and if they struggled with **you***
*that **you** ascribe partners with Me,*
*that of which for **you** there is no knowledge, then, obey them not.*
To Me is your return and I will tell you of what you had been doing.
And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality,
We will, certainly, cause them to enter
among the ones in accord with morality.
And of humanity is he who says:
We believed in God. But, when he was maligned for the sake of God
he mistook the persecution by humanity for a punishment by God.
*And if help drew near from **your** Lord, they would, surely, say:*
We had been with you. Is not God greater in knowledge
of what is in the breasts of beings?
And, certainly, God knows those who believed
and, certainly, He knows the ones who are hypocrites. (29:1-29:11)

ENDNOTES

1 Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-maghazi Waqidi*, 139, 151.

2 Ibid.

3 SUNY Press, pp 163-164 on the authority of Ibn Humayd—Salamah—Muhammad ibn Ishaq—Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Ayyash ibn Abi Rabiah.) (al-Tabari, Volume 9 pp 163 ff.

4 Abd Allah ibn Umar from Ubayd ibn Jubayr, a freedman of al-Hakan ibn Abu al-As, from Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn al-As from Abu Muwayhiba, freedman of the Messenger.

5 Yaqub ibn Utba from Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhri from Ubayd Allah ibn Abd Allah ibn Utba ibn Masud from Ayisha, the prophet's wife.

6 Ahmad ibn Hammad al-Dulabi — Sufyan — Sulayman ibn Abi Muslim—Said ibn Jubayr —that Ibn Abbas states. Something similar is reported by Abu Kurayb—Yahya ibn Adam—Ibn Uyaynah—Sulayman al-Ahwal—Said ibn Jubayr—Ibn Abbas states; Abu Kurayb and Salih ibn Sammal—Waki—Malik ibn Mighwal—Talhah ibn Musarrif—Said ibn Jubayr—Ibn Abbas states.

7 *Kitab Waqidi*, p 150.

8 Muhammad al-Waqidi, *Kitab Maghazi*, p. 149, p. 153.

9 Tabari concerning the Messenger.

10 Farama is in the extreme northwestern Sinai, not far to the east of Port Said. The Greeks called it Pelusium. Today it is called Tell Farama.

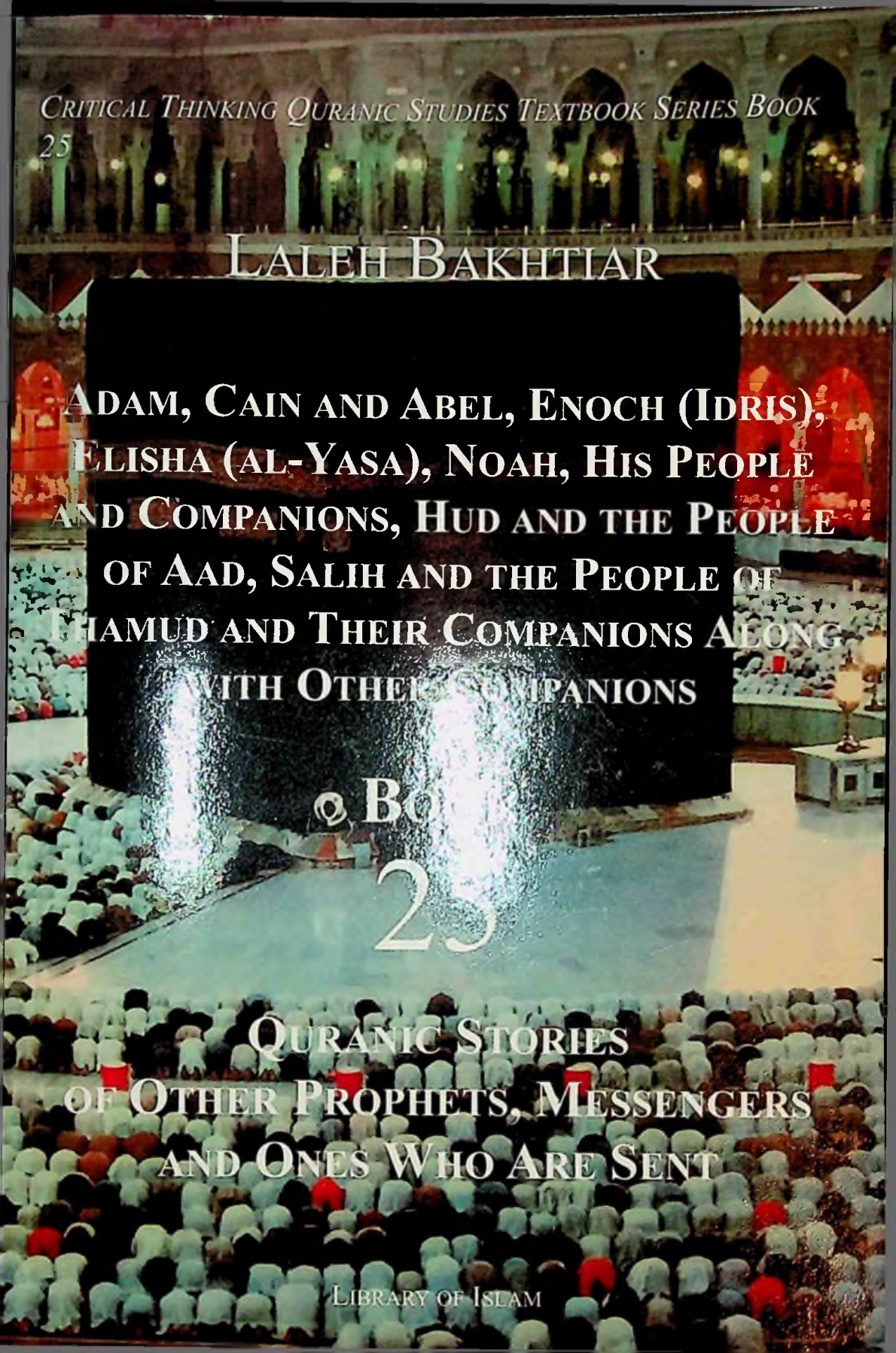
11. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, p. 4.

12. Mary addresses the Angel in masculine the 2nd person singular and the Quran refers to her in the feminine 2nd person singular.

13 "The Virgin Mary in Islamic Tradition and Commentary," Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Y. Haddad. *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXIX, July/October 1989, Nos. 3-4.

14 *The Old Testament: An Islamic Perspective*, Jay R. Crook (Muhammad Nur), p 746.

15 "The Virgin Mary in Islamic Tradition and Commentary," pp 165-166.


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Preface

Explanation of the Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

Sources

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

Terminology

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran.* For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3 Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (as-salam alaykum) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God.

The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in ka). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: antum where the verb ends in masculine: kum) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muham-

mad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

12. All the signs in the text are in chronological order.

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Adam

By the middle Meccan period of the revelation (ca. 615-618 CE), the early Muslims hear the story of Adam, the first human being. The Quran does not refer to him as a Prophet, a Messenger nor as One Who is Sent. It does say, however, that there will be Prophets among his offspring and for that reason we have included him here. We will study the signs regarding Adam, as well as that of the rest of the Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who are Sent through the Quranic signs in chronological order so we have a sense of how the Quran taught the early Muslims about them.

The Great Tidings

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Your Lord said to the angels:*
Truly, I am one who is Creator of a mortal from clay. (38:71)
So when I shaped him and breathed into him My Spirit,
then, fall to him, ones who prostrate themselves. (38:72)
So the angels prostrated themselves,
one and all, altogether (38:73)
but Iblis. He grew arrogant
and had been among the ones who are ungrateful. (38:74)
He said: O Iblis! What prevented you from prostrating thyself
to what I created with My two hands?
Had you grown arrogant?
Or had you been among the ones who exalt themselves? (38:75)
Iblis said: I am better than he. You had created me from fire while
You had created him from clay. (38:76)
He said: Then, go you forth from here
for, truly, you are accursed. (38:77)
And, truly, on you is My curse until the Day of Judgment. (38:78)
Iblis said: My Lord! Then, give me respite
until the Day to be raised up. (38:79)
He said: Truly, you are among the ones
who are given respite (38:80)
until the Day of the known time. (38:81)
Iblis said: By Your Great Glory,
then, I will certainly lead them one and all into error, (38:82)
but Your devoted servants among them. (38:83)
He said: This is The Truth and The Truth I say (38:84)
that I will fill hell with you and with one
and all of whoever heeded you. (38:85)

Commentary°

Mention, when your Lord said to the angels, *Truly, I am one who is Creator of a mortal from clay*, and this was Adam. (38:71) So when I have proportioned him, completed him, and breathed in him, when I have caused to flow therein, My Spirit, so that he becomes a living being—the addition of 'the Spirit' to Adam is an honor for him; the 'Spirit' is a subtle body that gives life to a human being by permeating him—then fall down in prostration before him!— a prostration of salutation that is actually a bow. *So when I shaped him and breathed into him My Spirit, then, fall to him, ones who prostrate themselves.* (38:72) *So the angels prostrated themselves, one and all, altogether* (38:73) except Iblis, the father of the jinn, who was among the audience of angels; he was disdainful and he was one of the disbelievers, according to God's knowledge, exalted be He.

The Creation of Adam and the Defiance of Satan

Chapter 7: the 39th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We created you.*
Again, We formed you.
Again, We said to the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam!
Then, they prostrated themselves, but Iblis.
He would not be of the ones who prostrate themselves. (7:11)
He said: What prevented you
from prostrating yourself when I commanded you?
Satan said: I am better than he.
You had created me of fire
and You had created him of clay. (7:12)
He said: So get you down from this!
It will not be for you to increase in pride in it.
Then, you go forth.
Truly, you are of the ones who are disgraced. (7:13)
Satan said: Give me respite
until the Day they are raised up. (7:14)
He said: Truly, you are
among the ones who are given respite. (7:15)
Satan said: Because You had led me into error, certainly, I will sit in ambush for them on Your path, one that is straight. (7:16)
Again, I will approach them from between the front of them and from behind them and from their right and from their left.
And You will not find many of them ones who are thankful. (7:17)
He said: Go you forth from this—one who is scorned,
one who is rejected.

Whoever heeded you among them, I will, certainly,
fill hell with you, one and all. (7:18)
And: O Adam! Inhabit you and your spouse the Garden
and both eat from where you both willed,
but neither of you come near this tree
or you both will be of the ones who are unjust. (7:19)
And Satan whispered evil to them both to show them both
what was kept secret from them both—their intimate parts.
And he said: The Lord of both of you prohibited
you both from this tree so that neither of you be angels
nor be ones who will dwell forever. (7:20)
And he swore an oath to them both
that I am the one who gives advice to both of you. (7:21)
Then, he led both of them on to delusion.
Then, when they both experienced of the tree,
the intimate parts of both showed to both themselves
and both of them took to doing stitching together
over both from the leaves of the Garden.
And the Lord of both of them proclaimed to them:
Prohibited I not both of you from that tree?
And said I not to both of you:
Truly, Satan is a clear enemy of you both. (7:22)
They both said: Our Lord! We did wrong to ourselves.
And if You will not forgive us and have mercy on us,
we will, certainly, be among the ones who are losers. (7:23)
He said: Get you down, some of you an enemy to some other.
And for you on the earth an appointed time
and enjoyment for awhile. (7:24)
He said: You will live in it and you will die in it
and from it you will be brought out. (7:25)

Commentary°

Iblis/Satan belongs to a different type of creation, separate from the angels. He is created out of fire while they are created out of light. They do not disobey God, whatever His command may be. He, on the other hand, disobeyed God, rejecting His command. For certain, then, he is not, and never was, one of the angels. That we have here a form of exception, more strongly pronounced in the Arabic text, refers to what is called in Arabic linguistics 'inconsequential exception'. It is acceptable to say in Arabic: The Joneses have come except for Ahmad, when you know that Ahmad does not belong to the Jones family, but is always with them. Now since the order stated here has

been issued to the angels, how could it apply to Iblis? This is clear proof that Iblis was given the same command. He might have been included in the command given to the angels, if he was with them at the time, or perhaps a separate order was issued to him. However, this is not mentioned here and this shows that he is of a far lesser position than the angels. Furthermore, the texts we have, and Satan's own behavior, all demonstrate that he was not one of the angels.

Offspring of Adam Given Prophethood

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Madinah 622: *Those are those to whom God was gracious*
from among the Prophets of the offspring of Adam
and whomever We carried with Noah
and of the offspring of Abraham and Israel, Jacob,
from among whomever We guided and elected.
When are recounted to them the signs of the Merciful
they fell down, crying, ones who prostrate themselves. (19:58)

Commentary°

These are they those whom I mentioned: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Jesus, Idris and all the prophets unto whom God showed favor from among the prophets God favored them with prophethood, the message and Islam, of the seed of Adam and of those whom We carried in the ship with Noah the offspring of Noah, and of the seed of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob (Israel) and of the offspring of Jacob: Joseph and his brothers, and from among those whom We guided those whom We favor.

Clearly the Prophets among the offspring of Adam, and Noah and the ofspring of Abraham and Jacob were developing their perspectives by God's guidance to them.

Angels Commanded to Prostrate Themselves Before Adam

Chapter 20: The 45th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We made a compact*
with Adam before. (20:115)
Then, he forgot and We find no constancy in him.
And when We said to the angels: Prostrate yourselves to Adam!
They prostrated themselves, but Iblis who refused. (20:116)
*Then, We said: O Adam! Truly, this is an enemy to **you***
*and to **your** spouse, so let him not drive you*
both out from the Garden

*so that **you** would be in despair.* (20:117)
*Truly, it is not for **you** that **you** hunger in it*
nor to be naked. (20:118)
*And, truly, **you** will not thirst in it*
nor suffer the heat of the sun. (20:119)
Then, Satan whispered evil to him.
*He said: O Adam! Will I point **you** to the Tree of Infinity*
and a dominion that will not decay? (20:120)
Then, they both ate from that so the intimate parts
of both showed to both themselves.
Both of them took to doing stitching together
over both from the leaves of the Garden.
And Adam rebelled against his Lord and he erred. (20:121)
Again, his Lord elected him.
Then, He turned in forgiveness to him and guided him. (20:122)
He said: Get you both down from here altogether,
some of you an enemy to some others.
Then, if guidance approaches you from Me,
then, whoever followed My Guidance,
neither will he go astray, nor will he be in despair. (20:123)
And whoever turned aside from My Remembrance,
then, truly, for him is a livelihood of narrowness.
And We will assemble him
on the Day of Resurrection unseeing. (20:124)

Commentary°

Adam's forgetting of his commitment is referred to at the outset. Moreover, the story is given in a chapter that reveals many aspects of God's grace bestowed on those chosen servants whom He places under His care. Therefore, in this story the point is made that God chose Adam, accepted his repentance and provided him with guidance.

God's covenant with Adam and his wife was that they could eat of all the fruits in the Garden except for one tree that represented the prohibition necessary to strengthen willpower, assert one's personality and liberate oneself of the oppressive pressure of desire. All this is necessary to give the human soul the freedom to do without its supposed needs, so that it is not enslaved by desire. This is indeed the true measure of human excellence. Whenever the human will weakens under the pressure of desire, he sinks closer to the level of animals.

Therefore, God so tested the human being initially in order to

prepare him for his role of building human life on earth. Thus the test is seen to be part of God's grace that He bestows on the human being in abundance: his power to resist temptation is alerted and enhanced. His eyes are opened to the struggle awaiting him between the pleasures raised before him by Satan and his will to honor his commitment to God. The results of this first test are made public: He forgot it [i.e. his commitment], and We found him lacking in constancy or firmness of purpose. The result is declared before the details of the test have been given.

This episode [of the angels being commanded to prostrate before Adam] of the story is given in very general terms, without the details given in other chapters. The general context here is one of mercy, care and blessings. Therefore, these aspects are brought forth very quickly.

We see how God takes care to alert Adam to the wicked designs employed by his enemy, warning him against Satan's treachery, after he disobeyed God's command to prostrate himself before Adam. The warning is very precise, showing the inevitable result of listening to Satan and his promptings. Once Adam and his wife are thrown out of heaven, all they will have is affliction: hard labor, going astray, worry, indecision, endless waiting, agony, deprivation, etc. As long as they are in Paradise, they are immune to all affliction. All that the human being needs is available in plenty in Paradise, which means that a person should ensure he stays there. We note here how hunger and nakedness are shown to be parallel to thirst and intense heat. These four represent the human being's initial concerns as he tries to find food, clothing, drink and shade.

Adam however was without experience. Moreover, he was burdened by weakness, such as his desire for survival and his other desire to feel himself powerful. It was through these weaknesses that Satan was able to tempt him.

We see here how Satan touches Adam's raw nerve. Human life and power are limited. Therefore, he longs for survival and lasting power. These two desires provided Satan with suitable openings. As we have said, Adam had all human weaknesses planted in him for a definite purpose. Therefore, he forgot his commitment and transgressed the permitted limits.

It appears that what Adam and his wife saw were their genitals, which had thus far been covered. This is the more likely explanation, since they started to cover themselves again, piecing together leaves from the trees in heaven. On the other hand, the expression may mean

that their action aroused their sexual desire.

It may be that the tree was forbidden to Adam and his wife because its fruits could awaken their sexual desire. Perhaps it was intended to leave this desire dormant for a time. It could be, on the other hand, that their forgetting of their commitment to God and their disobedience of His orders resulted in a weakening of their willpower and a break of their bond with the Lord Creator, giving way to the emergence of sexual and reproductive desires. It is only in this way that human beings can extend their life beyond their own term. All these are possible explanations for the association between their eating of the forbidden tree and their becoming aware of their nakedness. The Quran does not say, "their shameful parts became visible"; rather, these parts became visible "to them." This suggests that these parts were screened from them and then became exposed through their own inner feelings.

Perhaps the clothing that Satan removed was not physical, but rather, a protective feeling of innocence, purity and closeness to God. These are mere hypotheses that we neither emphasize nor give weight to. We state them only to make the first human experience with temptation clearer.

But God extended His grace to Adam and his wife after he had disobeyed Him. This was only the first experience. Realizing the enormity of his error, Adam and Eve both repented and sought God's forgiveness, but this is not mentioned here in order to leave God's grace to be seen most clearly.

Drawing the Lines of Battle

The order was then given to the two combatants to descend to earth, which would be the battleground in this long-lasting war. Thus, the enmity was declared the whole world over. This means that there is no excuse for Adam and his progeny. None can claim to have been taken unawares. Everyone knows the score and the un-abating hostility. The whole universe is aware of it.

Along with this declaration which resounded throughout the heavens and the earth, and which was witnessed by all the angels, God has willed, out of His grace, to send His messengers bringing guidance to humanity, before He punishes them for their sins. Thus, at the same time He alerts His servants to this enmity between Adam and Satan, He announces to them that He will provide them with guidance. He will then give them their reward according to whether they follow His guidance or reject it:

When guidance shall come to you from Me, he who follows My

guidance will not go astray, nor will he suffer misery; but he who turns away from My message shall have a straitened lift and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection. He will say: Lord, he why have You raised me up blind, while I was endowed with sight? God will reply: Thus it is: Our revelations were brought to you, but you were oblivious to them.

When human life severs its links with God, depriving itself of His abundant grace, it becomes straitened, even though it may be materially affluent. It is a type of stress attendant on being isolated from God and the reassurance of His mercy. It is a stress that demonstrates itself in worry, doubt and confusion; holding tight to what one owns and fearing unexpected loss; coveting all manner of comfort and pleasure; nurturing aspirations and ambitions, etc. People do not feel true reassurance except when they place their trust in God, holding tight to their bond with Him. The reassurance generated by faith in God adds much to life's dimensions in length, breadth, depth and expanse. Without such reassurance, life is nothing but a continuous misery and is far harder than what man suffers through poverty and deprivation. This is the same type of going astray as that which man went through in the life of this world. It comes by way of recompense for his turning away from God's message in this first life.

Satan's Pride Against the Human Being

Chapter 17: The 50th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And mention when We said to the angels:*
Prostrate yourselves to Adam!
so they prostrated themselves, but Iblis.
He said: Will I prostrate myself to one
whom Thou hadst created from clay? (17:61)

He said: Hadst Thou considered this whom Thou hadst held in esteem above me? If Thou hadst postponed for me to the Day of Resurrection, I will, certainly, bring under full control his offspring, but a few. (17:62)

He said: Go thou! And whoever of them heeded thee, then, truly, hell will be your recompense, an ample recompense. (17:63)

And hound whom thou wert able to of them with thy voice and rally against them with thy horses and thy foot soldiers and share with them in their wealth and children and promise them. And Satan promises them nothing but delusion. (17:64)

Truly, My servants, over them there is no authority for thee. And thy Lord sufficed as a Trustee. (17:65)

Commentary°

And when We said unto the angels who were on the earth: Fall down prostrate before Adam a prostration of greeting and they fell prostrate all save Iblis, he said: Shall I fall prostrate before that which You have created of clay?

Creation of Adam, the Human Being

Chapter 15: The 54th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We created the human being*
out of earth-mud of soft wet earth. (15:26)
And We created the ones who are spirits before
from the fire of a burning wind. (15:27)
And mention when thy Lord said to the angels:
Truly, I am One Who is Creator of mortals
out of earth-mud of soft wet earth. (15:28)
That is when I shaped him and breathed into him of My Spirit.
So fall down before him
as ones who prostrate themselves. (15:29)
The angels prostrated themselves, one and all, (15:30)
but Iblis.
He refused to be with the ones who prostrate themselves. (15:31)

Commentary°

Here, in [these signs], as we shall see, emphasis is placed on the secret of Adam's creation and the essential factors in the human being's constitution, leading him to follow either divine guidance or Satan's erring ways. Therefore, it begins by stating that Adam is created out of sounding clay and black mud molded into shape, before God breathed of His noble spirit into him. It also states that Satan was created before him, out of the fire of scorching winds. It tells of the angels' prostration before Adam, while Satan refused to so prostrate before a human being created of such low material, and how, as a result, God expelled him from heaven with a curse. God then accepted Satan's request to give him respite until the Day of Judgment. It adds Satan's own admission that he has no power over God's faithful servants. His power is only over those who submit to him in preference to submitting to God. It then states, without detail, the destiny of each of the two parties. The lack of detail here fits with the point of emphasis whereby the two essential factors are the human constitution, and the domain where Satan can influence the human being. At the outset the difference in the two natures is clearly stated. The dry clay which gives off a sound when knocked and

which is originally black mud given a specific shape is totally different from the fire described here as scorching, blowing fiercely. We learn later that another element is added to man's nature, namely, the breathing of God's spirit into it. Satan's nature, however, remained that of the fire of scorching winds.

[These signs 15:28-31] start with God's address to the angels. When, where and how He said all this are details that we have no way of knowing. We simply have no clear statement in the Quran that answers these points. Since these details belong to the realm of what lies beyond human perception, we have no way of knowing them. Therefore, any attempt to provide answers is futile. The same applies to the creation of the human being out of a dry clay, molded into shape, and infused with God's spirit.

We may refer to other statements in the Quran concerning this point. We may say on the basis of these statements that the human being and life itself originally come out of the earth's clay. The basic constituents of this clay are found in the physical constitution of the human being and all living organisms. There are several stages between the original clay and the human being's creation, and to these the term, line, refers. That is all that may be said on the basis of the texts we have. Any addition is no more than an overload added to the text, which the Quran does not need.

The Quran explains the human being's distinction in a clear and simple statement: The breath of God's spirit that was blown into the human being that takes the human being from the state of a humble organic entity to the noble human stage, right from his inception. It makes of him a distinguished creature worthy of being vicegerent on earth. How does this happen? In answer we ask: when was this human creature able to perceive how the Creator works?

Now we can stand on solid ground. Satan was created out of the fire of scorching wind, long before the human being's creation. This is as far as our knowledge goes. What Satan's nature is and how he was created are matters that we cannot delve into. However, we do understand that he shares some characteristics with the fire of scorching wind. We realize that he can affect the elements constituting mud and clay, since he is made out of fire. He also causes harm and is not slow to inflict it, since the fire he is made of is that of scorching wind. Then the story reveals to us his conceit, anger and arrogance, which is not far removed in our perception from the nature of fire.

Then human creation took place, starting with the sticky mud that had dried, then the adding of sublime spirit that brought about his distinction from all living creatures. This gave him his unique

human characteristics. Right from the beginning of human life, the human being has followed his own separate line, while animals remained in their own domain.

THE HUMAN BEING'S DUAL NATURE

It is this breath of God's spirit that provides the human being's link with the Supreme Society, making him worthy of contact with God, receiving His messages, and going beyond the material world of his physical constitution to the mental world of hearts and minds. It is this breath of God's spirit which allows the human being to go beyond time and space, and beyond the reach of his senses and physical ability to formulate perceptions and experience feelings that, at times, seem unlimited.

All this despite the heavy nature of clay which puts him in need of all that his clay constitution requires, such as food, drink, clothing and the satisfaction of desires. He also has his weaknesses, giving rise to faulty concepts and whims. Yet right from the beginning, the human being is a compound of these two inseparable elements. He has the nature of a compound, not that of a mixture. We need to keep this fact clear in our minds whenever we speak about human constitution from clay and sublime spirit. The two constituents are inseparable in his nature. In no situation does either element achieve total domination, completely excluding the other. The human being is not pure clay or pure spirit even for a single moment. Every single action and every single deed involves his whole make-up which is indivisible.

Achieving a proper balance between the clay and the sublime elements is the highest level the human being is called on to achieve. That is the stage of human perfection. He is not required to shed either element of his constitution so as to become either angel or animal. To attempt a rise that disturbs the balance is a shortcoming that does not suit a person's essential characteristics, or the purpose of his creation in this unique fashion. A person who tries to suppress his basic physical instincts is the same as one who tries to suppress his free spiritual powers. Both go beyond straight human nature, imposing on themselves something that God does not sanction. Both destroy themselves by distorting the basic compound of their very nature. They will have to account to God for such destruction.

Islam has formulated its own laws for human life taking into account the human being's constitution. It established a human system that does not suppress a single aspect of human potential. The whole purpose of this system is to establish a perfect balance between these

powers, so that they all work in concert, without allowing anyone of them to encroach on another. Any such encroachment leads to the negation of the other, and every dominance leads to destruction. The human being is responsible for the maintenance of the essential characteristics of his nature and his accountability to God. The system submission to God (*islam*) establishes for human life is geared to promote these characteristics which God has given to the human being for a clear purpose.

Anyone who wishes to kill the animal instincts in himself or herself destroys his or her unique constitution, just like one who wishes to kill the essentially human instincts such as faith and believing in what lies beyond the reach of our perception. Anyone who deprives people of their faith destroys their human entity, just like one who deprives them of their food, drink and other physical needs. Both are enemies of the human being, and both deserve to be driven away just like we must drive Satan away.

The human being is an animal with something extra. He has the same needs as an animal, but he has other needs on account of that extra element. These latter needs are not inferior to the 'essential needs' as claimed by advocates of materialistic creeds who are, in truth, enemies of humanity.

These are simply thoughts derived from the truth of our human constitution, as stated in the Quran. We have referred to them only briefly so that we do not delay any further the discussion of the Quranic text relating the most important story of human creation.

The Encounter and the Fall

God told the angels that He was creating a vicegerent. And what God said immediately took effect, for His word expresses His will, and His will is always done. We cannot question how the breath of God's eternal spirit mixed with the clay that has limited life. Such arguments are no more than idle play. It is indeed a child's play with the human intellect itself. It forces the human mind out of its own realm in which it may exercise its powers of perception, reflection and comprehension. All the controversy that has been raised over this issue, past and present, betrays ignorance of the nature of the human mind, its characteristics and limitations. It simply forces the human mind to try to measure God's work by human standards. It is an altogether wrong premise.

God simply says that this has happened without saying how. Therefore, the event itself is a fact that the human mind cannot deny. Yet it cannot prove it by any interpretation it invents, other than ac-

cepting what God has said. The human being is a creature with a beginning, and as such, he cannot judge what is eternal, or how the eternal creates. When the human mind accepts this point, it stops expending its power in futile argument.

What happened after God issued His order to the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam? That is in the nature of this aspect of God's creation, the angels. They obey God's orders whatever they are, without argument or delay. However, something else also took place at the same time: Iblis refused.

Again, the Angels Told to Prostrate Themselves Before Adam

Chapter 18: The 69th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And mention when We said to the angels:*
Prostrate yourselves to Adam!
So they prostrated themselves but Iblis.
He had been among the jinn
and he disobeyed the command of His Lord.
Will you, then, take him to yourselves
and his offspring to be protectors other than Me
while they are an enemy to you? Miserable was it to give in place
ones who are unjust! (18:50)

Tell the Angels All of the Names

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And He taught Adam the names, all of them.*
Again, He presented them to the angels and said:
Communicate to Me the names of these
if you had been ones who are sincere. (2:31)
They said: Glory be to ***You****!*
We have no knowledge but what ***You*** *had taught us.*
Truly, ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Knowing, The Wise.* (2:32)
He said: O Adam! Communicate to them their names.
So then, when he communicated to them their names,
He said: Did I not say to you:
Truly, I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth
and I know what you show
and what you had been keeping back. (2:33)
And mention when We said to the angels:
Prostrate yourselves to Adam!
They, then, prostrated themselves but Iblis.
He refused and grew arrogant.

He had been among the ones who are ungrateful. (2:34)
*And We said: O Adam! Inhabit the Garden, **you** and **your** spouse:*
Eat freely from it both of you wherever you both willed,
but come not near this, the tree
or you both will be among the ones who are unjust. (2:35)
Then, Satan caused both of them to slide back from there
and drove both of them out from that in which they both had been.
And We said: Get down some of you as an enemy to some other.
And for you on the earth, a time appointed
and sustenance for a while. (2:36)
Adam, then, received words from his Lord for He turned to him
in forgiveness. Truly, He, He is
The Accepter of Repentance, The Compassionate. (2:37)
We said: Get down altogether from it. And whenever guidance
approaches you from Me, then, whoever heeded My guidance,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (2:38)

Commentary°

The passage takes us right into the very scene in which we can see the angels in God's presence, and witness how He entrusts the human being with the task of God's vicegerent on earth. He has given the human being the great secret of knowledge and cognition, as well as the ability to assign names to persons and objects that serve as symbols denoting whatever they are assigned to, even though they are no more than sounds and words. The ability to know and name objects has had the most profound effect on human life on earth. We can only imagine what life would have been like without this communication tool to appreciate its value. Indeed, without it, human life and interaction would have been unthinkable, and there would have been no progress beyond a very primitive state. Without such ability, all communication would have necessitated the presence of the subject matter. Thus, if a group wants to discuss something related to a tree, a mountain, or a particular person, then that person should be brought before the group, or they should all go to the tree or mountain. Indeed, without the ability to use names and symbols, human life could not function. (2:31-32)

The angels have no use for such an ability because it is not required for their role. Therefore, they have not been given it. When God, having bestowed this great honor on Adam, asked the angels to identify certain objects, they could not because they did not possess the ability to use symbols and assign names or titles to things.

They admitted their inability and recognized the limits of their knowledge, prompting the comment that followed. (2:33)

This is undoubtedly the highest accolade bestowed upon the human being. For, despite the fact that he would commit corruption on earth and shed blood, he was elevated above the angels, endowed with the secrets of knowledge, and given a free and independent will to choose his destiny. The human being's dual nature, his ability to determine his own course of action, and the trust he carries to pursue God's guidance by his own means are all aspects of the high esteem in which he is held. The angels prostrated themselves before Adam in obedience to God's command, Here we see evil manifested in Satan's behavior as he disobeys God Almighty, vainly refuses to recognize honor where it is due, persists in his error and closes his mind to the truth.

The general drift of the narration suggests that Iblis was not one of the angels; rather, he was with them. For, had he been an angel, he would not have disobeyed God, since the angels' foremost characteristic is that they: do not disobey God in whatever He commands them and always do what they are bidden. (66:6) The fact that the Arabic construction here makes an exception in relation to Iblis does not mean that he is, or was, one of the angels. The exception is justified on the basis that he was with the angels. This is perfectly acceptable in Arabic, which allows the construction "the whole clan arrived but not Ahmad" without implying that Ahmad is a member of the clan.

Furthermore, the Quran specifically identifies Iblis as belonging to another type of extra-terrestrial creatures, the jinn, who are created out of fire, eliminating the idea that he was, at any time, an angel. (See 15: 27, 18:50, and 55:15)

The battle lines are drawn, and the long struggle commences between Iblis, the epitome of evil, and the human being, God's vicegerent on earth. This battle is fought within the human being's own conscience. Its outcome will be in human favor as long as he exercises his will and remains faithful to his covenant with God. Evil will triumph only if the human being succumbs to his own desires and alienates himself from his Lord. (2:34)

They had been allowed access to all the fruits of Paradise with the exception of one tree. That tree may be seen as a symbol of the things forbidden to human beings on earth, without which there would be no freewill for him to exercise. Human beings would have been indistinguishable from animals, acting on mere instinct. Without forbidden things, there would be no way of testing human willpower

and resolve in fulfilling his covenant with God. The human will is the deciding factor, and those who do not exercise their will, despite their human form, belong with animals and irrational creatures. (2:35)

So graphic and expressive is the Arabic word used here to express the act of luring away. We almost visualize the scene of Adam and Eve being tempted and manuvred so that they slip and fall out of Paradise.

Thus the test is over. Adam forgot his covenant and yielded to temptation, invoking God's inevitable judgment that they should be sent down to earth. (2:36) This was the signal for the battle between the human being and Satan to commence and continue until the end of time. (2:36)

But Adam, by virtue of his basically good and sound human nature, was awakened to his oversight and was saved by God's boundless mercy, which is always close at hand for the repentant to seek. (2:37)

God's final word has been spoken, and His full covenant with Adam and his offspring as His vicegerents on earth has been sealed and brought into effect. This covenant outlines the conditions that bring humanity prosperity and those that lead people to ruin. (2:38)

Thus the battlefield was transferred to its proper location, the planet earth, and the battle was to rage on unabated. From that early moment the human being was taught how to triumph over evil, and what would bring about his defeat and condemnation. It is now for him to choose how to act.

God Favored Adam

Chapter 3: The 89th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Truly, God favored Adam and Noah*
and the people of Abraham
and the people of Imran above all the worlds.... (3:33)

Commentary°

Lo! God preferred, He has chosen, Adam and Noah and the House of Abraham and the House of Imran, meaning He preferred them above the worlds, by making prophethood reside in them and their progeny.

The Parable of Adam is like the Parable of Jesus

Madinah: *Truly the parable of Jesus with God*
is like the parable of Adam.

He created him from earth dust.
Again, He said to him: Be! Then, he is! (3:59)

Commentary°

God then explained the creation of Jesus without a father because the delegation of Najran asked the Prophet to provide proof from the Quran for his saying that Jesus was not the son of God, so God revealed this verse.

Children of Adam

Chapter 7: The 39th Chapter Revealed

O Children of Adam!
Surely, We caused to descend to you garments
to cover up your intimate parts and finery,
but the garment of God-consciousness, that is better.
That is of the signs of God so that perhaps they will recollect! (7:26)
O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you
as he drove your parents out of the Garden,
tearing off their garments from both of them
to cause them to see their intimate parts.
Truly, he and his type sees you whereas you see them not.
Truly, We made he and the satans protectors
of those who believe not. (7:27)

*****

O Children of Adam! If Messengers from among you
approach relating My signs to you,
then, whoever was God-conscious and made things right,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (7:33)

*****

And mention when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam—
from their generative organs—
their offspring and called to them to witness of themselves:
Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea! We bore witness
so that you say not on the Day of Resurrection:
Truly, we had been ones who were heedless of this. (7:172)

Chapter 36: The 41st Chapter Revealed

Make I not a compact with you, O Children of Adam,
that you not worship Satan?
Truly, he is a clear enemy. (36:30

Chapter 17: The 59th Chapter Revealed

And, certainly, We held the Children of Adam in esteem.
And We carried them on dry land and on the sea
and provided them with what is good.
And We gave them advantage over many
of whomever We created with excellence. (17:70)

Cain and Abel

Chapter 5: The 112th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And recount **you** to them the tiding of the two sons of Adam in Truth \when they both brought near a sacrifice and it was received from one of them but there is non-acceptance from the other. He said: I will, surely, kill **you**. He said: Truly, God receives only from the ones who are God-conscious.* (5:27)

*If **you** were to extend **your** hand against me so that **you** would kill me, I would not be one who stretches out my hand towards **you** so that I kill **you**. I fear God, Lord of the worlds.* (5:28)

*Truly, I want that **you** wilt draw the burden of my sin and **your** sin, then, to be among the Companions of the Fire. That is the recompense of the ones who are unjust.* (5:29)

Then, his soul prompted him to kill his brother. And he killed him and became among the ones who are losers. (5:30)

Then, God raised up a raven to scratch the earth, to cause him to see how to cover up the naked corpse of his brother. He says: Woe to me! Was I unable to be like this raven to cover up the naked corpse of my brother? Then, he became among the ones who were remorseful. (5:31)

On account of that, We prescribed for the Children of Jacob that whoever killed a person, other than in retribution for another person, or because of corruption in and on the earth, it will be as if he had killed all of humanity. And whoever gave life to one, it will be as if he gave life to all of humanity. And, certainly, our Messengers drew near them with the clear portents. Again, truly, many of them after that were ones who were excessive in and on the earth. (5:32)

Commentary°

Having related to his followers an account of certain events in the history of the Children of Jacob with their Prophet, Moses, the Prophet Muhammad is told by God to relate the story of two people representing two types of human being. The account should be given in all honesty, because it tells of the truth deeply entrenched in human nature. It also emphasizes the need for a deterrent legal code to ensure justice.

Adam's two sons were in a situation that gives no rise to any

thought of aggression in a good person's mind. The situation is one of obedience to God and offering a sacrifice to draw closer to God. We note that the passive mode is used here to indicate that the acceptance or rejection of the offered sacrifice is done by a higher power in a metaphysical way. This mode of expression suggests to us two points: the first is that we should not try to determine how exactly the offering was accepted. We need not discuss reports mentioned in books of commentary on the Quran because these reports are most probably derived from Old Testament fables.

The second point suggests that the one whose offering was accepted had not committed any crime that might cause anyone else to be angry with him to any extent, let alone that that person should plot a murder. He had no say in the acceptance of this offering. The nature of the One who accepted the offering was beyond the perception of either of the two brothers. Therefore, thoughts of anger or murder should have been far removed from the minds of both brothers. They were in a situation that is close to worship, since it involves offering a sacrifice for God's sake.

The latter declaring that he will kill the other is a statement of confirmed intention which is met by our disapproval because it is totally unjustified. Indeed, it could only be the result of blind envy that is alien to a good heart. Thus, from the very first moment, we take an attitude of total disapproval of aggression. The sign, however, greatly enhances the ghastliness of this act of aggression by showing the peaceful, good-natured attitude of the other brother when God says that God only receives from the God-conscious.

Enoch (Idris)

We are told in a commentary that Enoch was Noah's great-grandfather. Indeed he was a truthful one, a prophet.

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Enoch in the Book.*
Truly, he had been a just person, a Prophet. (19:56)
And We exalted him to a lofty place. (19:57)

Commentary°

The last prophet to be mentioned in this chapter is Enoch (Idris): And mention in the Book Enoch, who was a man of truth, a prophet. We raised him to a lofty station." (19: 56-57) We have no way of determining during which period of history Enoch lived. Most probably he was ahead of Abraham. He was not one of the Jewish prophets. There is no mention of him in the Jewish books. The Quran describes him as a man of truth and a prophet. It records the fact that God granted him honor and made him worthy of praise, elevating him to a lofty position.

There is a view we would like to mention here without suggesting whether it is true or false. Some Egyptologists suggest that Idris is an Arabicized form of Osiris in the same way as Yohanna is Arabicized as Yahya, and Elisha as Al-Yasa. We know that around Osiris many a legend has been woven. It is said that old Egyptians believed that he was elevated to heaven where he was established on a throne. Whoever, after death, is found to have to his credit more good deeds in this life than bad ones will join Osiris who has become an Egyptian deity. He is also said to have taught the Egyptians all that they knew before he was elevated to heaven.

Be that as it may, we confine ourselves to what the Quran states about Enoch without indulging in speculation. We only say that it is more probable that he lived before the time of Abraham.

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And Ishmael and Enoch and Ezekiel* (Dhul-Kifl),
all were of the ones who remain steadfast. (21:85)
And We caused them to enter into Our mercy.
They are the ones in accord with morality. (21:86)

Elisha (al-Yasa)

Chapter 38: The 38th Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Ishmael, Elisha* (al-Yasa), *and Ezekiel*

(Dhu-l Kifl) *And all are among the good.* (38:48)

Chapter 6: The 55th Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And Zechariah and Yahya and Jesus and Elias* (Iliyas).
All were of hte ones who were in accord with morality. (6:85)
And Ishmael and Elisha (al-Yasa) *and Jonah and Lot.*
We gave all an advantage over the worlds (6:86)
and from among their fathers
and their offspring and their brothers.
We elected them and We guided them to a straight path. (6:87)

Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl)

Chapter 38: The 38th Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Ishmael, Elisha, and Ezekiel* (Dhu-l Kifl).
And all are among the good. (38:48)

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And Ishmael and Enoch and Ezekiel* (Dhul-Kifl),
all were of the ones who remain steadfast. (21:85)
And We caused them to enter into Our mercy.
They are the ones in accord with morality. (21:86)

Noah

Noah's Folk Were Defiant

Chapter 53: The 23rd Chaper Revealed

Makkah: ... *and the folk of Noah before.*
Truly, they had been they who do greater wrong
and ones who are defiant. (53:52)

The Folk of Noah Denied What Came Before Them

Chapter 50: The 34th Chaper Revealed

Makkah *The folk of Noah denied what came before them,*
and the Companions of the Rass and Thamud ... (50:12)

Commentary°

A Glance at History

The chapter (50) now opens some pages of the book of human history, speaking of the fate of past communities who argued about resurrection in the same way as did the Arab unbelievers, and who similarly denied God's messages. As a result, they incurred God's inevitable punishment: (50:12-15)

Al-Rass signifies a well over which there is no built wall, and the dales signifies an area thick with trees. The people of the wooded dales most probably refer to Shuayb's people.

The purpose of this quick reference to these peoples is certainly not to give any detailed information about them. It is only a reminder of the fate of earlier ungrateful communities. What is worth noting is that the sign mentions that each denied God's messengers in the plural. This emphasizes the unity of the divine message as all messengers preached the same faith. Thus, whoever denies anyone of Gods messengers actually denies them all, because he rejects the same message delivered by them all. God's messengers are brothers forming one community. They are like a tree with roots stretching far back into time. Each branch of that tree projects all its essential qualities, giving an image of the whole. Therefore, whoever cuts a branch actually cuts the tree and all its branches. Therefore, God's warnings came true and those communities suffered the fates known to listeners.

The Folk of Noah Deny Noah

Chapter 54: The 37th Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Noah denied before them.*

They denied Our servant and said:
One who is possessed! And he was deterred. (54:9)
So he called to his Lord saying: I am one who is vanquished,
*so **You** help me.* (54:10)
So We opened the doors of heaven with torrential water. (54:11)
And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs
so the waters were to meet one another
from a command that was measured. (54:12)
And We carried him on a vessel of planks and caulked, (54:13)
running under Our eyes, a recompense
for Noah who had been disbelieved. (54:14)
And, certainly, We left this as a sign.
Then, is there one who recalls? (54:15)
So how had been My punishment and My warning? (54:16)

Commentary°

[These verses] use the description of what happened to the people of Noah inviting hearts to reflect after they have been shown one of the calamities that befell earlier deniers of the truth.

The Folk of Noah Denied What Came Before Them

Chapter 38: The 38th Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Noah before them denied ...* (38:12)

Commentary°

Noah tells his people that if they are completely fed up with him, unable to tolerate his presence among them and his reminders of their duty to believe in God, then let that be as it may. He will continue along his way, unperturbed by their opposition, for "in God have I placed my trust." He seeks no help from anyone else.

It is a clear challenge thrown out by one who is absolutely certain of his ground and power. In fact he is inviting his opponents to attack him. What were the forces at his command facilitating such a challenge? He simply had faith, which gave him a power that is superior to everything else. Numbers, careful planning and firepower are of little use when compared to faith. He had God's support, and God does not abandon those who believe in Him. It is the challenge of one who relies on the source of real power, for faith establishes a bond between the believer and the One who has power over everything in the universe. It is neither an arrogant nor a foolhardy challenge. Rather, it is the challenge of true power.

Advocates of the divine faith have in God's Messengers a fine example to follow. They should have unwavering confidence as they place their trust in God and face tyranny, whatever its source may be. Tyranny will not cause them any real or lasting damage, apart from perhaps some physical pain that God allows as a test of the believers. God does not abandon the believers to His and their enemies, but He lets them undergo this test so that true believers come through it unharmed. The end favors the believers when God's promise is fulfilled and they are victorious.

The Quranic signs show that Noah exhibited intellectual humility and suspended judgment of the people. It is based on the recognition that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness. It implies a lack of arrogance or conceit. It implies insight into the foundations of one's beliefs: knowing what evidence one has and how one has come to believe.

The Message of the Messenger Noah

Chapter 7: The 39th Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *Surely, We sent Noah to his folk.*
And he said: O my folk! Worship God!
You have no god other than He. Truly, I fear for you
the punishment of a tremendous Day. (7:59)
The Council of his folk said: Truly, we see you
clearly wandering astray. (7:60)
He said: O my folk! There is no fallacy in me.
I am only a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds. (7:61)
I state the messages of my Lord to you
and advise you and I know from God what you know not. (7:62)
Or marveled you that there drew near you
a remembrance from your Lord through a man among you
that he warn you and that you be God-conscious
so that perhaps you will find mercy? (7:63)
Then, they denied him.
Then, We rescued him and those who were with him
on the boat and We drowned those who denied Our signs.
Truly, they, they had been a folk in the dark. (7:64)

Commentary°

This is the solid unchangeable basis of divine faith, the mainstay of human life that guarantees the unity of direction and goal. It ensures that human beings are free from enslavement by their desires or by other human beings. It helps those who accept it to rise above

all that they desire and to resist all temptation and threats. (7:59)

The divine faith is a code for living based on the fundamental principle that all authority in human life belongs to God alone. This is the essential meaning of worshipping God alone and that God is the only deity acknowledged by human beings. (7:60)

Noah denies that he is in error, and explains to his people the true nature of his call and its origin. He has not invented it, but he is simply a messenger bearing a message from the Lord of humanity, and delivering it with honest advice, based on the fact that he knows of God what they do not know. He feels that knowledge within himself, because he has his link with God. (7:61)

Here we note a gap in the story. It seems that they have wondered that God should choose a human being, one of their number, to bear a message from Him to them, and that this human messenger should find within himself knowledge about his Lord which is not available to those who are not similarly chosen. This gap is indicated by what comes next. (7:63)

There is nothing strange about this choice. Indeed, everything about human beings is amazing. The human being deals with all the worlds and can have a direct link with his Lord because of what God has imparted to him and settled in his nature as a result of breathing into him of His Spirit. God certainly knows best whom to choose as His messenger. If God chooses a human being to bear His message, then this honored person can receive the message through his latent ability to be in contact with God who gives him his special status as a human being receiving honors no other creature receives.

Noah reveals to them the goal of his message. (7:63) There is first the warning so that their hearts respond and steer away from evil, as a prelude to eventually receiving God's grace. Noah himself has no personal interest or purpose other than this noble one.

The Folk of Noah Deny Noah

Chapter 25: The 42nd Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And the folk of Noah*
when they denied the Messengers,
We drowned them.
And We made them as a sign for humanity.
And We made ready for the ones who are unjust
a painful punishment. ... (25:37)

Commentary°

It should be explained here that Noah's people denied only

Noah's message and their rejection applied only to him, but we have to remember that Noah only preached the faith advocated by all God's messengers. Therefore, when they rejected what he told them, it was as though they rejected all messengers, most of whom lived after their own time. God states that He made them an example for humanity. (25:37) The great floods could not be forgotten despite the passage of time. Anyone who looks carefully at the result of that flood will understand its lesson, provided he approaches it with an open mind. It is now ready, requiring no further waiting.

Those Who Believed Are Saved and the Ungrateful Drown

Chapter 26: The 47th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Noah denied*
the ones who are sent (26:105)
when their brother, Noah, said to them:
Will you not be God-conscious? (26:106)
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you (26:107)
so be God-conscious and obey me. (26:108)
And I ask you not for any compensation for it.
My compensation is only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:109)
So be God-conscious and obey you me. (26:110)
They (the folk of Noah) said: Will we believe in you
when it is the most wretched that followed you? (26:111)
He said: And what knowledge
have I of what they had been doing? (26:112)
Truly, their reckoning is but
with my Lord if you be aware. (26:113)
I am not one who drives away the ones who believe. (26:114)
I am not but a clear warner. (26:115)
They said: If thou hast not refrained thyself, O Noah,
thou wilt, certainly, be among the ones who are stoned! (26:116)
He said: My Lord! My folk denied me, (26:117)
*so give **You** deliverance between me and them and victory*
and deliver me and whoever is
with me among the ones who believe. (26:118)
And We rescued him and whoever was with him
in the laden boat. (26:119)
Again, We drowned after that the ones who remained. (26:120)
In this is, truly, a sign, yet most of them
had not been ones who believe. (26:121)
***Your** Lord, He, truly, is*

The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:122)

Commentary°

Such was Noah's message that his people denied, despite his being their brother. Such brotherhood should have ensured a peaceful relationship, leading to their belief in him and his message. But his people had no time for this bond of brotherhood, and they did not soften to their brother's call when he said to them. (26:106) Will you not worry about the end to which your attitudes and actions lead you?

This directive and reminder to fear God is consistent in these signs. Then every prophet that succeeded Noah said the same thing to his community. (26:107) He would not cheat, defraud or act dishonestly. He would not add to, or withhold anything from what he was required to deliver to his people. (26:108) In this case, Noah again reminds his people to fear God, giving it a more express definition this time. He appeals to their consciences to obey him as he calls on them to surrender themselves to God.

He then reassures them that he was neither looking for any worldly gain nor seeking any wage in return for advocating the divine message and guiding them to their Lord. He seeks only God's reward, because it was He who gave him his message. This assurance of seeking no gain or wage seems to have always been necessary for sincere advocacy of faith. It is, thus, distinguished from the familiar pattern of religion as exploited by clerics and religious orders for personal gain and enrichment.

Now that he has reassured them of having no personal ambition, Noah again tells them to be conscious of God, reminding them that they should obey him. (26:110) Their response, a singular objection, was the same given to all messengers. (26:111)

What they meant was that it was only the poor who followed him, because the poor are normally the first to accept divine messages and messengers. They are quick to believe in God and submit themselves to Him, because they are not deterred by any hollow status or fear of losing any interest or position as a result. The chiefs and nobles of society often fear for their interests that are based on false considerations, as also myths and legends that are given religious status. Moreover, they are unwilling to accept complete equality with the masses as a result of believing in God's oneness. Under such a belief system only faith and good action are given an appropriately high value, with the net result that some people rise and others fall by the single standard of faith that is complemented by good action.

Noah's reply, therefore, establishes true values, defining the mis-

sion of God's messenger and leaves judgment on people to God who knows best their intentions, thoughts and actions:

Said he: What knowledge do I have as to what they used to do in the past? Their reckoning rests with none other than my Lord, if you could but understand. I am not one to drive away the believers. I am only a plain warner. (26:112-26:115)

The nobility always speak in a derogative manner about the poor. They say that their habits and values are not acceptable to those who are in the higher echelons of society. They have nothing of their refinements. Noah tells them that he does not ask of people anything other than that they believe in God. Their actions are left to God to evaluate and to determine their appropriate reward. His, God's, is the right evaluation. Noah then defines his own mission. (26:115)

With such clear argument and plain logic, Noah's people were silenced. They had no meaningful reply to offer. Therefore, they resorted to the same method to which tyranny resorts every time it finds itself cornered; they threatened him with brute force. (26:116) Thus tyranny reveals its ghastly and cruel face.

Noah realized that their hardened hearts would not soften. Therefore, he turned to the One source of support that is always available to believers, never failing them: (26:117-26:118) His Lord certainly knew that his people had denied him and accused him of lying, but Noah needed to address his complaint to God, appealing to Him for justice. Thus, he puts the matter in His hands. (26:118) Such decisive judgment will put an end to tyranny and injustice. (26:118)

God certainly responded to His messenger's plea for help. (26:119-26:120) Thus, the end of this very early battle in human history between faith and unfaith is described in a very quick sequence of words, which also tell of the outcome of every subsequent battle between the two sides in human history.

Noah a Grateful Servant

Chapter 17: The 50th Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *O offspring of whomever We carried with Noah:*
Truly, he had been a grateful servant. (17:3)

Generations After Noah Perish

Makkah: *How many generations*
have We caused to perish after Noah?
And thy Lord sufficed as Aware,
Seeing the impieties of His servants. (17:17)

The Messages of Noah Referred to

Chapter 10: The 51st Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And recount to them the tidings of Noah*
when he said to his folk:
O my folk! If my station had been troublesome to you
and my reminding you of the signs of God,
then, in God I put my trust.
So summon up your affair along with your ascribed associates.
Again, there be no cause for doubt in your affair.
Again, decide against me and give me no respite. (10:71)
Then, if you turned away, I asked you not for any compensation.
My compensation is with God.
And I was commanded
that I be of the ones who submit to God. (10:72)
Then, they denied him, so We delivered him
and some with him on the boat.
And we made them the viceregents
while We drowned those who denied Our signs.
Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who are warned! (10:73)
Again, We raised up Messengers after him to their folk.
They drew near them with the clear portents.
But they had not been believing
in what they had denied before of it.
Thus, We set a seal on the hearts
of the ones who exceed the limits. (10:74)

Commentary°

Only the end part of Noah's story is mentioned here where we see him offering his people a final challenge. He had spent a very long time preaching and warning his people, but to no avail. There is no mention of the ark here, or of those who were taken on board and so saved from the great floods. The aim here is to highlight the challenge and the believers' reliance on God, as well as the saving of a small, powerless group of believers and the destruction of the great hordes of the ungrateful. These signs reduce the whole story to a single episode so as to emphasize its final end. This is what is most fitting in the present context.

Noah tells his people that if they are completely fed up with him, unable to tolerate his presence among them and his reminders of their duty to believe in God, then let that be as it may. He will continue along his way, unperturbed by their opposition, for "in God have I

placed my trust." He seeks no help from anyone else.

Noah Builds an Ark and His Son is Drowned

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Noah to his folk:*
Truly, I am a clear warner to you (11:25)
that you worship none but God.
Truly, I fear for you the punishment of a painful Day. (11:26)
Then, the Council of those who were ungrateful
said from among his folk:
*We see **you** only as a mortal like us.*
*We see none followed **you** but those,*
they who are visibly our most wretched, simple minded.
Nor we see you as having any merit above us.
Nay! We think that you are ones who lie. (11:27)
He said: O my folk! Considered you that I had been
with a clear portent from my Lord
and that He gave me mercy from Himself
but it was invisible to you?
Then, will we fasten you to it
when you are ones who dislike it? (11:28)
And O my folk! I ask not of you wealth for it.
My compensation is but with God.
And I will not be one who drives away those who believed.
Truly, they are ones who will encounter their Lord
while I see you a folk who are ignorant. (11:29)
And O my folk! Who would help me against God
if I drove them away?
Will you not, then, recollect? (11:30)
And I say not to you: The treasures of God are with me
nor that I know the unseen nor I say:
Truly, I am an angel nor I say
of those whom your eyes look down upon:
God will never give them good.
God is greater in knowledge of what is within their souls for,
then, I would be of the ones who are unjust. (11:31)
*They said: O Noah! Surely, **you** had disputed with us,*
then, made much of the dispute with us.
*Now approach us with what **you** have promised us*
*if **you** had been among the ones who are sincere.* (11:32)
He said: Only God will bring it on you if He willed.
And you will not be ones who frustrate Him. (11:33)

And my advice will not profit you
—even if I wanted to advise you—
if God had been wanting to lead you into error.
He is your Lord and to Him you will return. (11:34)
Or they say: He devised it.
Say: If I devised it, my sin is upon me
and I am free of your sins. (11:35)
And it was revealed to Noah:
Truly, none of thy folk will believe but who had already believed.
So be you not despondent
at what they have been accomplishing. (11:36)
And craft you the boat under Our Eyes and by Our Revelation
and address Me not for those who did wrong.
They are, truly, ones who are drowned. (11:37)
And he crafts the boat.
Whenever the Council passed by him of his folk,
they derided him.
He said: If you deride us, then, we will deride you
just as you deride us. (11:38)
And you will know to whom will approach a punishment
covering with shame and on whom
an abiding punishment will alight! (11:39)
Until when Our command drew near and the oven boiled,
We said: Carry in it of every living thing,
two, a pair and thy people,
but him against whom the saying has preceded and who believed.
And none but a few believed with him. (11:40)
And he said: Embark in it. In the Name of God
will be the course of the ship and its berthing.
Truly, my Lord is Forgiving, Compassionate. (11:41)
So it runs with them amidst waves like mountains.
And Noah cried out to his son and he had been standing apart:
O my son! Embark with us and be you not
with the ones who are ungrateful! (11:42)
He said: I will take shelter for myself on a mountain.
It will be what saves me from the harm of the water.
Noah said: No one saves from the harm this day
from the command of God but him on whom He had mercy.
And a wave came between them
so he had been of the ones who are drowned. (11:43)
And it was said: O earth! Take in thy water!
And O heaven: Desist!

And the water was shrunken and the command of God
was satisfied and it was on the same level as Al-Judi.
And it was said: Away with the folk,
the ones who are unjust! (11:44)
And Noah cried out to his Lord and said:
My Lord! Truly, my son is of my people.
*And, truly, **Your** promise is The Truth.*
*And **You** are the Most Just of the ones who judge.* (11:45)
*He said: O Noah! Truly, he is not of **your** people.*
Truly, he, his actions are not in accord with morality.
*So ask not of Me what **you** have no knowledge.*
*Truly, I admonish **you** so that **you** not be*
of the ones who are ignorant. (11:46)
*He said: My Lord! Truly, I take refuge with **You** so that I not ask*
***You** of what I am without knowledge.*
*Unless **You** are to forgive me and have mercy on me,*
I would be of the ones who are losers. (11:47)
*It was said: O Noah! Get **you** down with peace from Us*
*and blessings on **you** and on communities*
*from whoever are with **you**,*
and communities to whom We will give enjoyment.
And, again, they will be afflicted by Us
with a painful punishment. (11:48)
*That is of the tidings of the unseen that We reveal to **you**.*
***You** have not been knowing of them*
*nor **your** folk before this. So have **you** patience.*
Truly, the Ultimate End is
for the ones who are Godfearing. (11:49)

COMMENTARY°

The Quran gives this account of the history of the age-old call to submission to the Will of god in order to provide landmarks for its advocates . These landmarks are not only relevant to the first Muslim community, the first to be addressed by the Quran, and the first to make it its operational guide as opposed to ignorance, but also to every Muslim community which stands up to ignorance anywhere in the world, at any time. This is what makes the Quran the permanent constitution of its message and the manual of every Quranic-based movement.

Every time the Quran mentions the approach of any messenger sent by God to any people, it quotes the messenger as saying: 'My people, worship God alone. You have no god other than He." 'Wor-

ship God alone' means total submission to Him alone in all matters which relate to this life or to the hereafter. This is indeed the original meaning of the word. The dictionary shows the word *abada*, which we now use primarily to denote worship, as meaning: to yield, submit and to lower one's rank to another. A *muabbad* road is one which has been leveled to facilitate travelling. *Abbada* is to enslave; that is, to cause someone to submit to another.

The Arabs who were first addressed by the Quran did not confine the import of the term abada to mere worship rituals. Indeed, when the Arabs were first addressed by this term in Makkah, no worship rituals had then been assigned to them. They understood it to mean that they were required to submit themselves to God alone in all their life affairs and to renounce submission to anyone else. The Prophet defined 'worship' in one of his pronouncements as meaning 'compliance', not as offering worship rituals.

The term 'worship' has come to signify worship rituals since these are one form of showing submission to God. This form does not by any means, however, encompass the full meaning of 'worship'. When the clear meanings of 'religion' and 'worship' faded from peoples' minds, they started to think that people abandon Islam only if they offer worship rituals to anyone other than God, such as idols and statues. They believe that if they avoid this particular form of ignorance they are protected against atheism, polytheism or any other form of ignorance generally and remain Muslims who could not be deprived of this status. They would thus continue to enjoy all the privileges of a Muslim with regard to the protection of life, honor and property.

This is a blatant fallacy based on distortions of the word 'worship' which decides whether a person is Muslim or not. This term signifies total submission to God in all matters and all affairs. As we have already said, this is the linguistic meaning of the word and the specific definition of it by the Prophet. When the Prophet has so clearly defined a certain term, no one can provide any other definition.

He certainly did not mean to tell his people not to offer worship rituals to anyone other than God, as imagined by those who give the term 'worship' the very narrow meaning of rituals. He meant total submission to God alone and the rejection of any false god or tyrant.

Their denial of God's revelations is manifest in their disobedience of His messengers and their following of arrogant tyrants. All these actions refer to the same thing. When any people disobey God's commands, they do indeed deny God's revelations and disobey His

messengers. They thus go beyond the pale of Islam into polytheism. We have already shown that Islam, in its broad sense, is the original status with which human life on earth started. It is indeed the faith brought by Adam when he fell from heaven and was put in charge of this earth. It is the faith Noah re- established on earth as he disembarked after the floods. People, however, will continue to deviate from Islam and sink back into ignorance until the call of Islam is successful in bringing them back to Islam. The cycle has continued until the present time.

The establishment of the oneness of God, the only God, Lord and Sustainer in the universe, and the only source of legislation in all matters, and the establishment of the only way of life acceptable to God are all aims which merit the sending of God's messengers. They also merit the exertion of great efforts by the messengers as well as the endurance of all the suffering the advocates of Islam have experienced throughout history. This is not because God needs to achieve these aims: He is in need of nothing and no one. They are worthy aims simply because human life cannot be put right, reformed, elevated and become worthy of man without the establishment of the faith based on God's oneness.

NOAH WAS GUIDED

CHAPTER 6: THE 55TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: ... *And Noah We guided before and among his offspring*
are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph
and Moses and Aaron.
And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)

THE PRAYER OF NOAH

CHAPTER 37: THE 56TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah 618: *And, certainly, Noah cried out to Us.*
And how excellent were the ones who answer! (37:75)
And We delivered him and his people
from tremendous distress. (37:76)
And We made his offspring—they, the ones who remain. (37:77)
And We left for him to say with the later ones: (37:78)
Peace be on Noah among the worlds. (37:79)
Thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (37:80)
Truly, he is one of Our believing servants. (37:81)
Again, We drowned the others. (37:82)

Commentary°

This reference to Noah includes his appeal to God and the full answer to his prayer by the best to give such an answer. It also tells of the fact that he and his household were saved from the great floods that drowned all except those whom God willed to be saved. It speaks of God's will to make of his offspring communities which build the earth and establish its heritage, while he himself, would he remembered by future generations until the end of time. It declares to all the worlds God's greeting to Noah, as he was one who fulfilled well the assignment given him. What reward could anyone wish for when he has received God's own greetings and is to be remembered for the rest of time? The mark of Noah's doing well that so ensured his great reward was his unshakeable faith. This outcome is brought about by faith. The unbelievers among Noah's people met their own ruin. (37:82) This has set the rule ever since the dawn of history. It is the pattern given in general terms immediately before these stories.

Noah Denied and the Confederates After Him

Chapter 40: The 60th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Noah denied before them*
and the confederates after them.
And every community is about to take its Messenger
and they dispute with falsehood to refute The Truth.
So I took them.
And how had been My repayment! (40:5)

Commentary°

The people of Noah denied before them and also the factions, such as Aad, Thamud and others, who came after them. And every community sought to seize their messenger, to slay him, and they argued falsely thinking to rebut, to eliminate, thereby the truth. Then I seized them, with punishment; so how fitting was My punishment of them—in other words, it was appropriate.

Those Who Deny the Messengers are Punished

Makkah ... *in like manner of a folk of Noah and Ad*
and Thamud and those after them.
And God wants not injustice for His servants. (40:31)

Commentary°

Like the case of the people of Noah, and Aad, and Thamud, and those who came] after them, in other words, the same requital as was

customarily dealt to those who disbelieved before you, of their being chastised in this world, and God does not desire to wrong any of His servants.

The Fate of the People of Noah

Chapter 51: The 67th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And the folk of Noah from before.*
Truly, they had been a folk, ones who disobey. (51:46)

Noah Complains to God About the Arrogance of His People

Chapter 71: The 71st Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Truly, We sent Noah to his folk saying:*
Warn your folk before a painful punishment
approaches them. (71:1)
He said: O my folk! Truly, I am a clear warner to you: (71:2)
Worship God and be God-conscious and obey me. (71:3)
He forgives you some of your impieties
and postpones for you a term, that which is determined.
Truly, when the term of God drew near, it will not be postponed
if you had been but knowing. (71:4)
He said: My Lord! Truly, I called to my folk
nighttime and daytime, (71:5)
but my supplication increases not but their running away. (71:6)
And, truly, as often as I called to them
that You would forgive them,
they laid their fingertips over their ears
and covered themselves with their garments.
And they maintained growing arrogant
as they grew arrogant. (71:7)
Again, truly, I called to them with openness. (71:8)
Again, I spoke openly to them and confided in them,
keeping secret our converse. (71:9)
And I said: Ask for forgiveness of your Lord.
Truly, He had been a Forgiver. (71:10)
He sends from heaven abundant rain for you. (71:11)
He will furnish you relief with wealth and children.
And He will assign for you Gardens
and will assign for you rivers. (71:12)
What is it with you that you hope not
for dignity from God? (71:13)

And, surely, He created you in stages? (71:14)
Consider you not how God created the seven heavens,
one on another? (71:15)
And how He made the moon in them as a light
and how He made the sun as a light-giving lamp? (71:16)
And how God caused you to develop,
bringing you forth from the earth. (71:17)
Again, He will cause you to return into it
and bring you out in an expelling. (71:18)
And how God made for you the earth as a carpet (71:19)
that you may tread in it ways through ravines. (71:20)

NOAH PRAYS FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PEOPLE

They followed such a one whose wealth
and children increase him not, but in loss. (71:21)
And they planned a magnificent plan. (71:22)
And they said: You will by no means forsake your gods,
nor will you forsake Wadd nor Suwa
nor Yaghuth nor Yauq nor Nasr. (71:23)
And, truly, they are going much astray.
And increase Thou not ones who are unjust
but in causing them to go astray. (71:24)
Because of their transgressions, they were drowned
and were caused to enter into a fire.
And they find not for themselves
any helpers other than God. (71:25)
And Noah said: My Lord! Allow not even one
on the earth from among the ones who are ungrateful! (71:26)
Truly, ***You****, if* ***You*** *were to allow them,*
they would cause ***Your*** *servants to go astray*
and they will but procreate immoral ingrates. (71:27)
My Lord! Forgive me and ones who are my parents
and whoever entered my house
as one who believes—the males, ones who believe
and the females, ones who believe
and increase not the ones who are unjust, but in ruin. (71:28)

COMMENTARY°

These signs begin with a statement defining the source of this message of divine faith. (71:1) This is the source that assigns tasks to Gods' messengers and from whom they learn the truth of faith. It is the source of all existence and all life. It is He who created human-

ity, giving their nature the ability to know and worship Him. When they deviated from this straight path, He sent them messengers to bring them back to Him. Noah was the first of these messengers after Adam. The Quran does not mention a message given to Adam after his fall to earth and life thereon. Perhaps he was a teacher who taught his children and grandchildren. With the passage of time, they went astray and adopted idols as deities. These were at first symbols of certain forces they considered holy. Then, they forgot what the symbols signified and worshipped the idols themselves. God sent them Noah to bring them back to believing in His oneness and give them the right concept of God, life and existence.

Having established the source of the message, these signs sum it up in a few words, and we learn that Noah was instructed to deliver a warning. (71:1) The report Noah presents to his Lord, as stated here shows that the state in which he found his people, heedless and arrogant, makes warning the sum of his message. In fact, the first thing he does by means of advocacy is to warn them of severe punishment, in either this world or the next, or in both.

The signs move straight from assigning the task to its fulfillment, in which the delivery of the warning is prominent. However, this is coupled with a note that raises the hope of the forgiveness of past sins and the deferment of reckoning until the Day of Resurrection. Moreover, the signs give a brief outline of the message Noah delivered to his people. (71:2)

He immediately states his role as a warner, clearly explaining his argument. He does not hesitate or wrap his words in a false cover. He leaves no one in confusion as to what he has to say, or what those who reject his message can expect. What he calls for is plain and simple. (71:3)

All worship must be addressed to God alone, without partners. Fearing God should be the quality that is clearly reflected in feeling and behavior. Obeying the messenger God sends to a people is the attitude that makes His orders the basis on which they build their way of life and how they determine their rules of behavior. These are the broad lines of divine faith in general, but messages may differ in points of detail as also in the concepts they outline, their relative scopes and how profound and comprehensive these are. To worship God alone provides a complete system of life that includes how man visualizes the nature of the Godhead and the nature of servitude to Him, the bond between the Creator and His creatures, as well as the nature of forces and values that operate in the universe and affect human life. Therefore, a system for human life is developed on the

basis of this concept, giving a special code of living. This code is based on the bond between God and His servants, and on the values He assigns to all things.

To be God-conscious is the true guarantee that people will follow this code of living, abide by it and never try to circumvent it or slacken in its implementation. Moreover, it is the quality that ensures sound moral behavior that seeks no reward other than being acceptable to God. Moreover, obeying God's messenger is the means that ensures remaining consistent, receiving guidance from its original source. It maintains the link with heaven through the messenger who receives instructions from on high.

These were the broad lines that constituted what Noah called on his people to believe in. They remain the essence of the divine faith for every generation. God promised them in reward what He promises those who turn to Him in repentance. (71:4) This sign states the reward promised for those who respond to the call to worship God alone, fear Him and obey His messenger. The reward is forgiveness of past sins, a respite lasting until the time appointed for reckoning, which means until the Day of Judgment, so that they will not be punished in this life like other communities that were totally destroyed. Later we see that Noah promised his people certain other things to be granted in this life.

Noah also confirms that this appointed time is inevitable: it comes at the moment determined for it. It will not be postponed like the delayed punishment in this world. (71:4) This statement may be understood to apply to every time appointed by God, so as to make this fact clear in their minds. It occurs at the appropriate place here, within the context of the promise that the reckoning will be deferred to the Day of Judgment if they heeded Noah's advice.

Untiring Efforts

Noah began his noble efforts to present guidance to his people. He had no personal interest in the matter, and stood to make no gain to compensate for all the arrogance and ridicule he had to put up with. He continued to do this for a thousand years minus fifty, with the number of those who responded positively hardly increasing. On the other hand, however, the level of rejection and insistence on following old erring ways did increase. At the end, Noah presented his account to God, who had assigned him this arduous task. He described his efforts even though he knew that God was fully aware of all that he had done. He is, therefore, simply making his heart-felt complaint to God, the only One to whom prophets, messengers and

true believers ever complain: Thus, Noah describes his untiring efforts at the end of his long, long journey. (71:5) He never slackened or showed any sign of boredom or despair in the face of determined and increasing opposition. (71:6) They ran away from the messenger who called on them to believe in God, the Giver of life, the Provider of everything they had and the Source of every light and guidance. Yet this messenger from whom they ran away never asked for anything in return for what he presented or taught them. He only called on them to believe so that they might be forgiven their sins.

When they could not physically run away, because he addressed them face to face, taking every opportunity to make his address heard, they loathed listening to him or even looking at him. They turned away in arrogance, intent on following their erring ways. (71:7) In this scene the advocate of the divine faith is seen using every opportunity to deliver his message, while they remain adamant, unwilling to hear. We see humanity here in its early stages, stubborn like a headstrong child, putting its fingers in its ears so that it does not hear, and covering its head and face. It is an image of childish resistance, thrusting their fingers in their ears, yet people can only put the tips of their fingers into their ears. The statement, thus, imparts an impression of violent reaction, as if they wanted to put their whole fingers into their ears to ensure that nothing of Noah's words could be heard. How childish!

In his strenuous efforts to fulfill his mission, Noah used every method, addressing them openly at times, and speaking to them in private on others. (71:8-71:9) In all this, he put before them immeasurable gains both in this life and in the life to come. The first prospect he put before them was forgiveness of their sins. (71:10) He also put before them the prospect of abundant provisions to be granted through rain pouring down in plenty, so that plants can grow and rivers run. He also added other types of God's grace, ones they loved dearly: children and wealth. (71:11-71:12)

Noah linked granting such provisions to seeking God's forgiveness of sins and misdeeds. This correlation between following God's guidance and attaining purity of heart on the one hand and a life of plenty and prosperity on the other is stated in several places in the Quran.

This is, then, a true rule repeatedly stated in the Quran. It is based on certain conditions involving a promise by God and the rules He set for human life. History confirms its fulfillment during different generations. The rule applies to communities and nations, not to individuals. Every community that implemented Gods law, truly

looking up to Him, doing good and beneficial deeds and seeking His forgiveness in a way that reflected fearing Him, benefited by this promise. Every community that worshipped God and feared Him, implementing His law and establishing justice and security for all people, was given provisions in plenty and a life of strength and affluence.

Having said this, we realize that some communities are left to enjoy a life of power and prosperity, despite the fact that they are far from being God-conscious or following His guidance. This is merely a test. Moreover, such prosperity is often accompanied by different ills such as the lack of social cohesion, loose morality, injustice, disregard for human dignity, etc. We see today two superpowers, seemingly enjoying power and plentiful provisions: one of them is capitalist while the other communist. In the first, morality has sunk to the lowest level. The prevailing vision of life has become so low that all life has become materialistic, measured by the dollar. In the other, the value of the human being has gone below the level of slavery. Intelligence agencies have become too powerful and people live in constant fear, threatened in their own homes. Several massacres have taken place, and no one is assured that by the morning his head will remain in place. A false allegation can easily find it chopped off. Neither condition can be described as a truly prosperous human life.

We continue with Noah and his untiring efforts. We see him trying to turn peoples attentions to the signs pointing to God, be these from within themselves or in the world around them. He wonders at their carelessness and rudeness. (71:13-71:14)

The stages of creation to which Noah refers must have been something which people either knew about or could understand at that time. He is obviously reminding them of something they know and hopes will have the desired effect of leading them to a positive response. Most commentators on the Quran say that the expression refers to the different stages the embryo goes through, starting with a gamete, then becoming a clinging cell mass, before it becomes a human embryo, and acquires a skeleton and is subsequently given its full shape and form. Noah's people could understand this because pregnant women suffered abortions at different stages of pregnancy, thus giving people a clear idea of how the human grows. This is one interpretation of the statement. It could also be a reference to what embryology says about the creation of the human being. It starts like a one-celled creature, then becomes like a multi-celled creature before acquiring the form of a water animal, then it becomes like a mammal, before it acquires human shape. This was however far from

comprehensible to Noah's people, being only a very recent discovery.

Noah draws the attention of his people to look at their creation and how it is done in stages. He reproaches them for knowing this and yet remaining insolent in their attitude towards their Lord. This is all very singular.

Noah directs his people's attention to the open book of the universe. (71:15-71:16) We cannot specify a meaning for the seven heavens on the basis of scientific theories about the universe, for these are only theories. Noah simply draws their attention to the skies. He tells them, as God taught him, that there are seven heavens in layers, and that they include the sun and the moon, which they could obviously see, just as they saw what they called the sky, which is that familiar blue colored space. To know what it is exactly is not necessary. Nor has it been properly proven even today. The invitation to look though is enough to reflect on the supreme power that has brought such great creatures into existence. This is what Noah wanted his people to do. He then invites them to look at their own creation, starting from dust and returning to it after death, and emphasizing the truth of resurrection (71:17-71:18)

The reference to the human being originating from the earth like a plant is both amazing and inspiring. This is certainly worth studying. It suggests that the origins of life on earth are the same, and that the making of the human being is the same as the making of plants. The human being is made of the earth's simple elements and feeds on such elements to grow. Thus, he is a plant like the rest of earth's plants. He is given a form of life different from that of plants, but both originate from mother earth, which suckles them both. We see how faith gives a believer a complete and true concept of his relation to the earth and to other living things. This concept combines scientific accuracy with warm feelings, which is the distinctive mark of true Quranic knowledge.

Those people who came out of the earth will go back into it, because God determines so, just like He brought them into being out of it. Their ashes become mixed with its dust and they become part of it again, just as they were before. Then again, God will bring them out like He did the first time. It is a simple matter that does not require a moments hesitation if we only look at it from this Quranic angle. Noah points out this truth to his people so that they feel how Gods hand lets them grow out of the earth like plants do, and then returns them there. Once they do this, they can easily expect the second life and take it into account. It is so simple and easy, needing no further argument.

Finally, Noah directs his people's hearts to reflect on Gods blessing as He enabled them to live easily on earth, conducting their various activities with ease and comfort. (71:19-271:0) This reality is so close to them and they see it all the time in full view. They cannot escape it like they tried to escape from Noah and his warnings.

In relation to them, the earth is stretched out like a vast expanse. Even in its mountains, God placed paths that are easy for them to traverse. They walk and travel even more easily on the plains. They can thus move about seeking God's bounty, and exchanging goods and benefits. They did not need scientific studies that sought to understand the natural laws that govern and facilitate their life on earth in order to appreciate all this. Indeed, the greater human knowledge gets the more evident the truth of this statement is.

We see how Noah tried to address his people in various ways, employing a wide range of methods. We also see his patience, perseverance and conscientiousness. He continued to exert these efforts over 950 years before giving this report to his Lord, complaining of the response he had had to contend with. From his succinct and accurate account we see a splendid image of the great efforts he made. Yet all this is merely one ring in the chain of divine messages to humanity.

So, what happens next? (71:21-71:24) It is a heart-felt complaint. After all Noah's endeavors, guidance and sound advice and the promise of an easy, plentiful life, they chose to disobey and follow the lead of those who had gone far astray, only because the latter enjoyed wealth, children and power. Yet such leaders benefit nothing by all these blessings. (71:21) What they possessed of wealth and children tempted them to go further astray, a scenario that could only end in misery and ruin. Yet these leaders did not stop at just going astray. (71:22) Their plot was on a grand scale, and its aim was to foil Noah's efforts, to suppress his message and to prevent it from addressing people's hearts. They schemed to give their disbelief and ignorance an attractive color. Therefore, they urged people to adhere to their false beliefs and to continue to worship those idols whom they called gods. They sought to arouse peoples personal emotions, making them feel that these idols were their own gods. They mentioned the names of the most important ones, so as to stir peoples false pride in them. (71:23) These were indeed the largest and the most important of their idols. Indeed, they continued to be worshipped in other ignorant communities until the time of the Islamic message.

This remains the practice of erring leaderships. They create idols

that may differ in name and form, according to the going trends in different ignorant societies. They seek to rally the masses around such idols and stir their emotions to defend them so that they can lead them wherever they want to, ensuring that they remain in error. This is how they manage to lead people astray. (71:24) Indeed every type of erring leadership tries to rally the people around idols, which may be in the form of statues, or humans or ideas. They are all the same, manipulated to turn people away from the divine message, creating a schism between them and its advocates. It is all part of a grand scheme, a mighty plot with a selfish end.

A passionate prayer is then voiced by Noah against the oppressors, the wrongdoers who lead people astray through plots and schemes of their own devising. (71:24) It is the prayer of one who has tried for a long time, making every effort and using every method. Eventually, however, he came to the conclusion that those erring, wrongdoing hearts were altogether devoid of goodness, undeserving of divine guidance.

Before completing Noah's prayer, the sign gives us an image of the end suffered by those wrongdoers in this life and in the life to come. Both situations are present in God's knowledge. They are events that admit no change:

Because of their sins, they were drowned, and were made to enter the fire. They found none besides God to support them. (71:25)

It is because of their sins and disobedience that they were made to drown and enter the fire. The two events are intentionally joined in succession, because their entry into the fire is connected to their drowning. The time gap between the two is so short that it is almost non-existent; according to God's measures it is negligible. The sequence is there: they were drowned in this life and they are made to enter the fire in the life to come. What is in between is perhaps the torment in the grave during the short gap between the two lives. (71:25) None whatsoever! No children, no wealth, no power and no patron from among their alleged deities.

In a single short verse, these mighty ones are swept away and no mention is left of them in human memory. No details are given here of their drowning or the floods that swept them away. This because the signs want to leave us with the impression of swift punishment. Indeed, it covers the gap between their drowning and their entry into hell with the conjunction, rendered in translation as and'. This is a common feature of the inimitable Quranic style. Therefore, we do not go into any further details of this event here.

The sign then gives the remainder of Noah's passionate prayer:

In his heart of hearts, Noah felt that the earth needed to have a complete change, a change that would eradicate the evil that had become so deeply entrenched among his people. Sometimes, only such eradication of the wrongdoers from the face of the earth will suffice. Their continued presence may put the divine message under siege, preventing it from touching people's hearts. This is exactly the scenario Noah states in his appeal to God to destroy these tyrannical oppressors, leaving none of them to walk the earth. He says: "If You spare them, they will lead Your servants astray." (71:27) Describing those people forced to go astray as "Your servants" suggests that they are the believers. This is a reference to how such wrongdoers will always use brute force to turn people away from divine faith. He may also mean that they lead others astray when people see them enjoying power and authority, without being punished for their wrongdoing.

Moreover, they create an environment in which the ungrateful are born and reared. This whole environment of ingratitude and its determined rejection of God's message leaves no way for the young to see the light. It overwhelms them with its erroneous beliefs and practices. It is to this fact that Noah, God's noble messenger, refers when he says that these wrongdoers will. (71:27) They create within the community an atmosphere based on falsehood and establish systems, traditions and situations that only help to lead the young into sin and disbelief. Thus, the new generation will always be composed of sinners and the hardened ungrateful as Noah said.

It is for this reason that Noah made his sweeping appeal to God, and God answered his prayer, washing that evil off the face of the earth. Noah ended his appeal against the ungrateful by a request to God to increase their ruin. (71:28)

Noah also made a different sort of passionate and humble appeal to God. (71:28) His prayer that God forgives him his sins is an aspect of the good manners all prophets maintain when addressing God. Noah knows that he is only a human being appealing to God. He knows that no matter how diligent he is in his obedience and worship, he makes mistakes and remains short of the high standard believers should try to attain. He also realizes the truth the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) later expressed when he said that no human being, not even a prophet, is admitted into heaven on the basis of his actions only, unless God bestows His grace on him. This appeal for forgiveness is exactly what he called upon his people to do, but they were too arrogant to take heed. Yet Noah, God s noble messenger who has untiringly sought to advocate God's message, seeks God's forgiveness at the moment he presents his account.

His prayer for his parents is an aspect of dutifulness towards parents who are believers. This is what we understand from the fact that he prayed for them. Had they been ungrateful, he would have been told not to pray for their forgiveness, as he was told that his son, an ingrate, met his merited fate when he was drowned with the rest of the unbelievers.

His special prayer for everyone who entered his home as a believer marks the mutual love between believers. Everyone loves for others to receive the same grace as he receives. This special mention of those who enter his home refers to the fact that they were the ones to be saved from the floods; they were the ones on the Ark with him.

Noah's final prayer is for the forgiveness of all believing men and women throughout all generations and localities. It emphasizes the close bond that unites them all, different as their communities and times may be. This is a remarkable quality of the divine faith, establishing this strong bond of genuine love between all believers across the centuries. It tells of the hidden secret God has incorporated into the divine faith and placed in believers' hearts.

Contrasted with this love among believers is the genuine aversion expressed towards the ungrateful. (71:28) In this way do the digns conclude after having given us a bright picture of Noah's struggle, as contrasted with the stubborn rejection by the ungrateful. It leaves us with feelings of love towards this great prophet, and admiration for his hard struggle. It strengthens our resolve to follow the same route no matter what hardship we have to endure and no matter what sacrifices we are called upon to make. It is the only route that ensures mankind attains the highest standard possible in their life on earth.

The Folk of Noah Denied Noah

Chapter 14: The 72nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Approach not to you the tidings*
of those before you:
The folk of Noah and Ad and Thamud
and of those after them.
None knows them but God.
Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents,
but they shoved their hands into their mouths in denial.
Then, they said: Truly, we disbelieved in what you were sent
and we are in uncertainty about that to which you call us.

We are in grave doubt. (14:9)

Noah Had Been a Grateful Servant Who was Saved

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And mention Noah, when he cried out before*
and We responded to him.
And We delivered him and his people
from the tremendous distress. (21:76)
And We helped him against the folk who denied Our signs.
Truly, they had been a reprehensible folk.
So We drowned them one and all. (21:77)

Noah's Message to His People

Chapter 23: The 74th Chapter Revealed

Makkah 620: *And, certainly, We sent Noah to his folk.*
And he said: O my folk! Worship God!
You have no other god but Him.
Will you not, then, be God-conscious? (23:23)
But said the Council who were ungrateful among his folk:
This is nothing but a mortal like you.
He wants to gain superiority over you. (23:24)
If God willed He would have caused angels to descend.
We heard not such a thing from our fathers, the ancient ones. (23:25)
He is nothing but a man in whom there is madness.
So watch him for awhile.
He said: My Lord! Help me because they denied me.(23:26)
*So We revealed to him: Craft **you** the boat under Our eyes*
and by Our revelation.
Then, when Our command drew near and the oven boiled,
*then, insert two pairs of each kind and **your** people,*
but whomever against whom the saying has preceded.
And address Me not for those who did wrong.
Truly, they are ones who are drowned. (23:27)
*When **you** and whoever is with **you** are seated in the boat,*
then, say: All Praise belongs to God
*Who delivered us from the folk, the ones who are unjust.** (23:28)
*And say: My Lord! Land **You** me with a blessed landing*
*for **You** are Best of the landing-places.* (23:29)
Truly, in this there are signs and, truly,
We had been ones who test. (23:30)
Again, We caused to grow another generation after them. (23:31)

We sent a Messenger to them from among them saying that:
Worship God! You have no god other than Him.
Will you, then, not be God-conscious? (23:32)
And said the Council of his folk to those who were ungrateful
and denied the meeting in the world to come,
and to whom We gave ease in this present life:
This is nothing but a mortal like you.
He eats of what you eat and he drinks of what you drink. (23:33)
And if you obeyed a mortal like yourselves,
truly, then, you are ones who are losers.(23:34)
Promises He that when you died
and had been earth dust and bones,
that you will be ones who are brought out? (23:35)
Begone! Begone with what you are promised! (23:36)
There is nothing but this present life.
We die and we live and we shall not be ones who are raised up. (23:37)
He is nothing but a man. He devised a lie
against God and we are not ones who will believe in him. (23:38)
He said: My Lord! Help me because they denied me. (23:39)
He said: In a little while they will become
ones who are remorseful. (23:40)
Then, a Cry duly took them so We made them into refuse.
So away with the folk, the ones who are unjust! (23:41)
Again, We caused to grow after them other generations. (23:42)
No community precedes its term, nor delays it. (23:43)
Again, We sent Our Messengers one after another.
Whenever drew near a community a Messenger to them,
they denied him.
So We caused some of them to pursue others
and We made them tales.
So away with the folk who believe not! (23:44)

Commentary°

[This signs] begins with a statement defining the source of this message of divine faith. (23:1) This is the source that assigns tasks to God's messengers and from whom they learn the truth of faith. It is the source of all existence and all life. It is He who created humanity, giving their nature the ability to know and worship Him. When they deviated from this straight path, He sent them messengers to bring them back to Him.

Noah was the first of these messengers after Adam. The Quran does not mention a message given to Adam after his fall to earth and

life thereon. Perhaps he was a teacher who taught his children and grandchildren. With the passage of time, they went astray and adopted idols as deities. These were at first symbols of certain forces they considered holy. Then, they forgot what the symbols signified and worshipped the idols themselves. God sent them Noah to bring them back to believing in His oneness and give them the right concept of God, life and existence.

Having established the source of the message, [these verses] sum it up in a few words, and we learn that Noah was instructed to deliver a warning. (23:l) The report Noah presents to his Lord, as stated here shows that the state in which he found his people, heedless and arrogant, makes warning the sum of his message. In fact, the first thing he does by means of advocacy is to warn them of severe punishment, in either this world or the next, or in both.

The signs moves straight from assigning the task to its fulfillment, in which the delivery of the warning is prominent. However, this is coupled with a note that raises the hope of the forgiveness of past sins and the deferment of reckoning until the Day of Resurrection. Moreover, the sgns give a brief outline of the message Noah delivered to his people. (23:2) He immediately states his role as a warner, clearly explaining his argument. He does not hesitate or wrap his words in a false cover. He leaves no one in confusion as to what he has to say, or what those who reject his message can expect. What he calls for is plain and simple. (23:3) All worship must be addressed to God alone, without partners. Fearing God should be the quality that is clearly reflected in feeling and behavior. Obeying the Messenger God sends to a people is the attitude that makes His orders the basis on which they build their way of life and how they determine their rules of behavior.

To be God-conscious is the true guarantee that people will follow this code of living, abide by it and never try to circumvent it or slacken in its implementation. Moreover, it is the quality that ensures sound moral behavior that seeks no reward other than being acceptable to God. Moreover, obeying God's messenger is the means that ensures remaining consistent, receiving guidance from its original source. It maintains the link with heaven through the messenger who receives instructions from on high.

These were the broad lines that constituted what Noah called on his people to believe in. They remain the essence of the divine faith for every generation. God promised them in reward what He promises those who turn to Him in repentance. (23: 4) This sign states the reward promised for those who respond to the call to worship God

alone, fear Him and obey His messenger. The reward is forgiveness of past sins, a respite lasting until the time appointed for reckoning, which means until the Day of Judgment, so that they will not be punished in this life like other communities that were totally destroyed. Later we see that Noah promised his people certain other things to be granted in this life.

Noah also confirms that this appointed time is inevitable: it comes at the moment determined for it. It will not be postponed like the delayed punishment in this world. (23:4) This statement may be understood to apply to every time appointed by God, so as to make this fact clear in their minds. It occurs at the appropriate place here, within the context of the promise that the reckoning will be deferred to the Day of Judgment if they heeded Noah's advice.

The Message of Noah

Noah stayed with his people and exhorted them to goodness for 950 years; but they rejected Noah's exhortation and the flood overtook them.

Chapter 29: The 85th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Noah to his folk*
and he lingered in expectation among them a thousand years
less fifty years.
And the Deluge took them while they were
the ones who are unjust. (29:14)
Then, We rescued him and the Companions of the Ark
and made it a sign for the worlds. (29:15)

God Favored Noah

Chapter 3: The 89th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Truly, God favored Adam and Noah*
and the people of Abraham and the people of Imran
above all the worlds,. (3:33)

Generations Raised After Noah's People Denied Messengers

Other generations and other messengers one after another sent to warn humanity; every messenger was belied.

Chapter 22: The 103rd Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And if they deny **you** surely,*
*the folk of Noah denied before **you***
and Ad and Thamud. (22:42)

Ungrateful Wrong Themselves

Chapter 9: The 113th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Approaches them not the tidings*
of those before them
—the folk of Noah and of Aad and of Thamud,
and of a folk of Abraham,
and of the Companions of Midian,
and that which are cities overthrown?
Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents.
So it had not been God who did wrong to them,
rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

Commentary°

Has not the tidings, the tale, of those before them reached them — the folk of Noah, and Aad, the folk of Hud, and Thamud, the folk of Salih, and the folk of Abraham, and the dwellers of Midian, the folk of Shuayb, and the Deviant cities, the cities of the folk of Lot, meaning, its inhabitants. Their messengers brought them clear proofs, with miracles, but they denied them, and so were destroyed. God would never have wronged them, by punishing them for no sin on their part, but they wronged themselves, by committing sin.

The Companions of the Ark (al-Safina)

Chapter 29: The 85th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Noah to his folk*
and he lingered in expectation among them a thousand years
less fifty years.
And the Deluge took them while they were
the ones who are unjust. (29:14)
Then, We rescued him and the Companions of the Ark
and made it a sign for the worlds. (29:15)

Hud and the People of Aad

Chapter 89: The 10th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Have you not considered*
how your Lord accomplished with Aad, (89:6)
with Iram of the pillars (89:7)
of which are not created the likes in the Land? (89:8)

Commentary°

The subject of the oath is omitted, but it is explained by the discussion that follows on tyranny and corruption. The punishment inflicted by God on the insolent, tyrannical and corrupt communities is a law of nature asserted by this oath. (89:6-89:14)

The interrogative form in such a context is more effective in drawing the attention of the addressee, who is, in the first instance, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and then all those who may ponder over the fates of those past communities. The people of the Prophet's generation, who were the first to be addressed by the Quran were aware of what happened to these nations. Their fates were also explained in reports and stories conveyed by one generation to another. The description of these outcomes as the deeds of God is comforting and reassuring for the believers. It was particularly so to those believers in Makkah who, at the time when this chapter was revealed, were subjected to relentless persecution and hardship by the unbelievers.

These short verses refer to the fates of the most powerful and despotic nations in ancient history. They speak of the earlier tribe of Aad of Iram, a branch of extinct Arabs. They used to dwell in al-Ahqaf, a sandy piece of land in southern Arabia, midway between Yemen and Hadramowt. The Aad were nomadic, using posts and pillars to erect their tents. They are described elsewhere in the Quran as being extremely powerful and aggressive. Indeed they were the most powerful and prestigious of all contemporary Arabian tribes. (Verse 8) The distinction here is restricted to that particular age.

(Iram: According to Islamic beliefs, King Shaddad defied the warnings of the prophet Hud and God smote the city, driving it into the sands, never to be seen again. The ruins of the city lie buried somewhere in the sands of the Rub al-Khali. Iram became known to Western literature with the translation of The Book of One Thousand and One Nights.)

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Other Warners Sent

Chapter 50: The 34th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *... and Aad and Pharaoh and the brothers of Lot [denied]* ... (50:13)

The Folk Who Deny

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Noah before them denied and Aad and Pharaoh, the possessor of the stakes,* (38:12)

The Message of the Messenger Hud

Hud exhorting his people to serve only God and none else; the people challenging Hus against the threats of the wrath of God; the punishment they suffered.

Chapter 7: The 39th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And to Aad, God sent their brother Hud. He said: O my folk! Worship God. You have no god but He.*

Will you not, then, be Godfearing? (7:65)
The Council of those who were ungrateful said among his folk:
Truly, we see foolishness in ***you.***
And, truly, we think that ***you*** *are among the ones who lie.* (7:66)
He said: O my folk! There is no foolishness in me.
I am only a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds. (7:67)
I state the messages of my Lord to you
and I am one who gives advice to you, trustworthy. (7:68)
Or marveled you that there drew near you
a remembrance from your Lord
through a man from among you that he may warn you?
And remember when He made you viceregents
after the folk of Noah
and increased you greatly in constitution?
Then, remember the benefits of God
so that perhaps you will prosper. (7:69)
They said: Hast thou brought about to us
that we should worship God alone
and forsake what our fathers had been worshipping?
So approach us with what thou hast promised us
if ***you*** *had been among the ones who are sincere.* (7:70)
He said: Surely, fell on you disgrace and anger from your Lord.
Dispute you with me over names which you named,
you and your fathers,
for which God sent not down any authority?
Then, wait awhile. Truly, I will be with you
among the ones who are waiting awhile. (7:71)
Then, We rescued him and those with him by a mercy from Us.
And We severed the last remnant of those who denied Our signs.
And they had not been ones who believe. (7:72)

Commentary°

They followed the same pattern as Noah's people, rejected the warnings, and refused to reflect on what happened to those who went along before them. (Verse 65) This implies a strong criticism of their attitude as they show no fear of God and no worry about a terrible destiny.

The People of Aad

Chapter 25: The 42nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: ... *and Aad and Thamud*
and the Companions of the Rass

and many generations in between that. (25:38)

Commentary°

And, mention, Aad, the people of Hud, and Thamud, the people of Salih, and the dwellers at al-Rass — the name of a 'well'; their prophet is said to have been Jethro (Shuayb); although some say it was someone else. The story is that they had been sitting around it on one occasion when it collapsed beneath them burying them together with their dwellings. And many generations, peoples, in between, that is, between the people of Aad and the dwellers at al-Rass.

Hud Advises his People to Guard Themselves Against Evil

Chapter 26: The 47th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The Aad denied the ones who are sent* (26:123)
when their brother Hud said to them:
Will you not be God-conscious? (26:124)
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you, (26:125)
so be God-conscious and obey me. (26:126)
And I ask you not for any compensation for it.
My compensation is only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:127)
Build you a sign on every high hill to amuse? (26:128)
And take you for yourselves castles
so that perhaps you will dwell in them forever? (26:129)
And when you seized by force,
seized you by force haughtily? (26:130)
So be God-conscious and obey me. (26:131)
Be God-conscious of Him Who furnished relief to you
with all that you know. (26:132)
He furnished relief to you with flocks and children (26:133)
and gardens and springs. (26:134)
Truly, I fear for you the punishment
of a tremendous Day. (26:135)
*They said: It is equal to us whether **you** were to admonish*
*or **you** have not been among the ones who admonish.* (26:136)
Truly, this is nothing but morals of the ancient ones (26:137)
and we are not ones who are punished. (26:138)
So they denied him and We caused them to perish.
Truly, in this is a sign yet most of them
had not been ones who believe. (26:139)
*And, truly, **your** Lord, He is, certainly,*
The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:140)

Commentary°

The story of Hud and his people has the same beginning as Noah's story: The Aad, too, denied God's messengers. Their brother Hid said to them: Will you have no fear of God? I am a Messenger [sent by Him] to you, worthy of all trust. So, fear God and pay heed to me. No reward whatever do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the Lord of all the worlds. (26:123-26:127)

It is the same message given by every messenger of God: it is a call to believe in God alone and to fear Him and obey His messenger. This is coupled with a declaration disclaiming any interest in worldly luxuries or position the people may have to offer. This puts things in the right perspective. The messenger seeks nothing from them, but instead he looks to God for his reward.

Had follows this declaration by examining their own particular conditions and behavior. He criticizes the fact that they build lofty buildings to demonstrate their ability, taking pride in their wealth. He denounces their arrogance which results from their material power and the resources that enable them to use different forces and means, in total disregard of God, oblivious to the fact of their accountability to Him. (26:128-26:129)

It seems that they used to build on high places so as to make such structures appear from a distance as grand landmarks. They did so to emphasize their superiority and great ability. Hence the Quran describes it as a vain endeavor. Had it been intended as a landmark or a sign to show direction, it would not have been described as such. The Quranic statement, then, implies the need to direct one's resources and abilities to what is of benefit, not merely to show off and demonstrate abilities and wealth. It also appears that the people of Aad were well advanced in industry, using machinery to carve positions for their palaces that they built on mountains. This is indicated in what Hud said to them. (Verse 129) It even occurred to them that such strong structures built with the use of heavy machinery could spare their lives, and protect them from severe atmospheric conditions as also from enemy attack.

They have further practices that are strongly criticized by Hud. (26:130) They were mighty, hard, tyrannical and would deal with others using utmost cruelty, like many others who rely on material power.

Hud, therefore, reminds them that they must fear God and obey His messenger. This would be sure to redress their cruelty and put a stop to their arrogance. (26:131) He further reminds them of God's grace, as it is He who has favored them with His blessings that they

use arrogantly as also to oppress others. They should have remembered God's favors and given thanks for them. They should also bear in mind that the One who has granted them such favors can easily take them back, or punish them for putting His favors to wrong use. (26:132-135)

Hud's reminder mentions first the One who granted them such blessings before enumerating them. He then gives further details." (26:133-134) These were the best favors that they could have enjoyed during that period of time. They are indeed a great favor at any time. He then warns them against punishment that may befall them on an awesome day. His warning expresses his fear for their end, because he is one of them, their brother, and he wants to spare them the hardship of that day which is certain to come.

But his reminders and warnings do not touch their hardened hearts. They stubbornly refuse to mend their ways. (26:136) This is a derogatory way of speaking, one which expresses their carelessness for whatever he might say. They add a clear indication that they are hardened in their ways, relying totally on what they have inherited from previous generations. (26:137-138) Their only argument in defense of all the practices Hud has criticized them for is that they are following earlier generations, towing their line. They then deny the possibility of being punished for following in their ancestors' footsteps. (26:138)

[These verses do] not mention here any of the arguments that took place between them and Hud. It proceeds straight to the end (26:139) These two short sentences, expressed in the original Arabic text by only two words, fakadhdhabuhu faahlaknahum, spell out the end of the mighty people of Aad and their great symbols of power. Nothing is left of their luxuries, cattle, children, gardens and springs.

How many a community has followed the same practices as the people of Aad, moving further away from God with every new aspect of civilization they have achieved. They always think that man can be independent of God. They try to produce weapons to destroy others while ensuring their own security. Yet it may be only a day or a night and such a community finds itself subjected to God's punishment. (26:139-140)

The story of Hud and his people has the same beginning as Noah's story: The Aad, too, denied God's Messengers. Their brother Hud said to them: Will you have no fear of God? I am a Messenger [sent by Him] to you, worthy of all trust. So, fear God and pay heed to me. No reward whatever do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the Lord of all the worlds.

It is the same message given by every messenger of God: it is a call to believe in God alone and to fear Him and obey His messenger. This is coupled with a declaration disclaiming any interest in worldly luxuries or position the people may have to offer. This puts things in the right perspective. The messenger seeks nothing from them, but instead he looks to God for his reward.

Hud follows this declaration by examining their own particular conditions and behavior. He criticizes the fact that they build lofty buildings to demonstrate their ability, taking pride in their wealth. He denounces their arrogance which results from their material power and the resources that enable them to use different forces and means, in total disregard of God, oblivious to the fact of their accountability to Him.

It seems that they used to build on high places so as to make such structures appear from a distance as grand landmarks. They did so to emphasize their superiority and great ability. Hence the Quran describes it as a vain endeavor. Had it been intended as a landmark or a sign to show direction, it would not have been described as such. The Quranic statement, then, implies the need to direct one's resources and abilities to what is of benefit, not merely to show off and demonstrate abilities and wealth. It also appears that the people of Aad were well advanced in industry, using machinery to carve positions for their palaces that they built on mountains. This is indicated in what Hud said to them. It even occurred to them that such strong structures built with the use of heavy machinery could spare their lives, and protect them from severe atmospheric conditions as also from enemy attack.

They have further practices that are strongly criticized by Hud. They were mighty, hard, tyrannical and would deal with others using utmost cruelty, like many others who rely on material power.

Hud, therefore, reminds them that they must fear God and obey His messenger. This would be sure to redress their cruelty and put a stop to their arrogance. He further reminds them of God's grace, as it is He who has favored them with His blessings that they use arrogantly as also to oppress others. They should have remembered God's favors and given thanks for them. They should also bear in mind that the One who has granted them such favors can easily take them back, or punish them for putting His favors to wrong use.

Hud's reminder mentions first the One who granted them such blessings before enumerating them. He then gives further details." These were the best favors that they could have enjoyed during that period of time. They are indeed a great favor at any time. He then

warns them against punishment that may befall them on an awesome day. His warning expresses his fear for their end, because he is one of them, their brother, and he wants to spare them the hardship of that day which is certain to come.

But his reminders and warnings do not touch their hardened hearts. They stubbornly refuse to mend their ways. This is a derogatory way of speaking, one which expresses their carelessness for whatever he might say. They add a clear indication that they are hardened in their ways, relying totally on what they have inherited from previous generations. Their only argument in defense of all the practices Hud has criticized them for is that they are following earlier generations, towing their line. They then deny the possibility of being punished for following in their ancestors' footsteps.

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They did not soften to their brother's call when he said to them. (26:106) Will you not worry about the end to which your attitudes and actions lead you?

This directive and reminder to fear God is consistent in [these verses]. We saw it with Pharaoh and his people as God informed Moses of his assignment. Then every prophet that succeeded Noah said the same thing to his community. (26:107) He would not cheat, defraud or act dishonestly. He would not add to, or withhold anything from what he was required to deliver to his people. (26:108) In this case, Noah again reminds his people to fear God, giving it a more express definition this time. He appeals to their consciences to obey him as he calls on them to surrender themselves to God.

The Message of Hud

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And to Aad, their brother Hud.*

He said: O my folk! Worship God!
You have no god other than He.
You are nothing but ones who devise. (11:50)
O my folk! I ask not of you any compensation.
My compensation is but with Who originated me.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (11:51)
And O my folk! Ask your Lord for forgiveness.
Again, repent to Him. He will send abundant rain to you from heaven
and increase you, adding strength to your strength.
So turn not away as ones who sin. (11:52)
*They said: O Hud! Have **You** brought about*
any clear portent for us?
We will not be ones who leave our gods for thy saying?
*And we are not ones who believe in **you**.* (11:53)
Truly, we say nothing but that some of our gods
*inflicted **you** with evil.*
He said: Truly, I call God to witness and bear you witness
that I am free from partners you ascribe (11:54)
other than Him. So try to outwit me altogether.
Again, give me no respite. (11:55)
Truly, I put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord.
There is not a moving creature
but He is One Who Takes of its forelock.
Truly, my Lord is on a straight path. (11:56)
But if you turn away, that is your decision.
Then, surely, I expressed to you what I was sent with to you.
And my Lord will make successors a folk other than you
and you will not injure Him at all.
Truly, My Lord is Guardian over everything. (11:57)
And Our command drew near.
We delivered Hud and those who believed
with him by a mercy from Us.
And We delivered them from a harsh punishment. (11:58)
And that was Aad. They negated the signs of their Lord
and rebelled against His Messengers.
And they followed the command
of every haughty and stubborn one. (11:59)
And they were pursued in the present life by a curse.
And on the Day of Resurrection, no doubt, truly,
Aad were ungrateful to their Lord.
Away with Aad, a folk of Hud! (11:60)

Commentary°

Every messenger was sent to his own community. At the start of his message, the messenger would be a member of his community, addressing them as a brother, desiring for them all the goodness a brother desires for his siblings. He wanted them to have all the goodness he had found in God's guidance, and for which he found clear evidence granted by his Lord. This was the attitude of every single messenger at the beginning; but it was not the same with any of them at the end.

A group from among every community responded to the message. They began to worship God alone. Thus, they surrendered themselves totally to God, forming together a community of believers, or a Muslim community, in the broader sense of the term. Another group rejected the message, denying its truth and continuing to submit to deities other than God. They remained in ignorance. Thus, they became a community of ungrateful.

This means that by their different attitudes towards God's messenger and his message, the same people became two communities: one Muslim and the other idolater. They were no longer one community, despite being of the same race and origin. Ties of race, land and common interests could no longer unite them and govern their relations. With the divine message a new bond came into being, uniting or dividing the same people. This is the bond of faith, with the type of submission it requires and the code of living it lays down.

What the advocates of Islamic revival today must clearly understand is that God never set the believers apart from the unbelievers until the believers themselves split away from the rest of their people. In so doing they declared their rejection of idolatry, submitted to God alone, and refused to obey any tyrannical authority. They also refused to participate in the social life of the community ruled by an authority implementing laws different from those of God.

God did not act to destroy the wrongdoers until the believers had separated themselves from them. This means that the believers must declare to the rest of their people that they are a community apart, with a distinctive faith, way of life and line of action. This is essential before God acts to fulfill His promise of granting victory to the believers and inflicting His punishment on the unbelievers.

It is particularly important that advocates of Islamic revival should understand this constant rule so as to plan their method of operation. The first step is to call on people to submit themselves to God alone, and to no one else. The same people will eventually split

into two groups. The believers then separate themselves from the rest. When all this takes place, God's promise to grant victory to the believers becomes due for fulfillment, as consistently happened throughout history.

The period of advocacy and calling on people to believe may be prolonged before the separation occurs in practical terms. However, mental separation should start right at the beginning. Separating the two communities may be delayed, while one generation or more of believers provide sacrifices and endure hardship and torture. The believers must, nevertheless, remain convinced that God's promise is more true than the apparent reality. It will not fail to come at the appropriate time. God never fails to honor His promises.

Who Understands the Quran?

These observations about the historical accounts given in the chapter reveal to us the nature of the Islamic approach, as outlined in the Quran. It is a practical approach in the face of human realities. These histories were related to the Prophet when he was in Makkah. The small number of believers were confined to their city, and the message practically besieged within it. The road ahead must have seemed to those believers to be long, arduous and without an end in sight. These histories showed them the end and outlined the different stages ahead. The Quran thus took the believers by the hand, helpe(them on the road that had become a continuation of the march tha started at the beginning of human history advocating the true faith of self-surrender to God alone. Thus, they no longer felt that their road was deserted. They felt themselves to be a new group in a continuous procession walking along a well-charted road. They moved from the starting point to the finishing line according to a well-defined plan.

Thus did the Quran act with the Muslim community, moving it in safe and measured steps. Thus it can do today and in future with the advocates of Islamic revival, moving them along the same way. These advocates need the Quran as a guiding light, marking its movement and outlining its stages.

When the Quran plays this role, it is no longer treated as mere words recited for blessing. It comes alive as if it is being bestowed now from on high to guide the Muslim community which implements its directives and hopes for the fulfillment of God's promise which it clearly states.

This is what we mean when we say that this Quran reveals its secrets only to the Muslim group that moves according to its guid-

ance, to put its message into practice. It does not reveal these secrets to those who only read it for blessings, artistic or scientific study, or to appreciate its artistic beauty and fine style. None of these will truly appreciate much of the Quran, because the Quran was not bestowed from on high for such purposes. It was rather revealed to act as a practical guide providing directives for implementation.

Those who face up to ignorance with the message of Islam, and who endeavor to return erring humanity to the faith based on submission to God alone, and who strive against tyranny in order to liberate humanity from servitude to others, are the ones who truly understand the Quran. They are the ones who live in an environment similar to that which prevailed when the Quran was revealed. They make the same attempt made by those who were the first to be addressed by the Quran. As they make their endeavors, they appreciate the meaning of its verses, because they see how such meaning applies to events and practical situations. This by itself is compensation for all the pain they have to endure and the sacrifice they have to make.

What am I saying? Is it compensation? Certainly not. It is a great blessing from God.

Every messenger was sent to his own community. At the start of his message, the messenger would be a member of his community, addressing them as a brother, desiring for them all the goodness a brother desires for his siblings. He wanted them to have all the goodness he had found in God's guidance, and for which he found clear evidence granted by his Lord. This was the attitude of every single messenger at the beginning; but it was not the same with any of them at the end.

A group from among every community responded to the message. They began to worship God alone. Thus, they surrendered themselves totally to God, forming together a community of believers, or a Muslim community, in the broader sense of the term. Another group rejected the message, denying its truth and continuing to submit to deities other than God. They remained in ignorance. Thus, they became a community of ungrateful.

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The Punishement Following Denial

Chapter 54: The 37th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Aad denied. So how had been*
My punishment and My warning? (54:18)
Truly, We sent a raging wind against them
on a day of continuous misfortune, (54:19)
tearing out humanity as if they had been
uprooted palm trees, uprooted. (54:20)
So how had been My punishment and My warning? (54:21)
And, certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance.
Then, is there one who recalls? (54:22)

Commentary°

The people of Aad also rejected the truth. How grievous was My punishment and how true were My warnings? We sent against them a howling cold wind on a day of unceasing misfortune: it swept people away as though they were uprooted palm trunks. How grievous was My punishment and how true were My warnings? We have made the Quran easy to bear in mind: will anyone take heed? (Verses 18-22)

The scene is violent and fearful; the storm wind sent against the Aad was one of Gods forces. It is a natural phenomenon God has placed in the universe. It operates according to the universal system He has chosen. He sends it against whomever He wishes. It continues to operate within natural laws, where there is no conflict between its normal operation in the planned order of things and its fulfillment of God's orders whatever they happen to be. It is He who set this natural law and issued the command. (Verse 21) This statement is now repeated after the scene has been shown providing the answer. The episode concludes with the other comment repeated throughout the surah according to its own flow: We have made the Quran easy to bear in mind. (Verse 22)

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The People of Aad

Chapter 40: The 60th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And he who believed said: O my folk!*
Truly, I fear for you like a Day of the confederates, (40:30)
in like manner of a folk of Noah and Aad and Thamud
and those after them.
And God wants not injustice for His servants. (40:31)

The Creation of the Earth and the Heavens

Chapter 41: The 61st Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *But if they turned aside, then, say:*
I warned you of a thunderbolt
like the thunderbolt of Aad and Thamud. (41:13)
And when the Messengers drew near before them
and from behind them saying: Worship none but God,
they said: If our Lord willed,
He would have caused angels to descend.
Then, truly, in what you were sent,
we are ones who disbelieve. (41:14)
As for Aad, they grew arrogant on the earth without right
and they said: Who is more vigorous than us in strength?
Consider they not that God Who created them,
He was more vigorous than they in strength?
And they had been negating Our signs. (41:15)
So We sent on them a raging wind in days of misfortune
that We might cause them
to experience the punishment of degradation in this present life.
And the punishment in the world to come will be more degrading;
and they will not be helped. (41:16)
So We sent on them a raging wind in days of misfortune that We might cause them to experience the punishment of degradation in this present life. And the punishment in the world to come will be more degrading; and they will not be helped. (41:17)

We delivered those who believed
and had been God-conscious. (41:18)

COMMENTARY°

If they turn away, say: Warn you of a thunderbolt like the thunderbolt that struck the Aad and Thamud. There came to them, from all directions, Messengers saying: Worship none but God. (41:13-18)

What sort of effect did this warning have on the unbelievers in Makkah? Ibn Ishaq, an early biographer of the Prophet, gives us the following story:

Another report by Jabir suggests that when the Prophet recited these verses, Utbah listened. When the Prophet read verse 13, Utbah put his hand on the Messenger's mouth and appealed to him by the ties of kinship to his people to do nothing of the sort.

Then Utbah left him, went home and stayed in doors. His people talked to him later about this and he explained his position: When Muhammad spoke this warning, I appealed to him not to do so. You know that when Muhammad says something, he does not lie. I feared that such punishment be inflicted on you."

This is, then, one image of the effect of the warning as stated by God's Messenger to a person who did not believe in his message.

What does this warning signify: (41:13) Essentially, it begins a fresh round showing us images of the fates met by earlier communities who rejected Gods message. The reckless arrogance of the present unbelievers is thus made all the more apparent through this reminder of what happened to similarly reckless and arrogant peoples: (41:14) This is the single issue as presented by all God's Messengers; it states the central point in every divine religion.

They answered: If our Lord had wished, He would have sent down angels. We will never believe in your message. (Sign 41:14) Similarly, this represents the same point of doubt faced by every Messenger. Yet a Messenger addressing human beings could not be other than human. This so that he would know the people he addressed and they would know him. In essence, a Messenger should provide a practical example and share his peoples problems. Yet the (Ad and Thamud declared themselves unbelievers simply because the Messengers sent to them were human like themselves. They were not angels as they wanted them to be.

Up to this point, the chapter speaks of the fates of both peoples as if they are one: both were struck by thunderbolts. Now, the chapter gives us some specific details about both peoples: (41:15) The right

attitude is that all creatures should submit to God and that people should not behave arrogantly. Who, then, are the Aad in comparison to God's great creation? All arrogant behavior, by whatever creature, is against all right. Yet these people thought themselves powerful. They asked: Who is mightier than us? This is the false sense exhibited by all tyrants when they feel that they have silenced all opposition and that none can stand against their power. They forget the truth: (41:15)

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How the People of Aad Were Punished

Chapter 46: The 66th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember the brother of Aad*
when he warned his folk in the curving sandhills.
Warnings passed away before and after him saying:
Worship nothing but God.
Truly, I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous Day. (46:21)
They said: Hadst thou drawn near to us to
mislead us from our gods?
Then, bring us that which thou hast promised us
if thou hadst been among the ones who are sincere. (46:22)
He said: The knowledge is only with God
and I state to you what I was sent with,
but I see that you are a folk who are ignorant. (46:23)
Then, when they saw it as a dense cloud
proceeding towards their valleys,
they said: This is a dense cloud, that which gives rain to us.
Nay! It is what you seek to hasten, a wind

in which there is a painful punishment. (46:24)
It will destroy everything at the command of its Lord.
So it came to be in the morning nothing
was seen but their dwellings.
Thus, We give recompense to the folk, ones who sin. (46:25)
And, certainly, We established them firmly in what We established you firmly not and We made for them the ability to hear and sight and minds. Yet having the ability to hear availed them not, nor their sight, nor their minds at all since they had been negating the signs of God. And surrounded were they by what they had been ridiculing. (46:26)

COMMENTARY°

The brother of the Aad is the Prophet Hud (peace be upon him) who is mentioned here by his position as a brother to his people. This highlights the relation of mutual love and care that existed between him and his people, which should have made them more responsive to his call and motivated them to think well of him and what he taught. The same bond existed between Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his people who similarly opposed him.

The Aad used to build their homes on the high sand dunes in a valley in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, said to be near Hadramawt. God in His glory directs His messenger to remember Hud and how he warned his people at the Valley of the Sand Dunes. This to give him encouragement as he realizes that Hud was similarly rejected by his people. Such remembrance also serves to remind the Makkan unbelievers of the fate of those earlier communities that rejected God's messages.

Hud warned his people, but he was not the first messenger to warn his community. Other messengers did the same before him. (46:21) Worshipping God means faith at heart and a code of living. To discard all this inevitably leads to terrible suffering in this present life, or in the life to come, or in both. When reference is made to a day, as it is made here, it means the Day of Judgment when the suffering is far greater and more terrible.

What response did Hud's people give him for his caring instructions and warnings? (46:22) Their response betrays mistrust, lack of understanding, rejection of the warning, hastening the punishment he warned them against, arrogance and a persistent adherence to false beliefs.

For his part, Hud receives all this with patience, showing the manners that behove a prophet. He makes no personal claims as he

outlines his attitude and makes his limits clear to them. (46:23) I am giving you this warning as I was commanded to do, but I do not know when such punishment fails, or what form it will take. All this is known to God alone. I am only delivering a message entrusted to me, making no further claim. (46:23) What could be more foolish and insolent than to give such a hostile reception to a brother who is only offering sincere and honest advice?

The signs give no further details of the long argument that took place between Hud and his people, moving straight to report on the fate they suffered. This is intended here as a reply to their challenge and hastening of punishment: Reports suggest that the Aad suffered a period of intense heat, coupled with absence of rain. They endured this unbearable climate for some time. Then God sent them clouds, and they were delighted. They went into the surrounding valleys hoping that rain would quickly ensue. Yet the truth of what the clouds brought signified their ultimate demise: This is a universal fact that the Quran is wont to impress on people. This universe is alive, and every force in it is aware of what God wants of it, proceeding to fulfill it. The human being is one of these forces. When he is a true believer, his heart becomes open to greater knowledge and he becomes able to understand more of the universal forces around him and respond to them. This opens the way to a mutual response that differs from what people generally know of life and understanding. Everything around us has life, but we do not appreciate this because shapes and forms limit our understanding. The universe around us is full of secrets that are appreciated by faculties of understanding, even though they cannot be seen by our eyes.

The storm wind fulfilled the task assigned to it, destroying everything. (Verse 25) No trace of the Aad was left behind, not even their animals or belongings. Everything disappeared. All that was left were desolate dwellings, empty, lacking all signs of life. (46:25) This rule applies to all guilty people.

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be seen by our eyes.

The Destruction of the People of Aad

Chapter 51: The 67th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And in Aad, when We sent against them*
the withering wind. (51:41)
It forsakes not anything it approached,
but made it like it was decayed. (51:42)

Wrong About the Attitude of the Ancestors

Chapter 14: The 72nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Approach not to you the tidings*
of those before you:
The folk of Noah and Aad and Thamud
and of those after them.
None knows them but God.
Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents,
but they shoved their hands into their mouths in denial.
Then, they said: Truly, we disbelieved in what you were sent
and we are in uncertainty about that to which you call us.
We are in grave doubt. (14:9)

The People of Aad and the Day of Disaster

Chapter 69: The 78th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And what would cause thee to recognize*
what The Reality is? (69:3)
Thamud and Aad denied the Day of Disaster. (69:4)
Then, as for Thamud, they were caused to perish
by a storm of thunder and lightning. (69:5)
As for Aad, they were caused to perish
by a fierce and roaring, raging wind. (69:6)
It compelled against them for seven
uninterrupted nights and eight days
so will you see the folk in it laid prostrate
as if they had been uprooted fallen down date palm trees? (69:7)
Then, will you see of them any ones who endure? (69:8)

Satan Made Their Actions Pleasing to Them

Chapter 29: The 85th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And Ad and Thamud, surely, it became clear to you*

from their dwellings.
Satan made their actions appear pleasing to them
and barred them from the way
and they had been ones who see clearly. (29:38)

So We took each of them in his impiety.
And of them was he on whom We sent a sand storm
and of them was he whom the Cry took
and of them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow
and of them were some whom We drowned.
And God had not been doing wrong to them,
but they had been doing wrong themselves. (29:40)

Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud, and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian, and that which are cities overthrown? Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents. So it had not been God who did wrong to them, rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

SALIH AND THE PEOPLE OF THAMUD

The story of Salih and the people of Thamud is similar to that of the story of Hud and the people of Aad.

CHAPTER 89: THE 10TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And with Thamud, those who hollowed out the rocks in the valley?* (89:9)
And with Pharaoh, the possessor of the stakes, (89:10)
those who were defiant in the land (89:11)
and made much corruption in it? (89:12)
*So **your** Lord unloosed on them a scourge of punishment.* (89:13)
*Truly, **your** Lord is, surely, on the watch.* (89:14)

COMMENTARY°

The Thamud (89:9) used to live at Al-Hijr, a rocky tract in northern Arabia, on the road from Madinah to Syria. They excelled in using rocks to build their palaces and homes. They also dug shelters and caves into the mountains.

These people were all transgressors throughout their lands, bringing about much corruption there. (89:11-89:12) Corruption is an inevitable result of tyranny, and it affects the tyrant and his subjects alike. Indeed, tyranny ruins all human relations. It forces human life out of its healthy, constructive and straight path and diverts it into a line which does not lead to the fulfillment of the human beings's role as God's vicegerent on earth. Tyranny makes the tyrant captive of his own desires because he is uncommitted to any principle or standard and unrestrained within any reasonable limit. Thus the tyrant is always the first to be corrupted by his own tyranny. He assumes for himself a role other than that of a servant of God, entrusted with a specific mission.

Tyranny also corrupts the masses, as it humiliates them and compels them to suppress their discontent and hatred. It kills all human dignity and wastes all creative talents, which cannot flourish except in an atmosphere of freedom. A humiliated soul inevitably rots away and becomes a breeding ground for sickly desires. Therefore, digression from the right path becomes the order of the day as clear vision becomes an impossibility. In such conditions no aspiration to a higher human standard can be entertained. The net result of all this is the spread of corruption.

Tyranny also destroys all healthy standards and concepts because they constitute a threat to its existence. Therefore, values are falsified and standards are distorted so that the repulsive idea of despotism becomes acceptable as natural. This, in itself, is great corrup-

tion.

When these aforementioned peoples caused such corruption, the remedy was, inevitably, a complete purge: (89:13-89:14) God is certainly aware of their deeds and He records them all. So, when corruption increased, He severely punished the corrupt. The text connotes that the punishment was very painful as it uses the term 'scourge', or 'whip' as the Arabic term literally means, and that it was in large supply as indicated by use of the phrase 'let loose'. Thus these tyrants were made to suffer a plentiful and painful retribution.

As the believer faces tyranny in any age or place, he feels great reassurance emanating from far beyond the fates of all those communities. He also feels a particular comfort as he reads the verse: (89:14) Nothing passes unnoticed and nothing is forgotten. So let the believers be always reassured that God will deal, in time, with all corruption and tyranny.

Thus the chapter provides some examples of what God may do about the cause of faith. All these stories are related for a definite purpose, namely, the education of the believers and their preparation to face whichever course God chooses for them. They will, then, be ready for all eventualities and equipped with God's reassurance as they submit themselves to Him and let His will be done.

He sees, records, holds to account and rewards according to a strict and accurate measure which neither errs nor exceeds the limits of justice. (89:14) It is never deceived by appearances because it judges the essence of things. Human measures and standards are liable to all sorts of errors. The human being sees nothing beyond appearances unless he adopts the divine measure.

THE INGRATITUDE OF PREVIOUS PEOPLE

CHAPTER 53: THE 23RD CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *and that He caused to perish*
the previous Aad (53:50)
and Thamud. He caused none to remain (53:51)

THE ARMIES OF THE THAMUD

CHAPTER 85: THE 27TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Approached you*
the discourse of the armies (85:17)
of Pharaoh and of Thamud? (85:18)

COMMENTARY°

Examples of this are given: *Approached you the discourse of the armies of Pharaoh and of Thamud?* (85:17-85:18) This is a reference to two long stories well known to the addressees. The two nations concerned are described here by the term "the hosts" in reference to their might and equipment. Have you heard their stories and how God did with them as He pleased? Theirs were two stories, different in nature and consequence. Pharaoh and his army were eliminated when the Children of Israel were saved by God. He gave them power to rule for a certain period in order to accomplish a certain scheme. As for the Thamud, God exterminated them and saved His messenger, Salih, along with his few followers. The believers in this instance did not establish a state of their own; they were merely saved from corrupt enemies.

Both stories are manifestations of the divine will and its performance. They provide two examples of what may befall advocates of the Quranic faith. They are mentioned along with a third possibility which distinguishes the pit event. The Quran explains all three eventualities to the believers in Makkah and to all generations of believers.

THE THAMUD DENIED SALEH

CHAPTER 91: THE 26TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Thamud denied because*
of their overboldness. (91:11)
When the disappointed among them were aroused, (91:12)
and the Messenger of God said to them:
Allow watering to the she-camel of God. (91:13)
Then, they denied him; then, they crippled her.
So their Lord doomed them for their impiety. (91:14)
Then, He leveled them.
And He fears not its Ultimate End. (91:15)

THE MESSAGE OF SALEH

CHAPTER 7: THE 39TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And to Thamud God sent their brother Salih.*
He said: O my folk!
Worship God! You have no god but He.
Surely, drew near you clear
portents from your Lord. This is the she-camel of God
as a sign so allow her to eat on the earth of God
and afflict her not with evil
so a painful punishment not take you. (7:73)

And remember when He made you viceregents after Aad
and placed you on the earth.
You take to yourselves palaces on the plains
and carve out the mountains as houses.
So remember the benefits of God.
And do no mischief as ones who make corruption
in and on the earth. (7:74)
Said the Council of those who grew arrogant among his folk
to those who were taken advantage of due to their weakness,
to those who believed among them:
Know you that Salih is one who is sent from his Lord?
They said: Truly, in what he was sent,
we are ones who believe. (7:75)
Those who grew arrogant said: Truly, we are in what you
believed, ones who disbelieve. (7:76)
Then, they crippled the she-camel
and defied the command of their Lord
and they said: O Salih! Approach us
with what you have promised us
if you had been among the ones who are sent. (7:77)
So the quaking of the earth took them.
And it came to be in the morning
they were in their abodes ones who are fallen prostrate. (7:78)
Then, he turned away from them and said:
O my folk! Certainly, I expressed to you the message
of my Lord and advised you,
except you love not the ones who give advice. (7:79)

The Defeat of the Confederates

Chapter 387: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *and Thamud and a folk of Lot*
and the Companions of the Thicket.
Those were the confederates. (38:13)

The Punishment Given to the Ungrateful in the Past

Chapter 54: The 37th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Thamud denied the warning* (54:23)
for they said: Follow we a lone mortal from among us?
Truly, we would be going astray and insane. (54:24)
Is it that the Remembrance was cast down

to Salih from among us?
Nay! He is a rash liar! (54:25)
They will know tomorrow who the rash liar is! (54:26)
Truly, We are ones who sent the she-camel
as a test for them.
So you be on the watch for them
and maintain patience. (54:27)
And tell them that the division of the water
is between them.
Every drink was that which is divided in turn. (54:28)
But they cried out to their companion,
and he took her in hand and crippled her. (54:29)
So how had been My punishment and My warning? (54:30)
Truly, We sent against them one Cry
and they had been like straw
for the one who is a builder of animal enclosures. (54:31)

Parables Given About the Thamud

Chapter 25: The 42nd Chapter Revealed

and Ad and Thamud and the Companions of Rass
and many generations in between that. (25:37)
And We propounded parables for each of them. (25:38)
And We shattered each a shatterig. (25:39)

The Message of Salih

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We sent to Thamud their brother Salih.*
He said: O my folk! Worship God.
You have no god other than He. He caused you to grow
from the earth and settled you on it.
So ask for His forgiveness.
Again, repent to Him.
Truly, my Lord is Near, One Who Answers. (11:61)
They said: O Salih! Surely, you had been
one who is a source of hope to us before this.
Have you prohibited us that we worship
what our fathers worship?
And, truly, we are in uncertainty
about what you have called us to, in grave doubt. (11:62)
He said: O my folk! Considered you that I had been

with a clear portent from my Lord
and that He gave me a mercy from Himself
so who, then, would help me against God
if I rebelled against Him?
Then, you would increase me not but in decline. (11:63)
And: O my folk! This is the she-camel of God, a sign for you.
So let her eat on God's earth
and afflict her not with evil
so that a near punishment take you. (11:64)
But they crippled her.
So he said: Take joy in your abode for three days.
That is a promise, one that will not be belied. (11:65)
Then, Our command drew near. We delivered Salih and those
who believed with him by a mercy from Us
and from the degradation of that Day.
Truly, your Lord, He is Strong, Almighty. (11:66)
The Cry took those who did wrong. It came to be in the morning in
their abodes, ones who are fallen prostrate, (11:67)
... as if they dwelt not in them. No doubt, truly, Thamud were
ungrateful to their Lord. Away with Thamud. (11:68)

***

And O my folk! Let not your breach with me drive you
into being lighted on by the like of what lit on a folk of Noah
or a folk of Hud or a folk of Salih
And a folk of Lot are not far from you. (11:89)

***

... as if they had not been dwelling in them.
Away with Midian just as Thamud was done away. (11:95)

***

The She-Camel Wronged

Chapter 17: The 50th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And nothing prevented Us from sending the signs,*
but that the ancient ones denied them.
And We gave to Thamud the she-camel
—the one who perceives—but they did wrong to her.
And We send not the signs, but as a deterrence. (17:59)

The People of Thamud Deny Salih

Makkah: *And Thamud denied the ones who are sent* (26:141)
when their brother Salih said to them:
Will you not be God-conscious? (26:142)

Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you, (26:143)
so be God-conscious and obey me. (26:144)
And I ask you not for any compensation for it.
My compensation is only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:145)
Will you be left ones who are safe in what you have here (26:146)
in gardens and springs (26:147)
and crops of slender spathes of date palm trees? (26:148)
Will you carve houses out of the mountains
as ones who are skillful? (26:149)
So be God-conscious and obey me. (26:150)
Obey not the command of the ones who are excessive, (26:151)
who make corruption in and on the earth
and make not things right. (26:152)
They said: Truly, ***you*** *are only of the ones*
against whom a spell is cast. (26:153)
You *are not but a mortal like us.*
So bring us a sign if ***you*** *had been of the*
ones who are sincere. (26:154)
He said: This is a she camel. She has a right to drink
and you have a right to drink on a known day. (26:155)
And afflict her not with evil so that
you should take the punishment of a tremendous Day. (26:156)
But they crippled her and, then,
it came to be in the morning that they are
ones who are remorseful. (26:157)
So the punishment took them. Truly, in this is a sign
yet most of them had not been ones who believe. (26:158)
And, truly, ***your*** *Lord! He is, certainly,*
The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:159)

Chapter 27: The 48th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent to Thamud*
their brother, Salih,
that they worship God!
Then, when they became two groups of people
striving against one another, (27:45)
Why ask you not for forgiveness of God
so that perhaps you will find mercy? (27:46)
They said: We auger ill of you and whoever is with ***you****.*
He said: That which is your omen is with God.
Nay! You are a folk who are being tried. (27:47)
And there had been nine groups of persons in the city

who make corruption in the earth
and make not things right. (27:48)
They said: Swear to one another by God:
We will, certainly, attack him by night and his people.
Again, we will, certainly, say to his protector:
We bore not witness to the destruction of his people
and, truly, we are ones who are sincere. (27:49)
So they planned a plan and We planned a plan
while they were not aware. (27:50)
So look on how had been the Ultimate End of their planning!
Truly, We destroyed them and their folk one and all. (27:51)
And that are their houses, ones that have fallen down
for what they did wrong.
Truly, in this is a sign for a folk who know. (27:52)
And We rescued those who believed
and had been God-conscious. (27:53)

God Wants Not Injustice for His Servants

Chapter 40: The 60th Chapter Revealed

And he who had beleive said: O my folk!
Truly, I fear for you like a day of the confederates, (40:30)
like the custom of a folk of Noah
and Aad and Thamud and those after them.
And God wants not injustice for His servants. (40:31)

The Thamud Warned of a Thunderbolt

Chapter 41: The 61st Chapter Revealed

But if they turned aside, then, say: I warned you of a thunderbolt
like the thunderbolt of Aad and Thamud. (41:13)

The Thamud Were Guided

Chapter 41: The 61st Chapter Revealed

And as for Thamud, We guided them,
but they embraced blindness of heart instead of guidance.
Then, a thunderbolt took them with a humiliating punishment
because of what they had been earning. (41:17)
We delivered those who believed
and had been God-conscious. (41:18)

Tidings of The Thamud

Chapter 51: The 67th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And in Thamud, when it was said to them:*
Take joy for a while. (51:43)
Yet they defied the command of their Lord so the thunderbolt took
them while they look on. (51:44)
They were neither able to stand up
nor had they been ones who are aided. (51:45)

Chapter 14: The 72nd Chapter Revealed

Approach not to you the tidings of those before you:
The folk of Noah and Ad and Thamud
and of those after them.
None knows them but God.
Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents,
but they shoved their hands into their mouths in denial.
Then, they said: Truly, we disbelieved in what you were sent
and we are in uncertainty about that to which you call us.
We are in grave doubt. (14:9)

The Inevitable

Chapter 69: The 78th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Thamud and Aad denied the Day of Disaster.* (69:4)
Then, as for Thamud, they were caused to perish
by a storm of thunder and lightning. (69:5)

The Thamud Taken for Their Impiety

Chapter 29: The 85th Chapter Revealed

So We took each of them in his impiety.
And of them was he on whom We sent a sand storm
and of them was he whom the Cry took
and of them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow
and of them were some whom We drowned.
And God had not been doing wrong to them,
but they had been doing wrong themselves. (29:40)

The Thamud City Overthrown

Chapter 9: The 113th Chapter Revealed

Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—
the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud,
and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian,
and that which are cities overthrown?

Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents.
So it had not been God who did wrong to them,
rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

The Companions of the Rocky Tract (al-Hijr)

Chapter 15: The 54th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Certainly, the Companions of the Rocky Tract*
denied the ones who are sent. (15:80)
And We gave them Our signs. Then, they had been ones who turn
aside from them. (15:81)
And they had been carving out
safe houses from mountains, (15:82)
but the Cry took them in that which is morning. (15:83)

Al-Hijr was the capital city of the people of Thamud. Its ruins are found near the modern city of Al-Ula which is to the north west of Madinah and lies on the route from Madinah to Tabuk. Though the caravans had to pass through the valley of al-Hijr, the Prophet had forbidden Muslims to stay in the valley on their journey.

When Ibn Batutah reached there in the eighth century of Hijrah on his way to Makkah, he wrote: "I have seen the buildings of Thamud hewed into red mountains; the paintings look so bright as if they have been put on only recently.... and rotten bones of human beings are found in them even today."

That is, their strong and secure buildings, which they had hewed into the mountains, could not protect them from the blast.

The People of the Ditch (al-Ukhdud)

Chapter 85: The 29th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: ... *the Companions of the Ditch were slain,* (85:4)
possessors of the fuel of the fire (85:5)
above which they were ones who sit, (85:6)
as they were, in what they accomplish against the ones who believe,
ones who bore witness. (85:7)

The People of Tubba

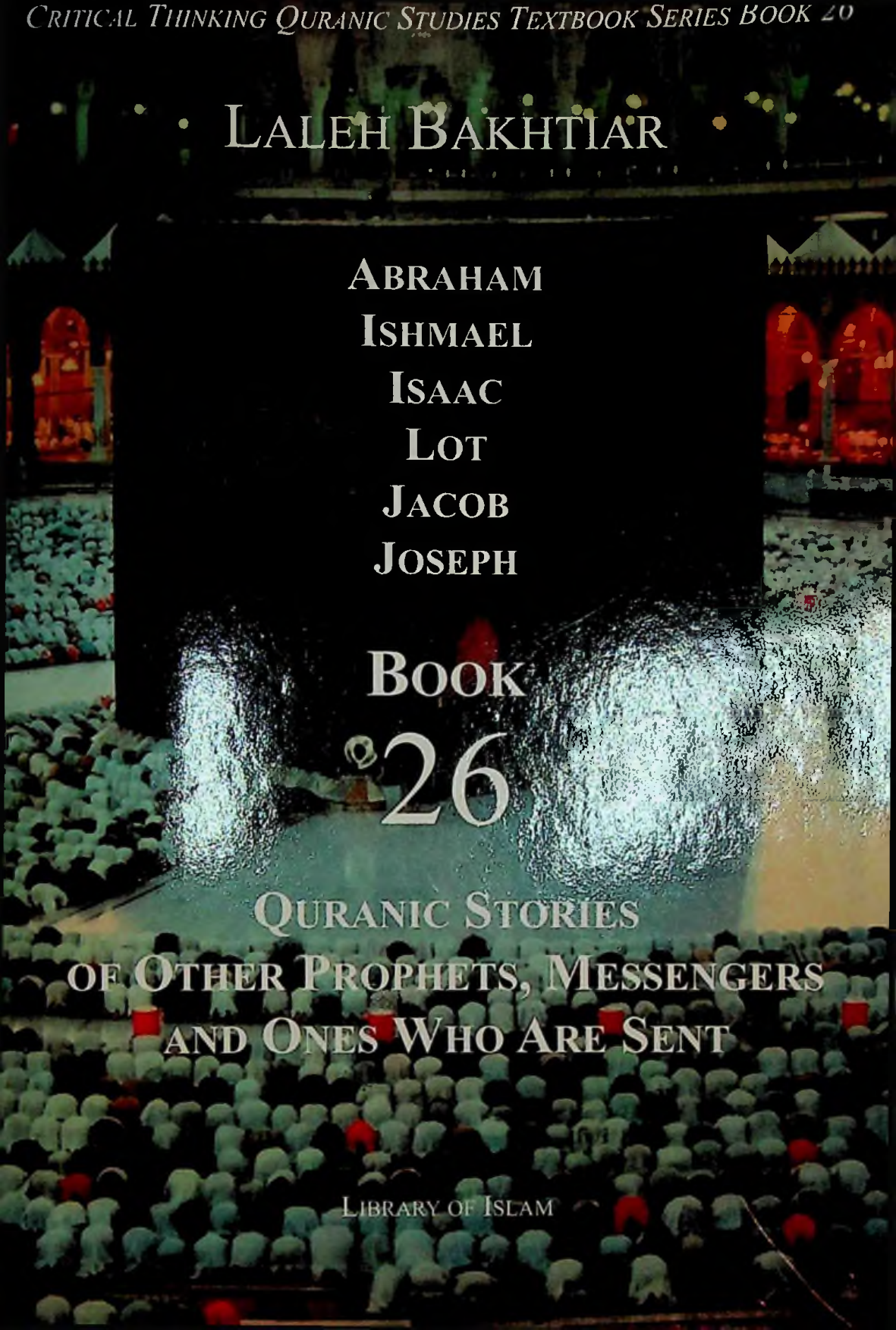
We have no information about the people of Tubba, a tittle used by the Yemeni kings of the Himyar dynasty.

Chapter 44: The 64th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Are they better or a folk of Tubba*
and those who were before them?
We caused them to perish.
They, truly, had been ones who sin.(44:37)

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Book 26

Laleh Bakhtiar



Abraham
Ishmael
Isaac
Lot
Jacob
Joseph

Book 26

Quranic Stories of Other Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent

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Book 26

Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob, Joseph

Library of Islam

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Preface

Explanation of the Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob* (known as Israel), *Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

Sources

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

Terminology

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran.* For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3 Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (as-salam alaykum) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In

effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in ka). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: antum where the verb ends in masculine: kum) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

12. All the signs in the text are in chronological order.

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Introduction

1: The Islamic School of Thought and Action
2: Prophet Abraham's School of Thought and Action
3: Prophet Abraham's Perception of the World and Response

In this Introduction, we explore the school of thought of Prophet Abraham and how that school was continued by Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent from Abraham to Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob and Joseph and eventually to Prophet Muhammad (*Books Year 1* to *Book Year 24*).

We begin with the Islamic School of Thought and Action followed by exploring: The Followers of the Islamic Movement; Islamic Perception of the Universe; and the Islamic Response and Summary.

1: The Islamic School of Thought and Action

A school of thought and action is the name given to the doctrines held in common by a group of people. It is a neutral term used without any further evaluation of a particular schools' position on an issue. It refers to an orientation or guideline which may be negative or positive. There are many schools of thought in the world, some of which have no apparent or specific religious orientation—like materialism, skepticism, existentialism—while others have a specific religious orientation like monotheism, polytheism, infidelity or ingratitude, Buddhism, Hinduism, or Taoism.

Every school of thought and action is based on a perception of the universe or what is known as cause and a response to that perception or what is known as effect. These two, in turn, develop a perspective/response to history, society, and the individual. This will become more clear as you move through the introduction. Also, every school of thought marks out its followers in a particular way, emphasizing some aspect of the human being in question. Some schools attract followers of race theory according to which only the members of a certain race are accepted. Other schools attract followers of a certain class.

The Followers of the Islamic Movement

Islam is universal in the sense that its followers do not belong to any one class, race, occupation, region, or any other division. The fol-

lowers of the school of thought and action of Islam are not just Arabs or just non-Arabs, nor Black or white, nor rich or poor, nor Easterners or Westerners, nor Asian or African, nor males or females. They are people who come together because of unity or sameness in perception of the universe and response. The basis of the summons of this school of thought and action is the relationship between the human being—all human beings—and God just as the name suggests—submission to the will of God (*islam*).

Islamic Perception of the Universe

The Islamic perspective is based in and permeated by the belief that God is One and that there is no deity but God. According to this perception, this is the most natural disposition that an individual can have and one with which the human being is naturally endowed but it is lost sight of through the nurturing process. All of the Prophets were sent to confirm this position including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, the latter of whom is considered to be the Seal and the last of the Prophets.

The Islamic Response

Response to this perception in the Islamic movement is twofold: first, defending its goals by commanding to the good or counseling to the positive and second, overcoming the goals of the opposition to the belief in the One God by preventing evil or preventing the development of the negative.

Defending the goals of the Islamic movement by a response to counseling to the positive takes several forms. These forms operate on two types of relationships: first, the relationship of the individual to the One God; and second, the relationship between the individual and society. Responses of the first type include prayer, both ritual prayer (*salat*) and supplication, paying the poor-due, pilgrimage to Makkah, fasting during the month of Ramadan and counseling the self to the positive and trying to prevent the development of the negative. The second type includes responses to social and political affairs like marriage, divorce, the regulation of contracts, legal punishments, and counseling others to the positive and trying to prevent the development of the negative. In general, these responses, when done with the right intention, have a positive effect upon the individual and the community.

The response to overcoming the goals of the opposition to the belief

that God is One include methods that are to prevent the development of the negative. These include migration and *jihad*. *Jihad* is a response that has two forms: outer against the opposition which is the lesser *jihad* and inner within the self against negative influences and this is called the greater *jihad*.

In trying to overcome the goals of the opposition to the belief in the One God, the Islamic movement has historically also stood against other religious schools like that of ingratitude or infidelity to the One God (*kufr*), hypocrisy (*nifaq*), and arrogance (*istikbar*), the latter of which results in one who rebel's against God's commands (*taghut*).

In the history of Islam, Prophet Abraham stands against infidelity and its subcategory of idolatry. Prophet Moses opposes the self-worshipping Pharaoh who is a person who rebels against God's commands (*taghut*). Prophet Jesus stands against the hypocrisy of the rabbis of his time and the Roman idol-worshipping, rebels against God's commands (*taghut*s). Prophet Muhammad stands against ingratitude to the One God (*kufr* or covering over the truth) and its subcategory of worshipping more gods than there are (*shirk*). He confronts the arrogant Quraysh, even though they are members of his own family and tribe who rebel against God's commands and worship idols. Once hypocrisy develops in Madinah, he confronts it whether among Muslims or the People of the Book.

Summary

We have seen the perception/response of the Islamic movement as manifested by Prophet Abraham which is continued by Prophet Muhammad. This is the movement of monotheism (*tawhid*) in history. We have also had a glimpse of the perception/response of the movement which opposes the Islamic movement by practicing ingratitude to the One God (*kufr*). In either case, the perception/response of a movement motivates its views of history, society, and the human being.

2: Prophet Abraham's School of Thought and Action

The strategy used by Prophet Abraham and Prophet Muhammad, as examples of all Prophets and Messengers, namely, "Say: 'God is One,' and be saved," shows their unity of purpose. Many of their tactics are also similar because the latter is the confirmation and continuation of the other. It is revealed to both of them to call the people to the worship of One God through formal prayer. The monotheistic response to

God's actions in the creation, then, is prayer and giving thanks. In addition, both of these Prophets are commanded by God to call people to the pilgrimage, to the House of the One God, to worship One God together.

After Prophet Abraham and his son, Prophet Ishmael, call the people to the pilgrimage and the worship of the One God, the people become negligent and forgetful. Their natural instinct to worship the One God becomes covered over with doubts. These doubts are placed in their minds in one of three possible ways: first, by a despotic ruler who forces them to worship him or something he has ordered to be carved. Second, by corrupt religious scholars who either allow their judgments to be based on the rulers' self-interests or they themselves are interested in ruling. Third, by the forces of wealth and power who want to hold the people in obligation to them in order to increase their own wealth and power instead of allowing them to show their thankfulness for their blessings to the One God.

It is these forces which Prophet Abraham stands against and confronts as does Prophet Muhammad later. It is these forces that persecute and torture both Prophet Abraham and Prophet Muhammad. In the case of Prophet Muhammad, the persecution and torture extend to his Companions, *sahabah*, as well.

Both of these two great people in history are forced to migrate when the oppression against them grows to be more than a human being can bear. With great courage and wisdom, they give the message of the One God to the people. Their message embraces everyone because every human being has the right to know the way to salvation. Accepting it or rejecting it is their own decision, but at least they will not be able to claim ignorance of the message on the Day of Judgment.

Thus their school of thought and action is the same, namely, submission to the Will of the One God (*islam*). Their perception of the world is the same, namely: the world has one Creator Who will summon everyone back to Him at the time of the End, the Day of Judgment, where each will have to give an account of their deeds. This sameness of perception motivates them and leads to sameness in response towards the opposition they face, namely, to confront disbelief, ingratitude, covering over the truth (*kufr*), worship of other than the One God (*shirk*), and hypocrisy (*nifaq*) with the Word of God: "Say: 'God is One,' and be saved."

The differences in tactics the Prophet Muhammad uses are in re-

sponse to situations which do not exist at the time of Prophet Abraham and because Prophet Muhammad is given an additional role to play, namely, that of the Seal of Prophets. There will be no Prophet after him. Therefore he has the task of perfecting and completing God's Message for all time. In order to be able to do this, the Quran teaches him to form the Community (*ummah*). Members of this Community are given the task of carrying on the message just as they had received it from the Messenger in the form of the Quran and how he understood and practiced it that became the *sunnah*. Whereas Prophet Abraham himself is referred to as a Community in the Quran, Prophet Muhammad's Community forms out of his Companions who he himself trains and for whom he is the model.

This responsibility has been carried out to different degrees by the Community for over 1400 years. It has been possible because the revelation, the eternal Word of God had been written down by scribes during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad. It is preserved today in the Arabic language just as it had been received by him. That, together with his actions and sayings, and approvals, called the *sunnah*, have preserved the model ethics and behavior. The Quran and the *sunnah* are the models for both the Community and each individual member of the Community. The success and/or failure of the Community depends upon the success and/or failure of each individual. In the Islamic perspective, each individual is responsible to follow these models to the best of his or her ability, remembering, "*There is no compulsion in religion*," (2:256) and:

> **Madinah:** *God places not a burden*
> *on a soul beyond its capacity.*
> *For it is what it earned and against it is what it deserved.*
> *Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forgot or made a mistake.*
> *Our Lord! Burden us not with a severe test*
> *like that which* ***You*** *had burdened those who were before us.*
> *Our Lord! Load us not such that we have no energy for it*
> *and pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us.*
> ***You*** *are our Defender so help us against the folk,*
> *the ones who are ungrateful.* (2:286)

According to the Quran, the Book of Abraham had contained what the monotheist who submits to the will of God is told about the school of monotheism:

Makkah : *The burdened soul will not bear*
the heavy load of another. (53:38)
The human being is not but what he endeavored for (53:39)
and that his endeavoring will be seen. (53:40)
Again, he will be given recompense for it
with a more true recompense, (53:41)
and that towards ***your*** *Lord is the Utmost Boundary,* (53:42)
and that He caused laughter and caused weeping, (53:43)
and that He caused to die and gave life (53:44)
and it is He, He created the pairs, the male and the female (53:45)
from seminal fluid when it is emitted, (53:46)
and that with Him is another growth (53:47)
and it is He, He Who Enriched and made rich (53:48)
and that He, He is the Lord of Sirius. (53:49)

In these signs, the Quran points out ethical truths that Prophet Abraham is entrusted to convey. They are:

1. Individual responsibility: This responsibility is general both in terms of faith and action. This means it is the choice of each individual to choose or not to choose to follow God's Way. No one is responsible for the misdeeds of another. This ethical truth appears in other verses of the Quran as well:

Makkah: *Say: Is it other than God that I should desire as a lord*
while He is Lord of everything?
And each soul will earn only for itself.
No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.
Again, to your Lord will you return.
Then, He will tell you
about what you had been at variance in it. (6:164)

Makkah: *And no burdened soul will bear another's load.*
If one who is weighed down calls for help for his heavy load,
nothing of it is carried for him,
even if he had been possessor of kinship.
Have ***you*** *warned only those who dread their Lord in the unseen*
and performed the formal prayer.
And he who purified himself, then,
only purifies for himself.
And to God is the Homecoming. (35:18)

Makkah: *If you are ungrateful, truly,*

God is Independent of you.
And He is not well-pleased with ingratitude from His servants.
And if you give thanks,
He will be well-pleased with you.
No burdened soul will bear the heavy load of another.
Again, to your Lord is the return,
so He will tell you what you had been doing.
Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (39:7)

Two other concepts or ideas are implied in this first point in the Quran. First, the sign clearly shows that there is no concept of original sin. Second, that no one can pay for or is responsible for the sins of another.

2. The human being must strive and work hard or he/she will gain nothing.

3. If the human being strives hard, however, the results will soon come in sight and the person will find his/her Abraham's school of thought and action in the Quran, we are told that Prophet Abraham should be followed as a model because: first of all, he is devotedly obedient to God; secondly, he is a monotheist (*hanif*); and thirdly, he does not join gods with God, that is, he does not practice ingratitude to the One God in any form, but particularly that of idolatry as is practiced by people in his time.

Makkah: *Abraham had been a community obedient to God*
—a monotheist—
he is not among the ones who are polytheists. (16:120)
He was one who is thankful for His divine blessings.
He elected him and guided him to a straight path. (16:121)
And We gave him in the present benevolence.
And, truly, in the world to come he will be among
the ones in accord with morality. (16:122)
Again, we revealed to ***you***
that ***you*** *follow the creed of Abraham*
—a monotheist.
And he had not been among
the ones who are polytheists. (16:123)

We are told in the *sunnah* that Prophet Abraham is persecuted because he challenges the false beliefs of his people, migrates from his home and people in Babylon because of the persecution and then settles

in Canaan. The Quran repeats, saying to follow the religious tradition of Abraham

Madinah: *Say: God was Sincere,*
so follow the creed of Abraham
—a monotheist—
and not had he been among the ones who are polytheists. (3:95)
Truly, the first House set in place for humanity
was that which is at Bekka,
that which is blessed, and a guidance for the worlds. (3:96)
In it are clear portents, signs, the Station of Abraham.
And whoever entered it had been one who is safe.
And to God is a duty on humanity of pilgrimage
to the House in Makkah for whoever
was able to travel the way to it.
And whoever was ungrateful,
then truly God is Independent of the worlds. (3:97)

Idolatry refers to a movement or school of thought and action that is developed as a religious tradition by its followers to justify their superiority over others. Idolatry is prevalent in the Tigris-Euphrates valley where Prophet Abraham lives. There are the idols of Lagash, Nipur, Ur, and Babylonia. The largest house of idols in history is in Babylon and Prophet Abraham is the first person in history who rises to destroy this house and the tradition.

By rising against idolatry, Prophet Abraham does not just break a few stone idols which had become gods of a tribe. He challenges the idols of ignorance and arrogance, false knowledge and powers. The Prophet Abraham that Muslims know continues a movement which is always alive and humanity is continuously committed to strive to follow his way. Why? The reason Prophet Abraham continues to break the false religious system is because the false religious system tries to preserve multiple classes, racial discrimination, class discrimination, racial superiority, and class differences. He rises to liberate or save the humanity which, throughout history, has been victims of these discriminations.

3: Prophet Abraham's Perception of the World and His Response

Prophet Abraham's perception of the world develops from seeing and reflecting upon the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth

through which he attains certitude in his belief that God is One (see 6:75-82).

Prophet Abraham contrasts his monotheist's perception of the world with that of the tyrant (*taghut*) Nimrod (see 2:258). These two examples from the Quran show that Prophet Abraham confirms his belief in monotheism and that all power rests with God.

Prophet Abraham performs many great deeds. His story is the story of a man alone and unique who arises against history. It is the story of the movement of an individual whose only weapon is true faith and sincere thought and his only power is love of the Creator. He stands alone against the perception of the world held by other than the monotheist. When consciousness and love become allies, they break through and history fulfills its philosophy in the monotheistic perspective as the completion and perfection of the will of God.

Prophet Abraham's response to his perception are a lesson for history. The rest of the textbooks in this series show the Messenger's responses are the same because his perception of the universe is the same. The first lesson to be learned from Prophet Abraham's response is that the worship of the One God is innate or instinctive within human beings. While Prophet Muhammad is not recorded in the Quran nor in the *sunnah* to have had the same doubts that Prophet Abraham had, the Quran confirms that the worship of the One God is innate or instinctive (see 30:30).

Prophet Abraham grows up in a society that worships idols. His father, it is said, is an idol-carver. In spite of this, when Prophet Abraham reflects upon the universe, he is able to see things as they really are. His mind moves from considering worshipping idols to considering worshipping the moon and the sun and finally considering worshipping the One God. His beliefs evolve from the material to the spiritual and he realizes, through stages, that the worship of the One God is the highest stage. It is the stage of truth and reality and it arises from his most basic nature.

Secondly, when he struggles against the tyrant (*taghut*) Nimrod, based on his perception of the world, Prophet Abraham responds to a despotic ruler by counseling to the positive and trying to prevent the development of the negative (*amr bil maruf wa nahy an al-munkar*). Although Prophet Abraham is an example of one person acting alone and making a difference, Prophet Muhammad acted alone and with his Community of believers to counsel to good and try to prevent evil.

Even though each of them may have doubted that he could have an effect on the situation, each one still did his duty and left the results to God.

The Quran tells us that as a result of Prophet Abraham's doing his duty, the tyrant Nimrod surrounds Prophet Abraham with a fire. God then turns that fire into a bed of flowers. The lesson here is that even when one voice confronts the greatest of human powers, it can make a difference when it has sincerity and love for truth, for God is on its side.

A third lesson one learns about the movement of Prophet Abraham in history is that when the system of ingratitude to the One God becomes too great to bear, a person who submits to the will of the One God, migrates. Prophet Abraham is a man who throughout his long life, struggled against false systems which had brought oppression and discrimination to society by justifying through false religiosity. He struggles against idolatry in Ur in Babylon when it had reached its peak of power as well as against the course of history which had taken humanity along with itself. Then he goes to Hebron. He confronts the star-worshippers. From there he goes to Egypt and then returns to Palestine and continues his struggle there. He once again returns to Egypt and then again to the Tigris-Euphrates valleys and the Arabian peninsula. Then after the story of Hagar and the Kabah, he continuously moves between Palestine and Makkah. The migration of Prophet Muhammad to Madinah to escape the oppression of the Quraysh comes in the later chapters.

Neither Prophet hesitates in manifesting the spirit which seeks Truth (al-Haqq) and human struggle in believing in and practicing that Truth. They are, in a sense, in continuous migration, movement, and struggle against all of the manifestations of corruption, deceit, bullying, oppression, and hypocrisy until they die.

A fourth lesson to be learned from the movement of Prophet Abraham is that the victory of a mission, the victory of a truth, can be realized at a time when all prevailing conditions bear witness to its opposite. We shall see the same situation with Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Abraham goes every so often to visit Hagar and Ishmael. The well of Zamzam is found there. His wife, Hagar, is able to form the economic foundations of Makkah because of it. The water of the Zamzam well allows the movement that had begun there, to spread. Ishmael grows up God commands that His House, the House of God and

the People, be built in Makkah. It is he and Prophet Abraham who rebuilds the Kabah for the worship of the One God (22:26 in life). Prophet Ishmael continues the movement of monotheism begun by his father.

The building of this House is a monument to the first arising for truth, through thought and struggle, at a time when the course of history is passing through the most anguishing and deceitful era. The Kabah is a monument to the beginning of a great *jihad* or 'struggle' against deviation in human history. This House must be visited every year by every generation and circumambulated around by people in pilgrimage.

The fifth lesson Muslims learn of how to respond to their perception of the universe through the example of Prophet Abraham is that of prayer like his prayer with his son Ishmael (see 14:38-41). God says the same things about the Prophet of Islam (see 2:131, 6:161).

Prophet Abraham's movement, then, as revealed in the Quran teaches Muslims five responses to the monotheistic (*tawhidi*) perception of the universe. They are all an aspect of the worship of the One God. This worship may take the form of an individual standing against the greatest power on earth as Prophet Abraham did against the tyrant Nimrod by counseling to the positive and trying to prevent the development of the negative, leaving the results to God.

Worship may also take the form of migration when the forces of opposition become too strong and oppressive. Rather than submit to injustice and be killed, Prophet Abraham migrates. Pilgrimage to the House of God is yet another form the Muslims' response may take. The pilgrimage is the highest manifestation of individuals coming together in one place, without any discrimination whatsoever, to worship the One God. Finally, worship may take the form of prayer. Recognizing the power of prayer is an important lesson to be learned from the Islamic movement in history.

Abraham

The Scrolls of Abraham

Chapter 87: The 8th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *the scrolls of Abraham* ..... (87:19)

Commentary°

The sign points out that the message of Islam is not new; its roots go back far deep in time. The basics of the grand faith contained in this sign are the same old basic facts outlined in the ancient scriptures of Abraham and Moses.

Abraham Paid His Account in Full

Chapter 53: The 23rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *and of Abraham*
who paid his account in full? (53:37)

Commentary°

This religion goes far back in history, and its latest version is closely related to its oldest one, with both having the same fundamental principles and values. Its different parts are mutually complementary, despite the fact that there have been many messages and Messengers, with wide gulfs separating them in time and place. It is embodied in the revelations given to Moses and to Abraham before him. Abraham is singled out here as having been true to his trust. He fulfilled every assignment given to him. This quality of Abraham's struggle is highlighted here to provide contrast with that of doing a little good first, then stopping altogether.

Abraham Described

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Our servants: Abraham,*
... imbued with dynamic energy and insight. (38:45)
And remember Our servants Abraham and Isaac and Jacob,
all imbued with strength and insight (38:46
And truly they are to Us
among ones who were favored and good. (38:47)

Commentary°

God, limitless is He in His glory, describes Abraham as a man *imbued with dynamic energy and insight*, which refers to his good actions, whether physical, done by hand, or mental, relying on sound

vision and good judgment. This implies that a person who does not do good deeds is without a hand, and the one who does nor think well is without a mind or a vision.

Abraham (87:19; 53:37) has insight into the foundations of his beliefs. He knows the evidence that he has and how he has come to believe. The evidence he has is that the truth is one and the faith is one (87:19). This results from the fact that their origin is one, God, whose will it was to send Messengers to humanity. The Messengers deliver basically the same message, the same simple truth. Details of the messages may differ according to local or temporal needs, but the basics are the same. They have one origin: God, the Most High, who creates, proportions well, determines and guides.

Abraham paid his account in full (53:37) This is a recognition by God of Abraham's faithful and complete fulfillment of those obligations, according him a very high rank in God's estimation and, therefore, God's promise that He appointed Abraham a leader. Thus, Abraham becomes the leader to be followed, the one who shows people the way to all goodness.

Abraham as a man of dynamic energy and insight had developed "intellectual humility" and was given a distinctive quality: the remembrance of the life to come. (38:45)

87:19: The truth is one and the faith is one. This results from the fact that their origin is one, God, whose will it was to send Messengers to humanity. The messengers deliver basically the same message, the same simple truth. Details of the messages may differ according to local or temporal needs, but the basics are the same. They have one origin: God, the Most High, who creates, proportions well, determines and guides.

Abraham Preaches Unity of God

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Abraham in the Book.*
Truly, he had been a just person, a Prophet. (19:41)
That is when he said to his father:
O my father! Why will ***you*** *worship what hears not,*
and perceives not,
and avails ***you*** *not anything?* (19:42)
O my father! Truly, I, there drew near me of the knowledge
of what approaches ***you*** *not.*
So follow me and I will guide ***you*** *to a path without fault.* (19:43)
O my father! Worship not Satan.
Truly, Satan had been rebellious towards The Merciful! (19:44)

*O my father! Truly, I fear that a punishment should afflict **you***
*from The Merciful so that **you** become*
a protector of Satan. (19:45)
*[Abraham's father] said: Are **you** one who shrinks from my gods,*
O Abraham?
*If **you** will not refrain **yourself**, certainly,*
*I will stone **you**, so abandon me for some while.* (19:46)
*He said: Peace be to **you**. I will ask for*
*forgiveness from my Lord for **you***
Truly, He had been One Who is Gracious to me. (19:47)
And I will withdraw from you
and what you call to other than God
and I will call to my Lord. Perhaps I will not be
disappointed in my supplication to my Lord. (19:48)
So he withdrew from them and what they worship other than God.
And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob.
And each of them We made a Prophet. (19:49)

Commentary°

Abraham's moving away from his people, and how he was blessed with Ishmael and Isaac, all this comes in a chapter that portrays God's care for His chosen servants, generating a clearly felt ambience of love and compassion.

The [signs] now give an account of part of Abraham's story, demonstrating the singularity and fallacy of polytheistic beliefs. Abraham is the great ancestor from whom the Arabs claim to descend. In fact the pagan Arabs claimed the custodianship of the Kabah, built by Abraham and his son, Ishmael.

In this account, Abraham's contented, patient and gentle character is shown in sharp relief. We see these aspects of his character in his approach and language. They are also clearly apparent in his behavior and how he responds to his father's overbearing attitude. We also feel how God has bestowed His grace on Abraham, compensating him for his father and people, all ungrateful, with goodly offspring that beget a whole nation that has its generous share of Prophets and saintly persons. Yet these are followed by generations who neglected prayers and deviated from the path shown them by Abraham to pursue their desires. Those were the ungrateful.

God describes Abraham in the Quran as being '*a just person and a Prophet*'. The Arabic word, translated here as *a just person,* has a wider sense than merely being truthful. It connotes that he was always

truthful and a firm believer in the truth. Both qualities fit well with his character.

Abraham had developed confidence in reason while his father was still irrational. Critical thinkers as rational people "recognize the power of reason." He encourages his father to come to his own conclusions, but his father rejects his son's view and, as a typical tyrant, tries to compel Abraham to believe as he believes by arousing fear in Abraham, fear of being stoned if he continues. Abraham, confident in his ability to reason, rejects the "force and trickery as standard ways of changing another's mind." Abraham believes that "with proper encouragement and cultivation, [his father] can develop the ability to think for himself, to form reasonable points of view, to draw reasonable conclusions, and to think clearly and logically." Abraham tries to persuade his father by reason to become a reasonable person "despite the deep-seated obstacles in the native character of the human bind and in society as we know it." Abraham asks: Why do you worship that which hears not and perceives not and does not benefit you at all.

It is with such a passionate appeal that Abraham addresses his father, trying to guide him to the goodness God had taught him and to which He had directed him. His appeal is an endearing one, stressing his position as a loving son. He asks him why he worships something that cannot help him. (19:42) The normal practice is that people address their worship to someone who is more exalted, knowledgeable and stronger than the human being. Indeed worship is always presented to someone exalted above the human position. How is it, then, that in this case it is presented to something below the level of the human being, and indeed below the level of animals; something that does not hear or see anything and can cause no benefit or harm. This was the case of Abraham's father and community. They worshipped idols, just like the Arabs of the Quraysh who opposed Islam.

This is the first point in Abraham's appeal to his father. He follows it with a statement that he does not make this claim at his own behest. Rather, he makes it on the basis of true knowledge that has been vouchsafed to him by God to set him on the path of true guidance. He was certainly younger and less experienced than his father, but what had been bestowed on him from on high gave him a clear recognition of the truth. Hence he gives his advice to his father who had not received such knowledge. He wanted his father to follow suit so that he would be on the road of truth. (19:43)

There is nothing wrong with a father following his son when this son has a direct recourse to a higher source able to give true guidance. In this case, the son is the one who follows the right way, leading only to what is good.

Having shown his father the fallacy of idol worship and outlined the source of guidance he received, which is the cornerstone of his appeal to his father, Abraham makes it clear that the way followed by his father is that of Satan. His own aim is to guide his father to the way acceptable to God, the Most Merciful. He fears that his father may incur God's anger and thus become a close friend of Satan. (19:44-19:45)

It is Satan who tempts people to worship idols. This means that whoever worships idols is in the same position as one who worships the devil himself. Satan, it must not be forgotten, is a rebel who disobeys God in every way. Abraham warns his father against incurring God's displeasure. For if he does, he will become Satan's friend and follower and so liable to God's punishment. This shows clearly that when God guides a servant of His to obey Him, that in itself is a blessing, while befriending Satan is a scourge leading to God's punishment and a position of utter ruin on the Day of Judgment.

Insolent Answer to a Compassionate Appeal: Abraham's appeal, made in the most compassionate language, cannot however find its way to his father's hardened heart. The father retorts with rejection and threats. (19:46)

His father's answer was harsh, arrogant and threatening. He considered Abraham's rejection of idols to be impertinent. It was a crime for which Abraham deserved a cruel punishment: i.e. death by stoning. Hence, he advised him to stay away, or else punishment would be forthcoming.

It is with such ignorance and cruelty that the father replies to the son's passionate and polite appeal. No regard is given for the son's care and concern for his father. This is indeed the pattern of response that advocates of faith receive from those who are hardened by ingratitude and lack of guidance.

Abraham, however, does not allow anger to dictate his attitude. He does not lose sight of his dutifulness to his father. Hence, he continues to address him with respect and compassion. (19:47-19:48)

Abraham makes it clear that he will not respond to the threat, nor will he indulge in futile argument. He promises his father to pray to God to forgive him and not to punish him by allowing him to go further astray. He will pray to God to have mercy on his father and guide him to the truth. He tells him that he is used to God's generous favors, as He answers his prayers. Then he adds that if his own presence and appeal irritate his father, then he will withdraw, leave his father and people, abandoning the deities they invoke instead of God. He will only worship God alone, hoping that by doing so he will avoid being unblest. Such is a believer's politeness and humility. Abraham does not

feel that he is deserving of favors from God more than being spared misery, unhappiness and withdrawal of blessings.

Thus Abraham left his father, his community and homeland, as well as their idols and worship practices. God, however, blessed him with offspring and gave him what was better than that which he had sacrificed.

Abraham Advises his Father to Avoid Idolatry

Chapter 26: The 47th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And recount to them*
the tidings of Abraham (26:69)
when he said to his father and his folk:
What is it you worship? (26:70)
They said: We worship idols.
We will stay ones who give ourselves up to them. (26:71)
He said: Hear they when you call them? (26:72)
Or are they profiting you or hurting you? (26:73)
They said: Nay! But we found our fathers
acting likewise. (26:74)
He said: Then, considered what
you had been worshipping, (26:75)
you and your fathers, the elders? (26:76)
Truly, they are an enemy to me,
but not so the Lord of the worlds (26:77)
Who created me. And it is He Who guides me. (26:78)
And that He Who feeds me and gives me drink. (26:79)
And when I was sick, it is He Who heals me (26:80)
and Who causes me to die, again, will give me life, (26:81)
and from Whom I am desirous that
He will forgive me my transgressions
on the Day of Judgment. (26:82)
My Lord! Bestow on me critical judgment
and cause me to join
with the ones in accord with morality. (26:83)
And assign me a good name of good repute
with the later ones (26:84)
and make me one who inherits the Garden of Bliss. (26:85)
And forgive my father. Truly, he had been
among the ones who go astray. (26:86)
And cover me not with shame on a Day
they will be raised up, (26:87)
on a Day neither wealth will profit nor children (26:88)

but he who approached God with a pure-hearted heart. (26:89)
And the Garden will be brought close
for the ones who are God-conscious (26:90)
and hellfire will be advanced for the ones who are in error. (26:91)
And it will be said to them:
Where is what you had been worshipping (26:92)
instead of God? Are you helped by them?
Or help they themselves? (26:93)
Then, they were thrown down into it,
they and the ones who are in error, (26:94)
and the army of Iblis, one and all. (26:95)
And they said while they are in it striving
against one another: (26:96)
By God! Truly, we had been clearly wandering astray (26:97)
when we made you equal with the Lord of the worlds. (26:98)
And no one caused us to go astray but the ones who sin. (26:99)
Now we have not ones who are intercessors (26:100)
nor an ardent friend, a loyal friend. (26:101)
Would that there were for us a return again.
Then, we would be among the ones who believe! (26:102)
Truly, in this is a sign; yet most of them
had not been ones who believe. (26:103)
And, truly, your Lord, He is
The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:104)

Commentary°

The chapter now moves on to tell us about Abraham and his people. The Prophet is ordered to relate this story to the ungrateful. For they claimed to be the custodians of Abraham's heritage in so far as they followed his old faith, even though they addressed their worship to multiple deities. Indeed, they went even further, placing idols in the Sacred Mosque built by Abraham as a focus for the followers of the pure faith based on God's oneness. The Prophet is required to tell them Abraham's story so that they know whether their claims are right or not. In this Chapter, historical accounts are not given in their chronological order, because it is only concerned with the lessons to be derived from these accounts.

The episode in Abraham's story given in this chapter concentrates on the message he delivered to his people, the debate he had with them, his denunciation of their alleged deities, addressing all worship to God alone and his reminder of the Day of Judgment. This is followed by a complete scene from the Day of Judgment when idolaters will deny those very deities they used to worship, and regret

their past actions that are certain to land them with a terrible end. It is all shown as if it is already happening now. The lesson the story delivers here is aimed primarily at the idolaters. Therefore, the chapter speaks at length on the basics of the monotheistic faith, the fallacy of polytheism, and the destiny of idolaters. All other aspects are only briefly hinted at, while they are nonetheless detailed in other chapters.

Questioning Popular Beliefs

The Prophet is instructed (26:69-26:70) to relate to them the story of Abraham whom the idolater Arabs considered themselves to be his heirs and the followers of his faith. The Prophet thus recounts how Abraham denounced what his father and people worshipped, which were no more than idols similar to those the ungrateful in Makkah worshipped. He also denounced their erring ways, asking them in a clear tone of disapproval: What is that you worship?

They answered (26:71) showing they certainly considered their idols deities, but the fact that they called them idols shows that they could not deny the fact that they were no more than statues made of stone, but to which they nevertheless devoted their worship. This is the ultimate degree of absurdity. Yet when people take up wrong beliefs, they lose sight of the absurdity of their concepts, worship and statements. Abraham begins to awaken their minds and hearts, highlighting the absurdity of their position. (26:72-73)

The least that should be true of a deity to whom worship is addressed is that it should have the same faculty of hearing as its worshipper. But these deities cannot hear their worshippers who appeal to them for benefit and the removal of harm and hardship. If they cannot hear, then how can they bring benefit or cause harm? Certainly the idolaters could not claim either quality for their idols. Hence, they did not answer Abraham because they realized that he was being sarcastic. Nevertheless, they could not refute what he said. Hence, when they do speak, they expose themselves as blind followers who do not reflect on their actions. (26:74) True, these idols cannot hear, bring benefit or cause harm, but we found our forefathers worshipping them and we follow in their footsteps. This is a disgraceful reply, but those idolaters were not ashamed to make it, nor were the Arabs in Makkah ashamed of doing likewise. It was sufficient that their forefathers did something for them to then accept it as valid without question.

Indeed a stumbling block in the way of the Islamic message was that the idolaters were required to abandon their forefathers' religion. This they did not want to do because it would detract from those an-

cestors' standing and constitute an acknowledgement that they were in error. This would be too disrespectful of their forefathers. Such otiose values are thus allowed to stand in the way of the truth. In times of inflexible obduracy people stick to such values in preference to the truth. Therefore, they needed to be shaken violently in order to release their minds and faculties. Patient and calm as he was, Abraham realized that the only way forward was to give them a real jolt, declaring his enmity to those idols and to the deviant beliefs that allowed such worship: He said: Do you see those which you have been worshipping—you and your forefathers of old? They are my enemies, except for the Lord of all the worlds. (26:75-26:77)

The fact that his own father and people worshipped such deities did not stop him from parting company with them, making clear his hostility to their errant beliefs. Thus, the Quran teaches believers that on the question of faith, no consideration is given to parents, ancestors or communities. The main bond is that of faith. Whatever else there is, is of secondary importance.

Abraham makes an exception in his hostility to what they and their ancestors worshipped, and this exception applies only to the Lord of all the worlds. It might be that some of their ancestors worshipped God before deviation crept into their faith. It might also be that some of them worshipped God alongside some other alleged deities. Hence, Abraham employs this precaution in order to make his statement precise, and this is only to be expected of Abraham when he speaks of faith.

Acknowledging God's Favors

Abraham then outlines the attributes of his Lord, the Lord of all the worlds, and the bond that exists between them at all times and in all situations. As we listen to his description we feel the close, inspirational relationship that acknowledges God's hand in everything that happens in life: It is He who has created me, and is the One who guides me. He is the One who gives me to eat and to drink. When I fall ill, He is the One who restores me to health, and will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life. It is He also who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgment. (26:78-26:82)

Abraham's description of his Lord and the bond between them imparts a feeling that every part of his constitution feels this bond. Therefore, all his aspirations look to God with love and trust. It is as if Abraham actually sees his Lord and feels his grace with all his heart. As the Quran quotes Abraham's description, it gives it a melodious tone, one that imparts a very relaxed atmosphere, spreading its soothing, tranquil air. (26:78)

He has originated me from where He knows but I know not. This means that He knows everything about me: my constitution, nature, functions, feelings, and ultimate destiny. He is the One to guide me and provide me with the line I should follow in life. It is as if Abraham feels himself like an elastic material which God shapes the way He likes, giving it whatever form He chooses. He submits himself to God with full trust, perfectly assured that he is on the right course. (26:78-26:80) These are aspects of the direct, compassionate and loving care Abraham feels his Lord takes of him in all situations of health and sickness. Abraham demonstrates the utmost standard of politeness with his Lord by not attributing any illness to Him, although he knows well that both sickness and health occur by God's will. He only attributes to Him the blessings he enjoys and the care he receives: his food and drink as well as his health.

(26:81) signifies complete faith that it is God who deals death, and that He is certain to bring the dead back to life. Abraham, a prophet and a messenger of God, who knows his Lord and feels his presence and care in such a way, acknowledging such a close relationship with Him, expresses his dearest hope that on the Day of Judgement, God will forgive him his faults. (26:82) He does not entertain any thought that he is without fault. Indeed he acknowledges that he has these, but hopes to receive more of God's grace. He does not feel that his deeds, good as they may be, deserve any credit, but hopes for God's mercy and forgiveness. This is the best to hope for.

This statement combines feelings of God-consciousness, politeness and self-effacement. This is the right combination to truly appreciate the grace God bestows on us, which is great indeed, and the value of our actions, which is definitely petty. In his description of his Lord, Abraham combines all the elements of true faith: God's oneness, acknowledgement that He conducts all the affairs of human life on earth including every minute detail, resurrection after death, reckoning, God's grace and man's failings. His people denied these, as do all those who associate partners with God.

Prayer by a Devoted Worshipper

Now Abraham addresses a long, comprehensive and humble prayer to his Lord. (26:83-89) Nothing in Abraham's prayer concerns any aspect of the comforts and pleasures of this world, not even physical health. It looks to higher aspects, motivated by pure feelings. It is a prayer made by a heart which has true knowledge of God and, as a result, attributes little value to everything else. He has known God's grace and prays for more of it, and he entertains hopes and fears in accordance with his experience. This is said by Abraham,

the noble Prophet whose devotion is exemplary. What self-effacing humility! What concern about falling short of what is expected, and what fear of a change of heart! How keen he is to just be among the righteous! He feels that he can only achieve this if God guides him to do the righteous deeds that will bring him into such ranks.

This is a supplication (26:84) that hopes for extension in later generations, not through offspring, but through faith. What Abraham prays for is that he should have in later generations a true advocate who calls on people to follow the path of truth, bringing people back to the pure faith which he himself advocated. This may be the same prayer quoted elsewhere in the Quran as it speaks of his building of the Kabah with his son Ishmael. They both prayed. (2:127-2:129)

God answered his prayer (26:85) and gave him that advocate of the truth, sending those people a Messenger to teach them the true faith and to purify them. Such an answer to Abraham's prayer came several thousand years later, which is a very long time in people's reckoning, but a time that is nonetheless appropriate in God's judgement. Having already prayed that he should join the ranks of the righteous, through guidance to do what is good, now Abraham prays to be one of those who will be admitted to the garden of bliss which is inherited only by God's righteous servants. (26:86)

He prays for his own and God's forgiveness of his father despite all the harsh treatment and serious threats he had received from him. He had promised his father that he would pray for his forgiveness and he certainly fulfilled his promise. Later, the Quran makes clear that it is not permissible for a believer to pray for the forgiveness of anyone who associates partners with God, even though that person might be a close relative. The Quran also clarifies that Abraham prayed for the forgiveness of his father only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became clear to him that he was God's enemy, he disowned him, (9:114) Abraham then realized that the true relation that should be observed is not that of blood; rather it is one of faith. This is an important aspect of correct Islamic education. The first bond that gives rise to any relation between two people is that of faith: if it is severed, then all relations are of little significance.

We appreciate the extent of Abraham's feeling about the hardships of the Day of Resurrection from his prayer (26:87-26:89) not to be then disgraced. We also feel his humility before his Lord and his fear that he might have fallen short of what was expected of him. We also realize how profoundly he felt the nature of that great Day from his description of it. (26:88-26:89) He also realizes that the only value recognized on that Day is a sincerity which makes one's heart purely devoted to God, allowing no consideration or personal desire

to detract from such devotion. This is the type of sound heart that is worthy of proper value. (26:88) Indeed, no other quality, property or consideration is of any benefit, because all are of a temporary nature and will inevitably come to an end. They may be coveted by people who try hard to possess such things in this life, but they are of no value in the ultimate reckoning.

A Question That Needs No Answer

We then have in the present passage a scene of the Day of Judgment, which was feared by Abraham. It is so vivid that he almost sees it with his own eyes as he addresses his humble prayer to God: Paradise will be brought within sight of the God-fearing; whereas the blazing fire will be placed in full view of the ones lost in error. It shall be said to them: 'Where is now all that you used to worship instead of God? Can they help you or even help themselves?' They will be hurled into hell, as also those who are lost in error, and Ibl s' hosts, all together. And there, quarrelling with one another, they will say: By God, we were obviously in error, when we deemed you equal to the Lord of all the worlds. It was only the truly guilty ones who led us astray. And now we have none to intercede for us nor any loving friend. Would that we had a second chance [in life], so that we could be believers.' (26:90-26:102)

The scene begins with an image of heaven being brought near, so as to be within sight of the God-conscious; those who actually remained apprehensive lest they might be made to suffer God's punishment. The fire of hell is also brought into full view of those who erred; those who strayed away from the right path and denied the Day of Judgment. As they stand within sight of hell, listening to stern rebukes for their bad deeds before they are thrown into hell, they will be first asked about the deities they used to worship. The question that will be put to them is: Where is now all that you used to worship instead of God? (26:92-26:93) Where are they? Can they help you or even help themselves? (26:93) No answer is heard from them. Indeed none is expected. It is only a question given by way of rebuke. Hence, (26:94-95) The very word used here, translated as 'hurled into', suggests that they fall into it, one on top of another, with much noise as a result. It is the same as when a landslide occurs, immediately followed by further ones. These people who were lost in error are accompanied in hell with Satan's hosts, all together." Indeed they are all part of Satan's hosts.

We are then made to listen to them as they speak in hell, saying to the false deities and the idols they worshipped. (26:97-26:98) They put the blame on those who led them into error and prevented them

from listening to divine guidance. They now wake up to the realization that it is all too late and that apportioning blame will benefit them nothing. (26:100-26:101) Neither deity nor friend will be of any avail to us now. But then they think that if there were a possibility of returning to life, they could still mend their erring ways. (26:102) This is nothing more than wishful thinking. There can be no return. They are already present on Judgment Day. This is followed by the chapter's standard comment. (26:103-26:104) This comment is repeated in the chapter every time the fate of any community that opposed God's messengers is shown, whether it be the Aad, the Thamud or Lot's people, and it also follows every sign given to any group who denied God and His messengers. The scene from the Day of Judgment that we have been discussing is shown here in place of a scene of punishment in this world. It shows the end faced by Abraham's people, and indeed the ultimate end of all idolatry. Hence, it delivers the same lesson in every historical account. We should remember that scenes of the Day of Judgment are shown in the Quran as if they are taking place in front of our eyes so as to touch our hearts and souls in the same way as they are touched when reflecting on the fate of past communities.

The Message of Abraham

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And certainly Our messengers drew near*
to Abraham with good tidings.
They said: Peace. He said: Peace.
And he presently produced a roasted calf. (11:69)
And when he saw their hands reach not out towards it,
he became suspicious and sensed awe of them.
They said: Fear not. . . . (11:70)

The Message of Abraham and Plea for the Folk of Lot

Abraham's woman, one who is standing up,
laughed when We gave her good tidings
of Isaac and besides Isaac, Jacob. (11:71)
She said: Woe to me! Will I give birth
when I am an old woman and this, my husband,
is an old man? Truly, this is a strange thing! (11:72)
They said: Marvel you at the command of God?
The mercy of God and His blessings be upon you,
O People of the House:

Truly, He is Worthy of Praise, Glorious. (11:73)
And when the panic went from Abraham
and the good tidings drew near to him,
he disputes with Us for the folk of Lot. (11:74)
Truly, Abraham was forbearing, sympathetic,
one who turns in repentance. (11:75)
O Abraham! Turn aside from this.
Truly, the command of your Lord drew near.
And, truly, that which arrives for them is a punishment,
one that is not to be repelled. (11:76)

Commentary°

11:74: Familiar or Miraculous? Nothing that God does should be considered strange. When it is the norm for something to happen in a particular fashion, this does not mean that that fashion is unchangeable. The norm can be broken when God so chooses, for a particular purpose of His own. The purpose here is to bestow His mercy and promised blessings to the believers in that household. Yet, when the norm is broken, whatever takes place as a result occurs in accordance with the overall divine laws of nature that we do not know in full. We cannot judge God's laws according to what happens during a short, limited period of time.

Those who try to restrict God's will to the laws of nature familiar to them are ignorant of the reality of Godhead as stated by God in His book. Whatever God states is true. Our human minds have no say in all this. Even those who restrict God's will to what He Himself has stated to be His law are again unaware of the true nature of Godhead. God's will is free and not restricted by His laws.

It is true that God conducts the affairs of this universe according to the laws He has set for it. This is, however, different from restricting God's will to these natural laws after they have been set in operation. The laws of nature work by God's will all the time. They are not automatic. At any time, God may choose to cause His natural laws to operate in a different way. Whenever this happens natural laws will change to the new fashion God has determined. The overall law of nature which governs the operation of all other laws is that which states that God's will is free and absolute. Every time any particular law operates, it does so according to God's free and absolute will.

Good News for Abraham

The account of Abraham opens here with the fact that he was to receive good news: Our messengers came to Abraham with good

news. (11:69) We are not told immediately what the good news was. This would come at the right moment, when his wife was present. The messengers were angels whose identity is left a mystery. Although some commentators on the Quran mention names and numbers, we prefer not to speculate, since we have no evidence to support such contentions.

They bade him peace, and he answered: Peace [be to you]. (11:69) Abraham had emigrated from his birthplace in Iraq, crossed the Jordan and settled in the land of the Canaanites which was largely a desert. Following the Bedouin tradition of hospitality, Abraham immediately went about preparing food for his guests: He then hastened to bring them a roasted calf. (11:69) He gets a fat calf, roasts and prepares it. He presents it to his guests who, as we have already said, were angels. Angels, however, do not eat what human beings eat. Therefore, they could not partake of the calf, and this worried Abraham: When he saw that their hands did not reach out to it, he felt their conduct strange and became apprehensive of them. (11:70) A guest who does not eat of the food given him causes worry. He makes his host nervous that he intends some kind of treachery. To this day, country people and Bedouins consider it a grave crime to act treacherously towards someone with whom they have shared food. Hence, if they refuse to eat someone's food, their action suggests that they either intend to do harm or that they do not trust the host's intentions. Therefore, the messengers reveal their identity to Abraham and tell him about their mission: They said: Do not be alarmed. We are sent to the people of Lot. (11:70)

Nothing that God does should be considered strange. When it is the norm for something to happen in a particular fashion, this does not mean that that fashion is unchangeable. The norm can be broken when God so chooses, for a particular purpose of His own. The purpose here is to bestow His mercy and promised blessings to the believers in that household. Yet, when the norm is broken, whatever takes place as a result occurs in accordance with the overall divine laws of nature which we do not know in full. We cannot judge God's laws according to what happens during a short, limited period of time.

At this point, Abraham was reassured. He was delighted by the good news given him by God's Messengers. This, however, did not make him overlook Lot and his people. Lot was his nephew who had emigrated with him from their birthplace and who lived in the neighboring area. He realized that the Messengers, or the angels were sent to destroy Lot's people. Compassionate and tender-hearted as Abraham was, he could not bear that the whole community should be so

destroyed. He began to plead for them.

Those who try to restrict God's will to the laws of nature familiar to them are ignorant of the reality of Godhead as stated by God in His book. Whatever God states is true. Our human minds have no say in all this. Even those who restrict God's will to what He Himself has stated to be His law are again unaware of the true nature of Godhead. God's will is free and not restricted by His laws.

It is true that God conducts the affairs of this universe according to the laws He has set for it. This is, however, different from restricting God's will to these natural laws after they have been set in operation. The laws of nature work by God's will all the time. They are not automatic. At any time, God may choose to cause His natural laws to operate in a different way. Whenever this happens natural laws will change to the new fashion God has determined. The overall law of nature which governs the operation of all other laws is that which states that God's will is free and absolute. Every time any particular law operates, it does so according to God's free and absolute will.

Angels Give Reward for the God-conscious

Chapter 15: The 54th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And tell them about the guests of Abraham* (15:51)
when they entered upon him and said:
Peace! He said: Truly, we are afraid of you. (15:52)
They said: Take no notice.
Truly, we give thee good tidings of a knowing boy. (15:53)
He said: Gave you good tidings to me
even though old age afflicted me?
So of what give you good tidings? (15:54)
They said: We gave thee good tidings of The Truth,
so thou art not of the ones who despair. (15:55)
He said: Who despairs of the mercy of his Lord,
but the ones who go astray? (15:56)

Commentary°

And tell them of the guests of Abraham, that is, the angels — there were twelve, ten or three of them, among them Gabriel.

15:51 Tell them about Abraham's guests, when they went in to him. In this account some of the details mentioned in other chapters are left out. The angels greet Abraham with a message of peace as they enter, but he tells them he is apprehensive about them. The [sign] does not mention the reason for his fear, nor does it mention

that he placed a roasted calf before them, as mentioned in Chapter 11, Hud. There we are told: When he saw that their hands did not reach out to it, he felt their conduct strange and became apprehensive of them. (11:70) The point of emphasis here is that God's grace is always bestowed on God's servants, as made clear by His messengers. Hence the details of Abraham's story are of little importance. They said: Do not be alarmed. We bring you the happy news of the birth of a son to you who will be endowed with knowledge. (11:53) The [sign] outlines this happy news without much detail of what else took place.

Here also we have Abraham's reply, without mentioning his wife and her intervention in the discussion that ensued: Said he: Do you give me this happy news when I have been overtaken by old age? Of what, then, is your good news? (15:54) First Abraham feels it unlikely that he would be given a son at his old age, particularly with his wife also being old and barren as mentioned in other chapters. Therefore, the angels remind him of the truth: They replied: That good news we have given you is the truth. So do not abandon hope. (15:55) Abraham immediately returns to his normal hopeful self, stating that he never lost hope of God's grace: He said: Who but a person going far astray abandons hope of His Lord's grace? (15:56)

The way he put this question (15:52) is indicative of his sharp sense of what is right. He gave those stones and wooden shapes their true names, 'images.' He did not call them 'deities.' Indeed, he stated his disapproval of their worship of those images by using the word 'devoted,' which indicates a permanent action. Needless to say, those people did not devote all their time to worshipping such idols, but they nonetheless attached great respect to them. This is, then, devotion in an abstract sense. The way Abraham put the question, describing them as permanent devotees to such idols, indicates that he considered their action absolutely absurd.

They defended their action. (15:53) Their answer indicates that they were in a stone-like inflexible state of mind that chained them to absurd traditions. They were far removed from freedom of thought, reflection and the proper evaluation of things and situations which belief in God generates as it breaks the chains of imaginary, baseless and traditional sanctities.

That such images were worshipped by their fathers (15:54) could not impart to such objects any value that they did not have. Nor could it have given them any undeserved sanctity. Nor is real value derived from giving forefathers an elevated status and following in their footsteps. It is rather the result of proper, free and objective judgment.

When Abraham confronted them with such objectivity they asked if what he was saying was true or was he just joking. (15:55) It is the kind of question asked only by someone who is unsure of his own beliefs, because he never questioned them to make sure they were right. Both his thinking and his soul are impaired by the myths and traditions he has thoughtlessly accepted. As such, he is uncertain about anything. Worship conversely must rely only on certainty, not on unsubstantiated myths. This is the state of loss that engulfs those who do not believe in a faith based on the clear truth of God's oneness that brings mind and conscience into perfect harmony.

Abraham, on the other hand, enjoys a state of complete certainty. He knows his Lord. His thoughts are full of the truth of His oneness. Hence, he says his response with absolute clarity. (15:56) He is the Lord of humanity, the heavens and earth: a single Lord who is the Creator of all. Indeed, creation and Lordship are two qualities that go hand in hand. Such is the straight and clear faith. It is totally different from what unbelievers think when they claim that there are several deities, whilst at the same time conceding that none of them creates except God, the only Creator. Yet still they worship such deities knowing they are powerless to create.

Abraham's Submission to God

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And mention when Abraham*
said to his father Azar:
Have you taken idols to yourself as gods?
Truly, I see you and your folk clearly wandering astray. (6:74)
And, thus, We cause Abraham to see
the kingdom of the heavens and the earth
so that he would be of the ones who are certain in belief. (6:75)
So when night outspread over him, he saw a star.
He said: This is my Lord.
Then, when it set, he said: I love not that which sets. (6:76)
Then, when he saw the moon, that which rises, he said:
This is my Lord. Then, when it set, he said:
If my Lord guides me not, certainly,
I would have been among the folk,
the ones gone astray. (6:77)
Then, when he saw the sun, that which rises, he said:
This is my Lord. This is greater.
Then, when it set, he said: O my folk!
Truly, I am free from the partners you ascribe with Him. (6:78)
Truly, I turned my face to

He Who Originated the heavens and the earth
—as a monotheist and I am not
of the ones who are polytheists. (6:79)
And his folk argued with him. He said:
You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me?
I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him.
When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything
in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect? (6:80)
And how should I fear what you ascribed as partners with Him
while you fear not that you ascribe as partners with God?
He sends not down to you any authority for it.
Then, which of the two groups of people
has better right to a place of sanctuary
if you had been knowing? (6:81)
Those who believed and confuse not their belief with injustice,
those, to them belongs the place of sanctuary.
And they are ones who are truly guided. (6:82)

Commentary°

This is the instinctive argument of nature voiced by Abraham who had not yet consciously recognized his true Lord. When human nature is free of deviation and perversion, it simply cannot accept that those idols worshipped by Abraham's people were gods. It should be remembered here that the ancient Chaldeans, who lived in Iraq at that time, used to worship idols as well as the stars and planets. To Abraham, the deity to be worshipped, to whom people turn for help in all situations, and who has created all living things, cannot be an idol made of stone or wood. It is obvious that those idols cannot create, listen, respond or provide sustenance. Hence, they are not worth worshipping. Indeed, they cannot be considered as deities even if they are given the limited role of being intermediaries between the Lord of the universe and human beings. Such a set-up and practices are, then, all erroneous. Abraham recognized this instinctively at the first instant. Indeed, he provides a complete example of human nature as created by God: pure, and free of perversion. It confronts error and deviation with clarity and decisiveness, stating the whole truth, since the matter is one of faith. (6:74)

The Other Messengers Followed Abraham's Footsteps

Makkah: *And that was Our disputation*
that We gave Abraham against his folk.
We exalt in degrees whom We will,

truly, thy Lord is Wise, Knowing. (6:83)
And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob ...
And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)
***
And from among their fathers and their offspring
and their brothers/sisters,
We elected them and We guided them
to a straight path. (6:87)
That is guidance of God. He guides with it
whom He wills of His servants.
And if they ascribed partners with Him,
what they had been doing was fruitless for them. (6:88)
Those are those to whom We gave the Book
and critical judgment and prophethood.
So if these are ungrateful for them, then,
surely, We charged a folk with them
who is not of the ones who are ungrateful for them. (6:89)
Those are those whom God guided.
So imitate their guidance.
Say: I ask of you no compensation for it.
It is not but a reminder for the worlds. (6:90)

Abraham's Message of Worshipping the One God

Chapter 37: The 56th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, truly, among his partisans*
was Abraham. (37:83)
When he drew near his Lord with a pure-hearted heart, (37:84)
when he said to his father and to his folk:
What is it that you worship? (37:85)
Is it a calumny that you want gods other than God! (37:86)
Then, what is your opinion about the Lord of the worlds? (37:87)
And he looked on them with a glimpse at the stars (37:88)
and he said: Truly, I am ill! (37:89)
But they turned away from him as ones who draw back (37:90)
and he turned upon their gods then, said: Will you not eat? (37:91)
Why speak you not for yourselves? (37:92)
Then, he turned upon them,
striking them with his right hand. (37:93)
Then, the people came forward towards him rushing. (37:94)
He said: Worship you what you yourselves carve out (37:95)
while God created you and what you do? (37:96)
They said: Build for him a structure.

Then, cast him into hellfire. (37:97)
So they wanted to use cunning against him,
but We made them the lowest. (37:98)
He said: Truly, I am one who goes to my Lord.
He will guide me. (37:99)
My Lord! Bestow on me
among the ones in accord with morality. (37:100)
So We gave him the good tidings
of a forbearing boy. (37:101)
And when he reached maturity endeavoring with him,
he said: O my son! Truly, I see while slumbering
that I am sacrificing ***you****. So look on what* ***you*** *have considered?*
He said: O my father! Accomplish whatever ***you*** *are commanded.*
You *will find me, if God willed,*
of the ones who remain steadfast. (37:102)
Then, when they both submitted themselves to God
and he flung him on his brow (37:103)
We cried out to him: O Abraham! (37:104)
Surely, ***you*** *had established the dream as true.*
Thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (37:105)
Truly, that was, certainly, the clear trial. (37:106)
And, then, We took ransom for him
with a sublime slaughter (37:107)
and We left for him a good name with the later ones: (37:108)
Peace be on Abraham! (37:109)
Thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (37:110)
Truly, he is one of Our believing servants. (37:111)
And We gave him the good tidings of Isaac, a Prophet,
among the ones in accord with morality. (37:112)
And We blessed him and Isaac. And of their offspring
are ones who are doers of good
and ones who are clearly unjust to themselves. (37:113)

Commentary°

Thus the story opens, moving from Noah to Abraham and making it clear that they were related in faith and its advocacy. Thus Abraham is said to belong to Noah's community despite the long time gap between them. Nonetheless they shared the same divine constitution and message.

It is to commemorate this great event that serves as a symbol of true faith and submission to God that Muslims celebrate the Sacrifice

or al-Adha. This event serves as a reference point for the Muslim community to know their first father, Abraham, whose faith it follows and to whom it traces its ancestry. It thus understands the nature of its faith, based on submission to God's will with perfect acceptance and reassurance. It will never need to ask God why. It will never hesitate to do His bidding, once it realizes what He wants of it. It gives its all, withholding nothing, and choosing no particular way or form of offering. It simply does what He bids it to do. The Muslim community also knows that God does not wish to overburden it with the test, nor put it to hardship. All He needs is that Muslims should be ready to give whatever they are required to give, in full obedience and commitment, without hesitation. Once they prove such complete dedication, He will remove the need for their sacrifice and pain. He will consider that they have fulfilled their duty and reward them for that, replacing their sacrifice and honoring them as He honored their father, Abraham.

He is remembered by one generation after another. (Verse 108) He is the father of all prophets, and the founding father of the Muslim community that inherits his faith. God has assigned to the Muslim community the task of leading humanity on the basis of Abraham's faith. In so doing, God has made the Muslim community Abraham's descendants for the rest of human life.

The chapter moves on to the second episode it relates of Abraham's history. After he was saved from the fire, he closed that chapter of his life to begin a new phase: "And Abraham said I will go to my Lord: He is sure to guide me." (37:99) His words indicate that he was migrating, this in both a mental and physical sense. He was abandoning everything: his father, family, home, people and land, leaving them all behind and going to his Lord, free of all concerns. He thus surrendered himself to his Lord, assured that He would give him guidance and care, setting him on the right path. It is a migration from one state to another, abandoning all ties and bonds in favor of one bond that remains pure and strong. His words express complete faith and unqualified surrender.

Until that moment, Abraham was without children. He had left behind his relations, friends and all that was familiar to him. Needless to say, his relations with those who threw him in the fire suffered a final breakdown. Therefore, he went to his Lord, praying to Him to grant him believing offspring: "Lord! Grant me a righteous son." (37:100) And God answered his true servant's prayer: "We gave him the happy news that he will have a forbearing son." (37:101) The son was most probably Ishmael, as clearly inferred from his life story and from the chapter itself. Indeed, we can see the mark of his for-

bearance in his youth. We can also imagine the delight experienced by Abraham in his new abode, where he was a stranger, at the birth of this son described by God as a 'forbearing son.'

It is time for us now to look at the glorious attitude that Abraham's life story represents, drawing from it an inspiring lesson as presented by God Almighty to the Muslim community.

When the boy was old enough to work with his father, Abraham said: My son! I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. Tell me, then, what you think. [Ishmael] said My father.! Do as you are bidden, and, God willing, you will find me to be patient in adversity. (37:102)

What effect will faith not produce? We see here Abraham in his old age, cut off in a foreign land, having deserted his homeland and his people, being given a child. The child turns out to be a model son, with his forbearance confirmed by God Himself. Hardly had Abraham enjoyed his son's company and seen his youth blooming so as to become his companion and assistant, when he sees in his dream that he should slaughter him. He understands that it is a sign from God requiring sacrifice. What is his attitude now? He does not hesitate for a moment. The thought of disobedience does not even occur to him. He thinks only of submission. It is true that the dream was only a signal, not a clear and direct order issued through revelation. It was a signal by his Lord though, and that was enough for Abraham to comply, not to delay, and not even to ask why.

Moreover, his compliance did not betray any feeling of distress, horror or panic; it was marked by calm acceptance and reassurance, reflected in his words as he put this most grave matter to his son: My son! I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. Tell me, then, what you think. (37:102) These are the words of a man in full control of himself and his feelings, knowing that he is only doing his duty and trusting that it behooves him to comply. We do not see any element of panic driving a person to do even what he feels to be repugnant, in order to get it done and finished with.

That it was hard for Abraham is beyond doubt. He was not required to send his only son to war, nor to put him to a task that would end in his death. Nothing of the sort. Instead he was required to undertake the task himself, by his own hand. And what task was that? It was to slaughter his own son by way of sacrifice. This was the order he received calmly, the one that he put to his son and asked him to consider carefully. He did not take his son by surprise and do what was bidden. Rather, he puts the question to him as if it were both normal and familiar. To Abraham, the question was one of obedience. Since his Lord wanted something, so be it, without hesitation.

His son should also know and accept it willingly, with submission so that he too would earn the reward of obeying God and experience the pleasure of submission to Him. He himself had known that pleasure and now wants his son to feel it as the pure goodness that surpasses all else that life can offer.

What does the son say as his father proposes to slaughter him in fulfillment of what he saw in a dream? The son also rises to the sublime standard his father had earlier attained: He said: My father! Do as you are bidden, and, God willing, you will find me to be patient in adversity. (37:102) This is not a response of mere obedience and resignation. It is a response marked with acceptance and certainty. His reply begins with: My father! The prospect of his death does not cause him to panic or to forget his manners and love of his father. Do as you are bidden. He also feels the same as his father, taking the dream as a signal, which means an order. This is sufficient to make him willing to carry it out without hesitation.

Furthermore, we see in Ishmael's response proper manners with his Lord, and recognition of the limits of his ability in the face of hardship. Therefore, he seeks his Lord's help to overcome his weakness. He attributes to God the grace of helping him to obey and make the sacrifice: God willing, you will find me to be patient in adversity. (37:102) He does not press the matter as a heroic act on his part. Nor does he describe it as facing the danger and caring little for the consequences. He does not give himself any credit in the matter; he simply attributes it all to God who has helped him in carrying out His orders with patience in adversity. This is an example of perfect humility before God, trust in Him, combined with complete obedience and submission to His will.

The scene moves further to show us the order being carried out: When the two of them had surrendered themselves to the will of God, and Abraham laid him prostrate on his forehead. (37:103) Once more, obedience, faith and acceptance of God's will rise to a far nobler standard than anything known to humanity. The father puts his son prostrate before him and the son submits and shows no resistance. All this takes place in reality. Such is self surrender, which is the essence of Islam: complete trust, obedience, certainty, acceptance, submission and action. Both father and son experience nothing other than pure faith.

The point here is not one of bravery, courage, enthusiasm or heroic action which a warrior might feel in battle. A committed fighter may undertake a task knowing that his chance of survival is negligible. However, this is totally different from what Abraham and Ishmael were doing: for them, there is no boiling situation, no rush

of enthusiasm prompting hasty action before weakness or hesitation can creep in. Theirs is a rational self surrender, with full knowledge of what they want, and complete reassurance about what will take place. More than that, they coolly appreciate the pleasure of obeying God's orders.

At this stage, Abraham and Ishmael have done all that is required of them. They have submitted themselves and carried out the order. All that remained was the actual shedding of Ishmael's blood and his death, which, in God's scales, counted for little, compared with the energy, feelings and determination both father and son put into what was bidden of them. By this time, the test had reached its climax, its results were known and its objectives fulfilled. What remained was physical pain and a dead body, but God does not want His servants to endure suffering. He does not require them to torment or kill themselves. Once they have submitted themselves and shown their true willingness to do what He bids, then they have fulfilled what is required and passed the test successfully.

Deliverance

God witnessed the sincerity shown by both Abraham and Ishmael, and He considered them to have fulfilled all that was required of them:

God called to him and ransomed [Ishmael] with a noble sacrifice. (37:104-37:107) You have indeed fulfilled all you needed to fulfill. God wants nothing from His servants other than that they submit themselves to Him totally, so that they have nothing which they consider too dear or too precious to give up, not even an only son, or their own lives. You, Abraham, have done this, offering everything dear, with certainty and acceptance. What was left was flesh and blood, which could be substituted by any type of flesh and blood. Thus, God ransomed this young man who had submitted himself to His will by a great and noble sacrifice. It is reported that the sacrifice was a ram that Abraham found ready by God's will and that he sacrificed this ram in place of Ishmael.

Abraham was then told that that is how God rewards the good. (37:105) We reward them by choosing them for such a test, directing their minds and hearts to rise to the necessary level, helping them in such fulfillment and then giving them the reward they deserve.

It is to commemorate this great event that serves as a symbol of true faith and submission to God that Muslims celebrate the Sacrifice or al-Adha. This event serves as a reference point for the Muslim community to know their first father, Abraham, whose faith it follows and to whom it traces its ancestry. It thus understands the nature of

its faith, based on submission to God's will with perfect acceptance and reassurance. It will never need to ask God why. It will never hesitate to do His bidding, once it realizes what He wants of it. It gives its all, withholding nothing, and choosing no particular way or form of offering. It simply does what He bids it to do. The Muslim community also knows that God does not wish to overburden it with the test, nor put it to hardship. All He needs is that Muslims should be ready to give whatever they are required to give, in full obedience and commitment, without hesitation. Once they prove such complete dedication, He will remove the need for their sacrifice and pain. He will consider that they have fulfilled their duty and reward them for that, replacing their sacrifice and honoring them as He honored their father, Abraham.

He is remembered by one generation after another. (37:108) He is the father of all prophets, and the founding father of the Muslim community that inherits his faith. God has assigned to the Muslim community the task of leading humanity on the basis of Abraham's faith. In so doing, God has made the Muslim community Abraham's descendants for the rest of human life.

Guidance Rests Exclusively with God

Chapter 43: The 63rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Mention when Abraham*
said to his father and his folk:
Truly, I am released from obligation to what you worship (43:26)
other than He Who originated me and, truly,
He will guide me. (43:27)
And He made it an enduring Word among his posterity,
so that perhaps they will return. (43:28)

Commentary°

The Quraysh, the major Arabian tribe living in Makkah at the time of the revelation of the Quran, used to say that they were Abraham's descendants, which was true. They also claimed that they followed Abraham's faith, which was untrue. Abraham espoused monotheism, clear and undistorted. It was for his belief in the One God that he abandoned his father and his people, after he was subjected to execution by burning. His religion is based on this basic belief. He urged his children and descendants to remain true to it. Thus, no trace of polytheism is ever found in his faith.

The precept of monotheism rejected by the Quraysh was nothing but the belief advocated by Abraham, from whom they descended. It was this great principle that Abraham declared to his own father

and people, thus rejecting their false creed, disowning their traditional worship. He did not adopt falsehood simply because his father and people practised it. In fact, he did not pay them any courtesy when he declared his rejection of it in a clear and emphatic statement quoted: *Mention when Abraham said to his father and his folk: Truly, I am released from obligation to what you worship other than He Who originated me and, truly, He will guide me.* (43:26-43:27)

Abraham clearly stated this precept of God's Oneness to which the whole universe testifies. *And He made it an enduring Word among his posterity, so that perhaps they will return.* (43:28)

Abraham clearly stated this precept of God's Oneness to which the whole universe testifies. (43:28) It fell to Abraham to have the largest share in establishing this precept in life, delivering it to future generations through his seed. A number of his descendants were Prophets and Messengers, among whom three belong to the very select group of messengers endowed with the strongest resolve. These three are Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them all). Today, scores of centuries after Abraham, more than a billion people who follow the three divine religions are indebted to Abraham for their belief in the fundamental principle of God's Oneness. It was he who made it an abiding precept among his descendants. Many of them may abandon it, but it remains firm, clear and undistorted. Thus, people will always have a chance to return to God, their Creator, and worship Him. This represents a return to the truth, understanding it and holding firm to it.

A Son Prophesied to Abraham

Chapter 51: The 67th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Truly, approached **you***
the discourse of guests of Abraham,
the ones who are honored? (51:24)
When they entered to him they said: Peace.
He said: Peace, to a folk, ones who are unknown. (51:25)
Then, he turned upon his people
and brought about a fattened calf (51:26)
so he brought it near to them. He said: Will you not eat? (51:27)
Then, he sensed a fear of them; they said: Be not in awe.
They gave him good tidings of a knowing boy. (51:28)
*They said: Thus, spoke **your** Lord.*
Truly, He is The Wise, The Knowing. (51:30)

Commentary°

These signs speak of a sign or signs in the history of the divine

message, just like those signs in the earth and within the human being to which these signs referred. It also refers to a promise or promises that are fulfilled.

It describes Abraham's guests as honored, either because they are so in God's sight, or because of how Abraham paid honor to them as we soon learn. Abraham's hospitality appears very clearly from the first moment his guests arrived. Once they greeted him and received his reply, and despite the fact that they are total strangers, he immediately goes to his wife telling her to prepare food. He provides a large quantity of food, sufficient for scores of people. (51:26) According to some reports, there were only three guests, which means that a shoulder of that calf would have been sufficient to give them a good meal ... He was concerned because they were not eating.

[They then] revealed their identity, reassuring him and giving him the good news they had brought him. This was the happy news of Isaac's birth.

Everything will come into existence once the command, 'Be,' is given. God said it, so what can prevent His order from being fulfilled? Familiar habits limit our imagination and understanding. Therefore, we are surprised when we see something running counter to what is familiar. Yet God's will is free, unrestricted by anything that may be familiar to the human being in his small world. It creates whatever He wills, without limitation.

It begins its reference to Abraham by the question. (51:24) This style is used to prepare our minds for what comes next. He asked this question (51:27) after he saw that their hands did not touch the food and it looked as if they would not eat the meal that had been provided. He became concerned, apprehensive either because a stranger who refuses to eat his host's food appears treacherous and causes an element of apprehension, or because he noticed something odd about them.

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tity of food, sufficient for scores of people. (51:26) According to some reports, there were only three guests, which means that a shoulder of that calf would have been sufficient to give them a good meal.

He asked this question (51:27) after he saw that their hands did not touch the food and it looked as if they would not eat the meal that had been provided. He became concerned, apprehensive either because a stranger who refuses to eat his host's food appears treacherous and causes an element of apprehension, or because he noticed something odd about them. Therefore, they revealed their identity, reassuring him and giving him the good news they had brought him. (51:28) This was the happy news of Isaac's birth.

His wife (51:29) overheard the good news, was stunned and surprised. She could not stop herself from crying out in amazement. In the habitual reaction of women, she slapped herself on both cheeks and said: A barren old woman! This was a further expression of her surprise given she was elderly, and had been barren throughout her life. Stunned by this totally unexpected piece of news, she forgot that those bringing the good news were angels. Therefore, the angels reminded her of the basic truth that there is no limit to God's power, and that He determines everything on the basis of perfect wisdom and absolute knowledge. (51:30)

Abraham and His Guests

Abraham said: O ones who are sent,
what is your business? (51:31)
They said that we were sent to a folk, ones who sin, (51:32)
to send on them rocks of clay, (51:33)
ones distinguished by thy Lord
for ones who are excessive. (51:34)
So We brought out whoever had been in it
of the ones who believe. (51:35)
But We found in it nothing but a house
of ones who submit to God. (51:36)
And We left a sign in it
for those who fear the painful punishment. (51:37)

Abraham Had Been a Community—a Monotheist

Chapter 16: The 70th Chapter Revealed

Abraham had been a community obedient to God—a monotheist—
he is not among the ones who are polytheists. (16:120)
He was one who is thankful for His divine blessings.
He elected him and guided him to a straight path. (16:21)
And He gave him in the present benevolence.

And, truly, in the world to come he will be
among the ones in accord with morality. (16:22)
Again, we revealed to ***you*** *that* ***you*** *follow the creed of Abraham—*
a monotheist.
And he had not been among
the ones who are polytheists. (16:23)

Passionate Prayer by a Devoted Believer

Chapter 14: The 72nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And when Abraham said: My Lord!*
Make this land one that is safe
and cause me and my children to turn away
from worshipping idols. (14:35)
My Lord! Truly, they caused to go astray many among humanity;
so whoever heeded me, truly, he is of me.
And whoever rebelled against me,
then ***You*** *are, truly, Forgiving, Compassionate.* (14:36)
Our Lord! Truly, I caused to dwell some of my offspring
in an unsown valley by ***Your*** *Holy House,*
O our Lord, they, certainly, perform the formal prayer.
So make the minds among humanity yearn for them
and provide them with fruits
so that perhaps they will give thanks. (14:37)
Our Lord! Truly, ***You*** *have known what we conceal*
and what we speak openly.
And nothing is hidden from God
in or on the earth or in heaven. (14:38)
The Praise belongs to God Who bestowed on me
in my old age Ishmael and Isaac.
And, truly, my Lord is Hearing the supplication. (14:39)
My Lord! Make me one who performs the formal prayer and from
my offspring also.
Our Lord! Receive my supplication. (14:40)
Our Lord! Forgive ***You*** *me and the ones who are my parents*
and the ones who believe on the Day the reckoning arises. (14:41)

Commentary°

When the human conscience is awakened, he looks at the universe around him and realizes that it is made for his benefit, either directly or through the harmony between its laws and human life and needs. When he looks around him, he finds it all made friendly by God's grace, and by His power and permission it is both helpful and useful. When human beings considers and contemplates, he must

stand in awe of his Lord, prostrate himself and express his gratitude. He always looks up to his Lord to replace with ease any hardship he may be going through, and to preserve any aspect of grace and happiness he may be enjoying.

The perfect example of a human being who always remembers God and expresses his gratitude to Him is Abraham, the father of Prophets. His truly thankful character imparts a definite ambience to the whole chapter of Abraham, which also reflects God's grace and how it is received with gratitude or ingratitude. Abraham is shown here in a scene of devotion, making a heartfelt appeal to God. His melodious supplication is inspirational as it rises to God in heaven.

Abraham prays [in front of the House he built for God in Makkah] ... Abraham is shown addressing his supplication with perfect devotion and heartfelt gratitude. This should make the ungrateful reflect and revise their attitude. It should make the ungrateful turn back to faith, and the oblivious remember God. It should make people generally follow Abraham in his exemplary attitude.

Abraham is fully aware of the great number of people in his generation and previous generations who went astray when they were deluded by such idols. Hence, he addresses his passionate appeal to God to spare him from such delusion:

Abraham continues his supplication (14:36) stating that whoever follows his way and does not give in to idol worship belongs to him, as they would have the strongest bond of faith joining them together. The others who disobey him he leaves to God to determine what He does with them.

In this last prayer we see Abraham, the caring, forbearing and compassionate. He does not pray to God to destroy those of his offspring who leave his path of guidance. He does not precipitate God's punishment. Indeed he does not even mention punishment. Instead, he leaves them to God, to His forgiveness and mercy. Thus Abraham lends to the whole scene an air of forgiveness and compassion, leaving the taint of disobedience to disappear altogether. Compassionate as he is, Abraham does not let it appear again....

Why does Abraham pray that they should have such fruit? To eat and enjoy themselves? Certainly, but also to bring about what Abraham, exemplary in his gratitude to his Lord, hopes for: *so that perhaps they will give thanks.* Thus the purpose of settling close to the Sacred House is given prominence. It is to establish regular prayer in the most devoted and pure form. Similarly, the purpose of the prayer to incline people's hearts to the dwellers in the neighborhood of the Sacred House and their abundant provision from the fruits of the earth is to give thanks to God who provides all....

Abraham follows his thanksgiving with a supplication to God to make him always thankful. His thanks take the form of prayer, worship and obedience to God. Thus he declares his determination to always be a devout worshipper, but fears that something may divert him from it. Hence, he prays that God may help him to carry out his intention. . . .

Abraham Questioning His People's Beliefs

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Certainly, We gave Abraham*
his right judgment before.
And We had been ones who know of him (21:51)
when he said to his father and his folk:
What are these images to which you be
ones who give yourselves up to? (21:52)
They said: We found our fathers
as ones who are worshippers of them. (21:53)
He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been
in a clear wandering astray. (21:54)
*They said: Had **you** drawn near The Truth*
*or are **you** of the ones who play?* (21:55)
He said: Nay! Your Lord is the Lord
of the heavens and the earth,
Who originated them. And I am of the ones
who bear witness to this: (21:56)
And by God, I will contrive against your idols
after you turn as ones who draw back. (21:57)
So he made them broken pieces—but the greatest of them—
so that perhaps they will return to it. (21:58)
They said: Who accomplished this with our gods?
Truly, he is of the ones who are unjust! (21:59)
They said: We heard a spiritual warrior (m) mention them.
It is said he is Abraham. (21:60)
They said: Then, approach with him
before the eyes of personages
so that perhaps they will bear witness. (21:61)
*They said: Have **you** accomplished this with our gods*
O Abraham? (21:62)
He said: Nay! It was accomplished by the greatest of them—this.
So ask them if they had been able to speak for themselves. (21:63)
Then, they returned to one another. Then, they said:
Truly, you, you are the ones who are unjust. (21:64)
Again, they were put into confusion:

Certainly, you had known
that these speak not for themselves! (21:65)
He said: Worship you, then, other than God
what neither profits you nor hurts you at all? (21:66)
Fie on you on what you worship other than God.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (21:67)
They said: Burn him and help your gods
if you had been ones who do so! (21:68)
We said: O fire! Be coolness and peace for Abraham! (21:69)
And they wanted to use cunning against him,
but We made them the ones who are losers. (21:70)
And We delivered him and Lot to the
region which We blessed for the worlds. (21:71)
And We bestowed Isaac on him and Jacob as an unexpected gift.
And We made both of them ones in accord with morality. (21:72)
And We made them leaders, guiding by Our command.
And We revealed to them the accomplishing of good deeds
and the performing of the formal prayer and the giving of the
purifying alms. And they had been ones who worship Us. (21:73)

Commentary°

The episode narrated here is that of Abraham's message, given in a sequence of scenes that leave short gaps in between. It starts by mentioning that Abraham was initially given *right judgment*, which here means God's Oneness. In fact, it is the most important aspect of guidance which is clearly understood here as the referent of the phrase, *right judgment.* This means that God gave Abraham his sense of what is right, knowing his aptitude to bear the trust given to His Messengers.

It was to the land of Palestine that he and his nephew, Lot, emigrated. This was the land to receive revelations from on high for a very long time and the area where Prophets and Messengers of Abraham's descent were raised. This area incorporates the holy land where the second house of worship was built. It is a fertile land with rich tillage. All these blessings were added to that of the generations of Prophets living there.

And We bestowed Isaac on him....

Abraham left his home country where his family and community lived. So God compensated him with this blessed land as a better country to live in. He also gave him his son Isaac and grandson Jacob to be a better family than the one he had earlier. He also gave him a better community than his old one and raised from his offspring leaders to give humanity guidance. He inspired them to do all sorts of

good works, to attend to their prayers and to give regular charity. They were obedient worshippers of God. All this was Abraham's blessed compensation given by God for his perseverance when he was tested. It was a goodly compensation to fit his endurance in adversity.

The Message of Abraham

Chapter 29: The 85th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And when Abraham said to his folk:*
Worship God
and be God-conscious of Him.
That would be better for you if you had been knowing. (29:16)
You only worship graven images and not God?
And you create calumny?
Truly, those whom you worship other than God
possess not for you any power to provide for you.
So look for the provision from God
and worship Him and give thanks to Him.
To Him you will be returned. (29:17)
And if you deny, then, surely, communities denied before you.
And for the Messenger is not but
the delivering of the clear message. (29:18)

Commentary°

These [signs] move on several centuries bringing into focus the divine message as preached by Abraham. Abraham's call to his people was clear, unambiguous and very well structured. It served as a good model for all advocates of the divine faith. He started by telling them of the true nature of his message. Furthermore, he made this appealing to them, stating that it contained much goodness for them, if they would only know it....

Abraham directs people to seek their provisions from God. On Him alone should they rely for what is most important in their lives. Provisions and sustenance are people's first preoccupation, particularly those who have not experienced the meaning of faith. Yet to seek sustenance from God alone is the most obvious thing to do.

Finally, Abraham calls on them to address their worship and thanks to God who grants sustenance and bestows blessings on all creatures. (29:17) He also tells them that their return to God is inevitable....

Issues Clarified

These signs move on several centuries bringing into focus the

divine message as preached by Abraham. (29:16-29:18) Abraham's call to his people was clear, unambiguous and very well structured. It served as a good model for all advocates of the divine faith. He started by telling them of the true nature of his message. (29:16) Furthermore, he made this appealing to them, stating that it contained much goodness for them, if they would only know it. (29:16)

In other words, if they were not ignorant, they would choose what was good for them. This is a simple and real truth that needs no fiery speeches to impart its essence.

Then Abraham explains how flawed their religion is, especially their worship of wooden statues. What an absurd substitute for worshipping the Almighty. Secondly, evidence to support their beliefs was completely lacking; they only invented what was false. Furthermore, such statues and idols are of no benefit, as they cannot provide people with anything. (29:17)

Then Abraham directs people to seek their provisions from God. On Him alone should they rely for what is most important in their lives. (29:17) Provisions and sustenance are people's first preoccupation, particularly those who have not experienced the meaning of faith. Yet to seek sustenance from God alone is the most obvious thing to do.

Finally, Abraham calls on them to address their worship and thanks to God who grants sustenance and bestows blessings on all creatures. (29:17) He also tells them that their return to God is inevitable. It is better for them, then, that they should turn to Him now as believers and address their worship and gratitude to Him alone. (29:17)

Abraham and the Fire

Makkah: *So the answer of his folk had been not but that they said:*
Kill him or burn him! Then, God rescued him from the fire.
Truly, in this are, certainly, signs for a folk who believe. (29:24)
And he said: You take only to yourselves graven images
instead of God because of affection
among yourselves for this present life.
Again, on the Day of Resurrection
some of you will disavow some others
and some of you will curse some others
and your place of shelter will be the fire.
And for you there will be no ones who help. (29:25)
So Lot believed in him. And Abraham said:
Truly, I am one who emigrates for my Lord.
Truly, He, He is The Almighty, The Wise. (29:26)

And We bestowed Isaac and Jacob on him and We assigned to his offspring prophethood and the Book. We gave him his compensation in the present. And, truly, in the world to come he will be, certainly, among the ones in accord with morality. (29:27)
And Lot, when he said to his folk: Truly, you approach indecency which none who preceded you committed in the worlds. (29:28)
*You approach men with lust and sever the way and approach that which is unlawful in your conclave. Then, the answer of his folk had not been but that they said: Bring on us the punishment of God if **you** had been among the ones who are sincere.* (29:39)
He said: My Lord! Help me against the folk, ones who make corruption. (29:30)
And when Our Messengers drew near Abraham with the good tidings. They said: Truly, We are ones who will cause to perish the people of this town. Truly, its people had been ones who are unjust. (29:31)

Commentary°

(And when Our Messengers) Gabriel and the angels who were with him (brought Abraham the good news) that he will have a son, (they said) to Abraham: (Lo! we are about to destroy the people of that township) the township of Lot, (for its people are wrong-doers) they are idolaters who brought destruction upon themselves because of their abominable acts.

Abraham and Nimrod

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Have **you** not considered him who argued with Abraham about his Lord because God gave him dominion? Mention when Abraham said: My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die. He said: I give life and cause to die. Abraham said: Truly, God brings the sun from the East, so bring **you** the sun from the West! Then, he who was ungrateful was dumfounded. And God guides not the unjust folk.* (2:258)

Commentary°

The first sign in this passage relates an argument between the Prophet Abraham and a contemporary king who disputed his belief in God. The sign does not mention the king's name, because men-

tioning it will not add to the moral of the story. This argument is related to the Prophet and the Muslim community in a way that invites amazement at this person who disputes the truth of God. We listen as though the argument is taking place now, before our eyes.

We learn from the text that the king who argued with Abraham did not, in fact, deny God's existence, but he denied that He was the only God or that He had sole sovereignty and control over humanity's affairs. This belief was prevalent among the Arabs during their Dark Ages or Age of Ignorance. They assigned lesser gods as partners to God and denied that God had any concern with, or authority over, worldly and daily human affairs.

The arrogant, stubborn king denies God for the very reason that he should acknowledge Him, as it was God who had made it possible for him to become king and ruler, in the first place. Power in the hands of those who do not believe or appreciate God's grace and generosity corrupts and leads to tyranny and despotism. Rulers govern by God's authority, and He never empowers them to enslave and oppress their people, or impose their own ideas and laws. Like their subjects, they are servants of God and subject to His authority. Their power is delegated by Him. They have no right to initiate or devise teachings and legislation of their own....

Abraham challenged the king. Life and death are two of the greatest wonders of this world which we witness every day. Thinking about them compels the human mind to seek a non-human cause behind them. There is, therefore, no escaping the conclusion that the supreme omnipotent power of God, and no other, lies behind the secrets of life and death. We remain ignorant of the true essence of life and death, but we perceive their manifestations in the world around us, and we are forced to seek their origin and cause with a power unlike any power known to man, and that is the power of God Almighty.

The passage presents two simple but profound truths: one taken from within the human being, that God gives life and causes death, and the other from the natural world around, that God causes the sun to rise in the east, and not in the west. These are familiar occurrences, available for all to see and contemplate, requiring little knowledge or effort to perceive or understand. The human being only needs to allow his inner nature to respond and react to these imposing phenomena, the impact of which cannot be mistaken or escaped, unless one is being deliberately stubborn or bent on rejecting the truth.

Abraham (2:258) cites an attribute that is unique to God Almighty, with no one else able to claim a share of it for himself. The statement implies, too, that God rules and legislates over all. It is clear that in his reply Abraham, a noble Prophet, was not seeking

to establish God's power in the mere acts of originating life and taking it away. Both are prerogatives of God alone.

Abraham's interlocutor saw his sovereign position over his subjects and his ability to kill them or let them live as evidence of his having more than temporal authority over them. His reply (2:258) implies having absolute power and authority over the affairs and destiny of his people, who are obliged to submit to his rule.

Abraham did not wish to pursue the argument about the meaning of originating life and causing death, with someone who twists facts. He simply took the argument to a different sphere, citing another familiar event and challenging the obdurate king to alter a natural phenomenon, the movement of the sun, to make him realize that godhead could not be assumed merely by having absolute power over a group of people in a small corner on earth. God, by definition, controls all the affairs of the whole universe, and He is the source of legislation for humanity.

Another familiar daily occurrence is portrayed as a visible proof of God's existence (2:258) and power, even for those who are not familiar with the principles of astronomy or laws of physics. This statement comes as a direct challenge to the basic human nature by expressing a fact that cannot be disputed. God's Revelations often address human nature at various stages of human intellectual, cultural and social development to lead man from wherever he is to a higher state of consciousness. (2:258)

The challenge was real, clear, and unambiguous, and the stubborn king would have been better advised to give in, but his pride had the better of him and prevented him from submitting to the truth. He could do no more than be astounded and stupefied, thereby forfeiting the opportunity to believe and win God's guidance. (2:258) This encounter, which God cited for His Messenger and his community of followers, remains today an example for obstinacy and ignorance, and a lesson from which they learn how to confront those who deny the truth.

The passage presents two simple but profound truths: one taken from within the human being, that God gives life and causes death, and the other from the natural world around, that God causes the sun to rise in the east, and not in the west. These are familiar occurrences, available for all to see and contemplate, requiring little knowledge or effort to perceive or understand. The human being only needs to allow his inner nature to respond and react to these imposing phenomena, the impact of which cannot be mistaken or escaped, unless

one is being deliberately stubborn or bent on rejecting the truth.

God is too kind to demand His recognition by means that may not be available to all people. Belief in God is an indispensable ingredient of the human being, without which human life would lose all sense of direction and order, and man would have no source of values, legislation or moral standards.

This can be said about all other essential aspects of human life. Human beings seek food, drink, air and procreation by his natural instincts. They do not need to attain certain levels of intellectual or cultural maturity to acquire the right to satisfy these desires. Were they to need these, human beings would perish without moving one step forward. Belief in God, is equally essential to human life, and it is easily attained by responding honestly and naturally to the compelling evidence present throughout the universe and within the very human being and existence.

Abraham and Nimrod

Madinah: *And mention when Abraham said: My Lord!*
*Cause me to see how **You** will give life to the dead.*
*He said: Will **you** not believe?*
He said: Yea, but so my heart be at rest.
He said: Again, take four birds, and twist them to thyself.
Again, lay a part of them on every mountain.
Again, call to them. They will approach thee coming eagerly.
*And know **you** that God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:260)

Commentary°

Then follows another episode, involving the Prophet Abraham and the phenomena of life and death. It is the usual tale of curiosity about the great mystery of life and creation. When this curiosity is expressed by a devoted and pious person like the Prophet Abraham, it proves that there are times when even the most favored and believing of God's servants experience a passionate urge and ambition to discover the secrets of creation.

God responds favorably to Abraham's request and exposes him to a direct personal experience to satisfy his curiosity, giving him the following instructions.

The instructions meant that Abraham should choose four birds and make sure of having them close to him so that he would be able to know every little detail of their appearance so that he could unmistakably identify them at any time. He would then have to kill them and cut them into pieces before placing different parts of their bodies on the surrounding mountains. He would then call them to

come over to him, and their parts will join again, life is breathed into them and they could speedily come to him. All this took place in reality.

Thus Abraham was able to witness the secret of breathing life into the dead unfolding before his own eyes. It is the secret that occurs all the time, but people only see its effects after its process has been completed. It is the greatest mystery of life, which was created in the first instance by God out of nothing, and which renews itself an infinite number of times in every new living thing. Abraham saw with his own eyes the birds he killed and placed portions of their bodies far apart, returned to life and moving in full vigor.

Here curiosity is not motivated by lack of conviction or the demand for proof to confirm one's faith, but has a different flavor, excited by a spiritual yearning to see and share one of God's most fascinating secrets. This privilege, even for someone like Abraham, has a unique honor and a flavor of its own, different even to that of faith itself. It is a natural and spontaneous desire to know and learn how the divine will operates, not in order to believe or obtain proof, but to experience total peace and gain reassurance.

Abraham's experience and the short dialogue that accompanied it reveal several perceptions of faith which the human heart, if it so desires, can experience and enjoy.

Abraham was seeking the reassurance of seeing God's hand at work and the satisfaction of seeing a hidden mystery unfold before him. God was aware that Abraham was a devout believer and that his inquisitiveness had arisen out of the quest for knowledge. The episode also serves to inform and educate and reveal God's compassion and benevolence towards a faithful and curious servant.

How could all this take place? It is the one mystery that continues to elude human perception. Even if one was to undergo Abraham's experience and witness the actual act of creation, one would not comprehend its reality or how it is accomplished. It is the prerogative of God Almighty, of whose perfect and absolute knowledge human beings can acquire nothing, except by His will. It is God's will that this sphere should remain beyond the bounds of human knowledge, possibly because it is beyond human comprehension and is not required for the fulfillment of the human being's mission on earth.

Until God allows the curtain to be raised on this issue, human aspiration to grasp the coveted secret of life shall remain unfulfilled. If, however, he were to persist in his defiance of God's authority and continue to trespass in regions that are the exclusive domain of the Divine, his efforts would forever be in vain and yield nothing.

Abraham Made a Leader and Guide for Humanity

Madinah: *And mention when his Lord tested Abraham*
with words;
then, he fulfilled them. God said:
Truly, I am One Who Makes thee a leader for humanity.
He said: And of my offspring?
He said: Attain not My compact
the ones who are unjust. (2:124)
And mention when We made the House
a place of spiritual reward for humanity
and a place of sanctuary:
And take the Station of Abraham
to yourselves as a place of prayer.
And We made a compact with Abraham,
and Ishmael saying that:
Purify My House for the ones who circumambulate it,
and the ones who cleave to it, and the ones who bow down,
and the ones who prostrate themselves. (2:125)
And mention when Abraham said: My Lord!
Make this a safe land, and provide its people with fruits,
whomever of them believed in God and the Last Day.
God said: And whoever is ungrateful,
I will give him enjoyment for a while.
Again, I will compel him to the punishment of the fire.
And miserable will be the Homecoming! (2:126)
And mention when Abraham elevates the foundations
of the House with Ishmael
saying: Our Lord! Receive it from us.
Truly, ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Hearing, The Knowing.* (2:127)
Our Lord! And make us ones who submit to ***You****,*
and, of our offspring,
a community of ones who submit to ***You****.*
And cause us to see our devotional acts,
and turn to us in forgiveness.
Truly, ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Accepter of Repentance,*
The Compassionate. (2:128)
Our Lord! And raise ***You*** *up, then, in the midst of them,*
a Messenger from among them
who will recount to them ***Your*** *signs*
and teach them the Book, and wisdom and make them pure.
Truly, ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Almighty, The Wise.* (2:129)

The Religion of Abraham is the Correct Religion

And who shrinks from the creed of Abraham,
but he who fooled himself?
And, certainly, We favored him in the present.
And, truly, in the world to come he will be
among the ones in accord with morality. (2:130)
When his Lord said to him: Submit!
He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds. (2:131)
And Abraham charged his children to it, and Jacob:
O my children! Truly, God favored the way of life for you.
Then, be not overtaken by death
but you be ones who submit to the One God. (2:132)
Or had you been witnesses when death attended Jacob
when he said to his children: How will you worship after me?
*They said: We will worship **your** God and the God of **your** fathers*
—Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac—One God.
And we are ones who submit to Him. (2:133)
That was, surely, a community that passed away.
For them is what they earned, and for you is what you earned
and you will not be asked
about what they had been doing. (2:134)
*Say **you**: Nay! We follow the creed of Abraham a monotheist.*
And he had not been of the ones who are polytheists. (2:135)
So if they believed the like of what you believed in it,
then, surely, they were truly guided.
And if they turned away, then, they are not but in breach.
So God suffices for you against them.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (2:137)
Life's color is from God.
And who is fairer at coloring than God?
And we are ones who worship Him. (2:138)
Say: Argue you with us about God?
And He is our Lord and your Lord.
And to us are our actions, and to you are your actions.
And we are to Him ones who are sincere and devoted. (2:139)
Or say you about Abraham and Ishmael
and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes
had been ones who became Jews or were Christians?
Say: Are you greater in knowledge or God?
And who does greater wrong
than he who had been keeping back testimony from God
that is with him, and God is not One Who is Heedless

of what you do. (2:140)
That is a community that has surely passed away.
For it is what it has earned and for you is what you have earned
and you will not be asked
about what they had been doing. (2:141)

Commentary°

When his Lord tested Abraham with certain commandments and he fulfilled them, He said, I have appointed you a leader of humanity. Abraham asked about his descendants? God said that His covenant does not extend to the unjust.

Being human, Abraham is immediately prompted to wish for that blessing and privilege to be extended to his offspring. What Abraham expressed was a natural instinctive human reaction, because the human being is always eager to multiply and perpetuate his achievements and attainments. By the passing of knowledge and experience from one generation to the next, the human lot is improved and life is preserved. This natural and necessary human process has been a target for criticism and attack, while Islam recognizes its importance, and promotes it through its law of inheritance, so that it serves human society to the full.

The answer to Abraham's question reiterates an already stated major principle: that religious leadership and authority are granted purely on merit, in reward for sincere faith and diligent work. They are not inherited through ancestral lineage.

While still pleading for the House to be made a universal place of peace and security for posterity, Abraham has clearly heeded God's earlier admonition, as we now find him making the exception that only the believers should receive God's favor.

The signs then go on to paint a lively picture of Abraham and Ishmael embarking on the job of constructing the House of God and preparing it for worshippers. (2:124-2:140)

The misguided efforts made in some societies to undermine this natural progression in fact try to suppress human nature altogether. Such efforts betray short-sightedness, inhumanity and arbitrary methods in tackling social and moral ills. Unless remedied, these will lead to the fragmentation and destruction of society. However, solutions that run contrary to human nature will inevitably end in failure. What is needed is a solution that rectifies deviation and social ills without contradicting human nature. Such methods can only be adopted and made to work within a framework of divine guidance and faith. They require a profound and enlightened understanding of human nature

and the human mind, and an unbiased outlook, free of all grudges and destructive tendencies.

Injustice it might be directed at oneself, by associating partners with God, or it might be oppression directed at fellow human beings. The leadership denied to wrongdoers includes all the meanings covered by the Arabic term *imam*, which includes political authority and the leading of congregational prayers. Equity and justice make up the foremost qualification for this lofty vocation, and no one who deviates from these qualities deserves any form of leadership, in its widest sense.

Not only does this vivid account take the reader right into the scene of the action, but it also surrounds him with the mood and feeling of the occasion. It was a labor of love and devotion that those two pious people undertook, dedicated to God Almighty and carried out in expectation and hope that He would accept it and be pleased with it.

We almost hear the tone and music of their prayer, and we feel the atmosphere of heart-felt appeal to God. This is a special characteristic of the Quranic style which brings a scene of an event long gone as though it is taking place here and now, right in front of us. In their prayer we cannot fail to note the sort of humility, devotion and profound faith that are worthy of Prophets who understand the importance of true faith in this world. Such characteristics the Quran tries to teach the advocates of faith and instill it in their hearts.

Their first aim is that their labor, which is dedicated purely to God, should be accepted by Him. Therefore, they offer it with humility, hoping to earn God's pleasure through it, pinning their hopes on the fact that God listens to their prayers and knows their feelings and intentions.

They turn to God seeking His guidance, fully aware that, without His help and support, they are powerless. Their prayer also shows the intrinsic solidarity of the community of believers over successive generations. This shows not only the fact that faith is the most important aspect in a believer's life, and appreciation of its great blessings, but also the instinctive natural feeling of wishing the best for one's children and descendants. Their main concern was that their offspring should be God-conscious, righteous and obedient to God. So they add a specific request. We note that some time may elapse before God answers a particular prayer. As human beings, we tend to be impatient and want our prayers answered immediately, forgetting that it is for God Almighty to choose how and when they should be answered and fulfilled.

There can be no room for doubt about God's oneness and sov-

ereignty over all creation. He is the Lord of all of us, and He shall judge everyone by their own deeds. As Muslims, we devote our life and existence totally to God alone. We seek no other beings with or beside Him; and to us, these are incontrovertible and indisputable facts on which the faith of Islam rests.

In terse and forceful language, the verses pose other rhetorical questions regarding the faith of earlier prophets, well known to the Jews and the Christians. (2:140)

God Favored the People of Abraham

Chapter 3: The 89th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Truly, God favored Adam and Noah and the people of Abraham and the people of Imran above all the worlds,* (3:33)

Friendship with the Enemies of God Forbidden

Chapter 60: The 91st Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Surely, there had been a fairer, good example*
for you in Abraham
and those with him when they said to their folk:
Truly, we are released from obligation to you
and whatever you worship other than God. We disbelieved in you.
Shown itself between us and between you was enmity
and hatred eternally until you believe in One God,
but for Abraham saying to his father:
Truly, I will ask for forgiveness for ***you***
and I possess not anything for ***you*** *before God. Our Lord!*
In ***You*** *we put our trust and to* ***You*** *we were penitent*
and to ***You*** *is the Homecoming!* (60:4)
Our Lord! Make us not be a cause of their pleasure
for those who were ungrateful and forgive us.
Our Lord; truly, ***You****,* ***You*** *alone*
are The Almighty, The Wise. (60:5)
Certainly there had been a good example in them for you
for those who have been hoping for God
and the Last Day. And whoever turns away,
then truly God, He is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise. (60:6)

Pilgrimage to the Sacred House

Chapter 22: The 103rd Chapter Revealed

Madinah *And mention when We placed Abraham*
in the place of the House that:
You *will ascribe nothing as partners with Me.*
And ***You*** *purify*

My House for the ones who circumambulate it
and the ones who are standing up, and the ones who bow down
and the ones who prostrate themselves. (22:26)

Commentary°

(And (remember) when We prepared for Abraham) when We explained to Abraham (the place of the (holy) House) by means of a cloud which had stopped close to him, and so he built the House by the side whereby the cloud stopped. And We inspired him (saying: Ascribe thou no thing) no idols (as partner unto Me, and purify My House) purify My place of prostration from idols (for those who make the round (thereof) and those who stand) and those who live there (and those who bow and make prostration) the people who pray from all countries and from wherever they happen to come. (22:26)

Abraham was Sympathetic

Chapter 9: The 113th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And had not been Abraham asking for forgiveness*
for his father only because of a promise he had promised him?
Then, when it became clear to him that, truly,
he was an enemy to God, he cleared himself from him.
Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing. (9:114)

Ishmael

According to Ibn Ishaq (p 4), Ishmael is buried in the *hijr* of the Kabah next to his mother, Hagar.

And Remember Ishmael

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, truly, they are to Us among ones who are favored and good.* (38:47)
And remember Ishmael, Elisha, and Dhul Kifl.
And all are among the good. (38:48)

References to the Other Prominent Messengers of God

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Ishmael in the Book.*
Truly, he had been one who is sincere in his promise,
and he had been a Messenger, a Prophet. (19:54)

Commentary°

And mention in the Book Ishmael. Indeed he was true to his promise—he never promised anything which he did not fulfill; he once waited for three days for someone whom he had promised to meet; or it is said that he waited an entire year until that person finally returned to the place in which he Ishmael was supposed to have met the former; and he was a Messenger to the tribe of Jurhum, a Prophet likewise.

Now the [sign] refers to the other branch of Abraham's seed, bringing in Ishmael, the father of the Arabs, for special mention: And mention in the Book Ishmael who was always true to his promise, and was a messenger of God, a prophet. He used to enjoin on his people prayer and charity, and his Lord was well pleased with him. (19:54-19:55)

The [sign] highlights a special quality of Ishmael's, which was his being true to his promise. This is a characteristic common to all prophets and all God-fearing men and women. The fact that it is highlighted here suggests that in Ishmael's case it must have had very special significance. Moreover, Ishmael is given the status of messenger of God, which means that he preached God's message to the Arabs of old. Indeed he was their highest grandfather. We know that even shortly before the advent of the message of the Prophet Muhammad, there were some individual Arabs who believed in one God.

Most probably they were the last remnants of Ishmael's followers.

The [sign] also mentions that the fundamentals of his faith included prayer and the purifying alms or *zakat*, which he ordered his family and his people to observe. Moreover, the [sign] leaves us in no doubt that Ishmael earned God's pleasure, which imparts a sense of contentment and satisfaction to anyone. This contentment is another aspect that permeates the whole chapter, in the same way as mercy. In fact the two aspects of mercy and contentment are mutually related.

The Other Messengers Followed Abraham's Footsteps

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot.*
We gave all an advantage over the worlds. (6:86)

Ishmael's Test

Chapter 37: The 56th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *My Lord! Bestow on me*
among the ones in accord with morality. (37:100)
And We gave him the good tidings
of a forbearing boy. (37:101)
And when he reached maturity
endeavoring with him, he said:
O my son! Truly, I see while slumbering
*that I am sacrificing **you**.*
So look on what thou hast considered?
He said: O my father!
Accomplish whatever thou art commanded.
Thou wilt find me, if God willed,
of the ones who remain steadfast. (37:102)
Then, when they both submitted themselves to God
and he flung him on his brow (37:103)
We cried out to him: O Abraham! (37:104)
*Surely, **you** had established the dream as true.*
Thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (37:105)
Truly, that was, certainly, the clear trial. (37:106)
And, then, We took ransom for him
with a sublime slaughter (37:107)
and We left for him a good name
with the later ones: (37:108)
Peace be on Abraham! (37:109)

My Lord! Bestow on me
of the ones who are in accord with morality. (37:110)
So We gave him the good tidings
of a forbearing son. (37:111)

Commentary°

And when he was old enough to walk with him, that is, to go about with him and help him out — this is said to have been either at the age of seven or at the age of thirteen — he said, 'O my son. . . . — and the visions of Prophets are always true and their actions are inspired by the command of God, exalted be He. *So look on what thou hast considered* . . . of this dream. He consulted him so that he his son might accept the idea of being sacrificed and comply with the command for it. He said, *O my father*. . . (37:102) And when they had both submitted, when they had submitted to and were prepared to comply with God's command, exalted be He, and he had laid him down on his forehead, when he had pushed him down to the ground thereon — every human being has two brows between which is the forehead this was at Mina. Abraham passed the knife across his son's throat but it did not do anything, by some impediment of the Divine Power. . . . (37:103)

God witnessed the sincerity shown by both Abraham and Ishmael, and He considered them to have fulfilled all that was required of them:

God called to him and ransomed [Ishmael] with a noble sacrifice. You have indeed fulfilled all you needed to fulfill. God wants nothing from His servants other than that they submit themselves to Him totally, so that they have nothing which they consider too dear or too precious to give up, not even an only son, or their own lives. You, Abraham, have done this, offering everything dear, with certainty and acceptance. What was left was flesh and blood, which could be substituted by any type of flesh and blood. Thus, God ransomed this young man who had submitted himself to His will by a great and noble sacrifice. It is reported that the sacrifice was a ram that Abraham found ready by God's will and that he sacrificed this ram in place of Ishmael.

Abraham was then told that that is how God rewards the good. We reward them by choosing them for such a test, directing their minds and hearts to rise to the necessary level, helping them in such fulfillment and then giving them the reward they deserve.

It is to commemorate this great event that serves as a symbol of true faith and submission to God that Muslims celebrate the Sacrifice or al-Adha. This event serves as a reference point for the Muslim

community to know their first father, Abraham, whose faith it follows and to whom it traces its ancestry. It thus understands the nature of its faith, based on submission to God's will with perfect acceptance and reassurance. It will never need to ask God why. It will never hesitate to do His bidding, once it realizes what He wants of it. It gives its all, withholding nothing, and choosing no particular way or form of offering. It simply does what He bids it to do. The Muslim community also knows that God does not wish to overburden it with the test, nor put it to hardship. All He needs is that Muslims should be ready to give whatever they are required to give, in full obedience and commitment, without hesitation. Once they prove such complete dedication, He will remove the need for their sacrifice and pain. He will consider that they have fulfilled their duty and reward them for that, replacing their sacrifice and honoring them as He honored their father, Abraham.

He is remembered by one generation after another. (37:108) He is the father of all prophets, and the founding father of the Muslim community that inherits his faith. God has assigned to the Muslim community the task of leading humanity on the basis of Abraham's faith. In so doing, God has made the Muslim community Abraham's descendants for the rest of human life.

The Great Sacrifice

The chapter moves on to the second episode it relates of Abraham's history. After he was saved from the fire, he closed that chapter of his life to begin a new phase: "And Abraham said I will go to my Lord: He is sure to guide me." (Verse 99) His words indicate that he was migrating, this in both a mental and physical sense. He was abandoning everything: his father, family, home, people and land, leaving them all behind and going to his Lord, free of all concerns. He thus surrendered himself to his Lord, assured that He would give him guidance and care, setting him on the right path. It is a migration from one state to another, abandoning all ties and bonds in favor of one bond that remains pure and strong. His words express complete faith and unqualified surrender.

Until that moment, Abraham was without children. He had left behind his relations, friends and all that was familiar to him. Needless to say, his relations with those who threw him in the fire suffered a final breakdown. Therefore, he went to his Lord, praying to Him to grant him believing offspring: "Lord! Grant me a righteous son." (Verse 100) And God answered his true servant's prayer: "We gave him the happy news that he will have a forbearing son." (37:101) The son was most probably Ishmael, as clearly inferred from his life

story and from the chapter itself. Indeed, we can see the mark of his forbearance in his youth. We can also imagine the delight experienced by Abraham in his new abode, where he was a stranger, at the birth of this son described by God as a 'forbearing son.'

It is time for us now to look at the glorious attitude that Abraham's life story represents, drawing from it an inspiring lesson as presented by God Almighty to the Muslim community.

When the boy was old enough to work with his father, Abraham said: My son! I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. Tell me, then, what you think.' [Ishmael] said My father.! Do as you are bidden, and, God willing, you will find me to be patient in adversity.' (37:102)

What effect will faith not produce? We see here Abraham in his old age, cut off in a foreign land, having deserted his homeland and his people, being given a child. The child turns out to be a model son, with his forbearance confirmed by God Himself. Hardly had Abraham enjoyed his son's company and seen his youth blooming so as to become his companion and assistant, when he sees in his dream that he should slaughter him. He understands that it is a sign from God requiring sacrifice. What is his attitude now? He does not hesitate for a moment. The thought of disobedience does not even occur to him. He thinks only of submission. It is true that the dream was only a signal, not a clear and direct order issued through revelation. It was a signal by his Lord though, and that was enough for Abraham to comply, not to delay, and not even to ask why.

Moreover, his compliance did not betray any feeling of distress, horror or panic; it was marked by calm acceptance and reassurance, reflected in his words as he put this most grave matter to his son: "My son! I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. Tell me, then, what you think." (Verse 102) These are the words of a man in full control of himself and his feelings, knowing that he is only doing his duty and trusting that it behooves him to comply. We do not see any element of panic driving a person to do even what he feels to be repugnant, in order to get it done and finished with.

That it was hard for Abraham is beyond doubt. He was not required to send his only son to war, nor to put him to a task that would end in his death. Nothing of the sort. Instead he was required to undertake the task himself, by his own hand. And what task was that? It was to slaughter his own son by way of sacrifice. This was the order he received calmly, the one that he put to his son and asked him to consider carefully. He did not take his son by surprise and do what was bidden. Rather, he puts the question to him as if it were both normal and familiar. To Abraham, the question was one of obe-

dience. Since his Lord wanted something, so be it, without hesitation. His son should also know and accept it willingly, with submission so that he too would earn the reward of obeying God and experience the pleasure of submission to Him. He himself had known that pleasure and now wants his son to feel it as the pure goodness that surpasses all else that life can offer.

What does the son say as his father proposes to slaughter him in fulfillment of what he saw in a dream? The son also rises to the sublime standard his father had earlier attained: "He said: My father! Do as you are bidden, and, God willing, you will find me to be patient in adversity." (37:102) This is not a response of mere obedience and resignation. It is a response marked with acceptance and certainty. His reply begins with, 'My father!' The prospect of his death does not cause him to panic or to forget his manners and love of his father. "Do as you are bidden." He also feels the same as his father, taking the dream as a signal, which means an order. This is sufficient to make him willing to carry it out without hesitation.

Furthermore, we see in Ishmael's response proper manners with his Lord, and recognition of the limits of his ability in the face of hardship. Therefore, he seeks his Lord's help to overcome his weakness. He attributes to God the grace of helping him to obey and make the sacrifice: "God willing, you will find me to be patient in adversity." (37:102) He does not press the matter as a heroic act on his part. Nor does he describe it as facing the danger and caring little for the consequences. He does not give himself any credit in the matter; he simply attributes it all to God who has helped him in carrying out His orders with patience in adversity. This is an example of perfect humility before God, trust in Him, combined with complete obedience and submission to His will.

The scene moves further to show us the order being carried out: "When the two of them had surrendered themselves to the will of God, and Abraham laid him prostrate on his forehead." (37: 103) Once more, obedience, faith and acceptance of God's will rise to a far nobler standard than anything known to humanity. The father puts his son prostrate before him and the son submits and shows no resistance. All this takes place in reality. Such is self surrender, which is the essence of Islam: complete trust, obedience, certainty, acceptance, submission and action. Both father and son experience nothing other than pure faith.

The point here is not one of bravery, courage, enthusiasm or heroic action which a warrior might feel in battle. A committed fighter may undertake a task knowing that his chance of survival is negligible. However, this is totally different from what Abraham and

Ishmael were doing: for them, there is no boiling situation, no rush of enthusiasm prompting hasty action before weakness or hesitation can creep in. Theirs is a rational self surrender, with full knowledge of what they want, and complete reassurance about what will take place. More than that, they coolly appreciate the pleasure of obeying God's orders.

At this stage, Abraham and Ishmael have done all that is required of them. They have submitted themselves and carried out the order. All that remained was the actual shedding of Ishmael's blood and his death, which, in God's scales, counted for little, compared with the energy, feelings and determination both father and son put into what was bidden of them. By this time, the test had reached its climax, its results were known and its objectives fulfilled. What remained was physical pain and a dead body, but God does not want His servants to endure suffering. He does not require them to torment or kill themselves. Once they have submitted themselves and shown their true willingness to do what He bids, then they have fulfilled what is required and passed the test successfully.

Abraham's Prayer of Gratitude for Ishmael and Isaac

Chapter 14: The 72nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God Who bestowed on me in my old age Ishmael and Isaac. And, truly, my Lord is Hearing the supplication.* (14:39

Commentary°

Praise be to God Who has given me, despite my old age, Ishmael — born to him when he Abraham] was 99 years old—and Isaac—born to him when he was 112 years old. Lo! my Lord is indeed the Hearer of supplication.

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

And Ishmael and Enoch and Dhul-Kifl, all were of the ones who remain steadfast. (21:85)
And We caused them to enter into Our mercy. They are the ones in accord with morality. (21:86)

Say You About Ishmael

Chapter 2: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Or say you about Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes had been ones who became Jews or were Christians?*

Say: Are you greater in knowledge or God?
And who does greater wrong than he
who had been keeping back testimony
from God that is with him,
and God is not One Who is Heedless
of what you do. (2:140)

Commentary°

And Ishmael, son of Abraham, and Elisha, and Jonah and Lot, son of Haran, brother of Abraham, all, of them, We preferred above all the worlds, through prophethood.

Isaac

Chapter 12: The 53rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And I followed the creed of my fathers,*
Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.
It had not been for us that we ascribe
anything as partners with God.
That is from the grace of God to us and to humanity,
except most of humanity gives not thanks. (12:38)

Commentary°

And I follow the creed of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It never was, right, for us to associate anything with God—on account of our God-given immunity from error. That, affirmation of God's Oneness, is from God's bounty to us and to humanity; but most people—and these are the ungrateful—do not give thanks to God and so they associate others with Him.

Makkah: *And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob.*
Each of them We guided.
And Noah We guided before and among his offspring
are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron.
And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)

Isaac a Prophet

Chapter 37: The 56th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We gave him the good tidings*
of Isaac, a Prophet,
among the ones in accord with morality. (37:112)
And We blessed him and Isaac.
And of their offspring are ones who are doers of good
and ones who are clearly unjust to themselves. (37:113)

Commentary°

God's grace is bestowed once more on Abraham, as He gave him Isaac in his old age. He further blesses him and his son, making Isaac a Prophet. Their offspring goes on through generations, but its main criterion is not the relation of blood, but the relation of faith and a code of living: whoever follows in their footsteps does-good, and whoever deviates wrongs himself and cannot benefit from this blood relation.

Say You About Isaac

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Or say you about Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and*
Jacob and the Tribes had been ones
who became Jews or were Christians?
Say: Are you greater in knowledge or God?
And who does greater wrong than he who had been keeping back
testimony from God that is with him,
and God is not One Who is Heedless of what you do. (2:140)

Lot

Chapter 50: The 34th Chapter Revealed

and Ad and Pharaoh and the brothers of Lot, (50:13)

Lot's People Punished

Chapter 54: The 37th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Lot denied the warning.* (54:33)
Truly, We sent against them a sand storm, but the family of Lot.
We delivered them at the breaking of day (54:34)
as a divine blessing from Us.
Thus, We gave recompense to him who gave thanks. (54:35)
And, certainly, he warned them of Our attack
but they quarreled over the warning. (54:36)
And, certainly, they solicited his guests,
so We obliterated their eyes.
Then, experience My punishment and My warning. (54:37)
And, certainly, it came in the morning,
early morning at dawn, a settled punishment. (54:38)
Then, experience My punishment
and My warning. (54:39)

Commentary°

The people of Lot denied the warnings, they denied those issues of which they were warned by his Lot's tongue. Indeed We unleashed upon them a squall of pebbles, a wind hurling at them pebbles, namely, small stones, a single one of these being no larger than the palm of the hand, and they were destroyed; all except the family of Lot, namely, his two daughters (Zaura and Raytha), together with him, whom We delivered at dawn, from among the dawns, the morning time of an unspecified. So was the squall unleashed at first with the family of Lot still there? There are two opinions regarding this: in the case of the former that it was unleashed upon them including the family of Lot, the exception is understood as a continuous one.

The Folk of Lot Denied the Warning

Chapter 7: The 39th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And mention Lot, when he said to his folk:*
You approach indecency
as preceded you not anyone therein in the worlds? (7:80)
Truly, you, you approach men with lust instead of women?
Nay! You are a folk, ones who are excessive. (7:81)
And the answer of his folk had not been but that they said:

Bring them out from your town.
Truly, they are a clan to cleanse themselves. (7:82)
Then, We rescued him and his people, but his woman.
She had been among the ones who stay behind. (7:83)
And We rained down a rain on them.
So look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who sin. (7:84)

Commentary°

(And Lot!) and We sent Lot to his people. (When he said unto his folk: Will ye commit abomination) i.e. sodomy (such as no creature ever did) this act (before you?)

The Message of Lot

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *They said: Fear not. We were sent to*
the folk of Lot. (11:70)

Commentary°

When the angels knew of his fear. (They said: Fear not!) O Abraham. (Lo! we are sent unto the folk of Lot) to destroy them.

Messengers Drew Near to Lot

And when Our messengers drew near Lot,
he was troubled for them and was concerned for them,
being distressed.
And he said: This is a distressful day! (11:77)
Then, drew near his folk, running toward him
because they had been doing evil deeds before.
He said: O my folk! These are my daughters!
so be God-conscious.
And cover me not with shame as regards my guests.
Is there not among you a well-intentioned man? (11:78)
They said: Certainly, you had known
we have no right to your daughters.
And, truly, you have known well what we want. (11:79)
He said: Would that I had strength against you
or take shelter with stauncher support! (11:80)
They said: O Lot! Truly, we are Messengers of your Lord.
They will not reach out to you
so set you forth with your people
in a part of the night
and let not any of you look back,

but your woman.
Truly, that which lights on them will light on her.
Truly, what is promised to them is in the morning.
Is the morning not near? (11:81
So when Our command drew near,
We made its high part low
and We rained down on it rocks of baked clay,
one upon another, (11:82)
ones that are distinguished, and not far
from the ones who are unjust. (11:83)

Lot Admonishes His People

Chapter 26: The 47th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Lot denied*
the ones who are sent (26:160)
when their brother, Lot, said to them:
Will you not be God-conscious? (26:161)
They said: If you have not refrained yourself, O Lot,
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you (20:162)
so be God-conscious and obey me. (20:163)
And I ask you not for any compensation for it. My compensation is
only from the Lord of the worlds. (20:164)
You approach males among worldly beings (20:165)
forsaking spouses whom your Lord created for you?
Nay! You are a folk ones who turn away. (20:166)
you will, certainly, be among ones who are driven out. (26:167)

Commentary°

(They said: If thou cease not, O Lot) from what you say, (you wilt soon be of the outcast) you will be expelled from our land, Sodom.

Drive Out the People of Lot

Chapter 27: The 48th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And Lot, when he said to his folk:*
You approach indecency
and you perceive what you do. (27:54)
Why approach you men with lust instead of women?
Nay! You are a folk who are ignorant. (27:55)
Then, there had been no answer by his folk,
but that they said: Drive the people of Lot out from your town.
Truly, they are a clan to cleanse themselves. (27:56)
So We rescued him and his people, but his woman.

We ordained her to be among the ones who stay behind. (27:57)

Commentary°

Since mating is basic for reproduction, God has made mutual attraction between the opposite sexes part of the essence of nature, which needs no acquisition or development through education or thought: it is pure instinct. This ensures that life continues naturally, because those who are alive find their pleasure in the fulfillment of their nature. Thus the divine will accomplishes its design through the natural satisfaction of creatures' instinctive desires. God made male and female genitals, and instilled mutual attraction between the two sexes, so that they find their natural pleasure in being together. He made no such possibility in two males coming together. Therefore, it is most odd that the natural inclinations of a whole community should become so perverted and without any compelling need pushing people to do what is contrary to their natural inclinations, as was the case with Lot's people.

The Family of Lot

Chapter 15: The 54th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: ... *but the family of Lot.*
Truly, we are ones who will deliver them one and all, (15:59)
but his woman. We ordained that she be
of the ones who stay behind. (15:60)

Lot's People Warned

Makkah: *Then, when the ones who are sent*
drew near the people of Lot, (15:61)
he said: Truly, you are folk, ones unlawful to me. (15:62)
They said: Nay! We drew near you with what
they had been contesting in it. (15:63)
We approached you with The Truth and, truly,
we are ones who are sincere. (15:64)
Then, set forth with your family in a part of the night
and follow you their backs and look not back any of you,
but pass on to where you are commanded. (15:65)
And We decreed the command to him that
the last remnant of these would be that which is
severed, in that which is morning. (15:66)
The people of the city drew near rejoicing
at the good tidings. (15:67)
Lot said: Truly, these are my guests,
so put me not to shame. (15:68)

Be God-conscious and cover me not with shame. (15:69)
They said: Prohibit we thee not from some beings? (15:70)
Lot said: These are my daughters
if you had been ones who do something. (15:71)
By thy life, truly, they were in a daze,
wandering unwilling to see. (15:72)
So the Cry took them at sunrise. (15:73)
And We made its high part low
and We rained down on them rocks of baked clay. (15:74)
Truly, in this are signs for the ones who read marks. (15:75)
And, truly, they are ones who are on an abiding way. (15:76)
Truly, in it is a sign for the ones who believe. (15:77)

Commentary°

And when the Messengers [of God] came to the house of Lot, he said: You are unknown here. They answered: No, but we bring you news of that over which they have been disputing. We are bringing you the certainty [of its fulfillment], for we are speaking the truth indeed. Depart with your household in the dead of night, with yourself following them in the rear. Let none of you look back, but proceed to where you are commanded.' And We made plain the case to him, that the last remnant of those [wrongdoers] will be wiped out by the morning. (15:61-15:66)

As indicated earlier, the chapter states that the angels immediately reveal their true identity to Lot and that they have come to accomplish what his people disputed about their punishment for their misdeeds. That punishment comes in fulfillment of God's warnings, confirming the fact that when angels are sent to a community, their punishment is immediate.

He said this (15:62) in irritation, as he was fully aware of the habits of his people and expected what they would try to do with his guests. He was a stranger among his people, and they were arrogant in their immorality. Therefore, he tells his guests that it is unwise of them to come to a city when the reputation of its people is well known.

All these assertions serve to tell us the extent of Lot's alarm and distress, as he wants to be hospitable yet also protect his guests against the designs of his people. Therefore, they reassure him time after time, before giving him his instructions. Thus Lot was to leave the town by night, before the break of dawn. He was to walk behind those who would be saved with him to make sure that no one was left behind, and no one looked behind, like displaced people unwilling to leave their homeland.

It is God, then, who has revealed to Lot this very serious piece of news, which is expressed in the Quran as the last one of those people would be destroyed by the morning. Well, if the last of them is destroyed, it follows that the whole lot are destroyed, with none spared. Therefore, caution must be exercised, so that no one is left behind to suffer the fate that was sure to engulf the whole city.

The [signs] relate this part of the story, first, because it is more suited to its overall theme. It now fills in the details of what happened earlier when Lot's people heard that a number of handsome young men were visiting him. To them, that was a chance not to be missed.

The way this is expressed portrays to what low and abhorrent level those people had sunk in their eagerness to fulfill their uncontrolled desires. This is shown in the fact that the townsfolk came in a group, rejoicing at the presence of young men, openly declaring their intent to rape them in broad daylight. This shameful publicity of their wicked intentions, in addition to the action itself, is so abhorrent and repulsive that we cannot imagine it, but it was certainly true. An individual may harbor some desire, but he conceals the fact and tries to satisfy his perversion in secret. He is ashamed if others know of it. In fact, sound human nature prefers to keep such desire private even when it is with one's legitimate wife. Some animal species do not mate in public. But those people declare their lust shamelessly, come seeking it in groups, and rejoice as they expect to fulfill it.

On the other side we see the Prophet Lot in distress, standing up to defend his guests and his honor. He tries to awaken in his people a sense of honor and fear of God. But he knew full well that they had no fear of God, and that such perverted natures would not respond to any compassionate, humanitarian appeal. Yet in his distress he tries every avenue. But his appeal awakens no feeling of honor or integrity. They had lost all such feelings. Instead, they rebuke Lot for entertaining any man as a guest, as if he is the offender by offering them the temptation.

Lot continues with his attempts, pointing out the proper line of desire, i.e. the other sex. It is women who hold natural attraction for men to satisfy their sexual urge, so that procreation continues and human life is preserved.

Lot, a Prophet, does not offer his daughters in any adulterous relationship. He simply reminds the folk of the natural way to satisfy their urge. He knew that if they responded to his appeal they would not want to be adulterous. Hence, his offer sought recourse to their human nature, if only it would respond. But that was unlikely.

The [signs] portray the scene with all the action taking place. At

this moment, the mode of expression changes into an address to the Prophet who is observing it all. This takes the form of an oath, following the traditional method of Arabic emphasis. (15:72) This describes a state that had become part of their nature. In that state they were unlikely ever to wake up or listen to appeals based on personal integrity, fear of God or uncorrupted human nature. Therefore, they were doomed and God's punishment was to engulf them without delay.

Now we face a scene of total destruction, two towns in complete ruin with particular features that are suited to the perverted natures of their dwellers.

Lot Sent to Warn His Folk

Chapter 37: The 56th Chapter Revealed

Makkah *And, truly, Lot*
was of the ones who are sent. (37:133)
We delivered him and his people, one and all, (37:134)
but an old woman of the ones who stay behind. (37:135)
Again, We destroyed the others. (37:136)
And, truly, you pass by them in that which is morning (37:137)
and at night. Will you not, then, be reasonable? (37:138)

Lot

Chapter 29: The 85th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *So Lot believed in him.*
And Abraham said.
Truly, I am one who emigrates for my Lord.
Truly, He, He is The Almighty, The Wise. (29:26)

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And Lot, when he said to his folk:
Truly, you approach indecency
which none who preceded you committed in the worlds. (29:28)
You approach men with lust and sever the way
and approach that which is unlawful in your conclave.
Then, the answer of his folk had not been
but that they said: Bring on us the punishment of God
if you had been among the ones who are sincere. (29:29)
He said: My Lord! Help me against the folk,
ones who make corruption. (29:30)
And when Our messengers drew near Abraham
with the good tidings.
They said: Truly, We are ones who will cause
to perish the people of this town.

Truly, its people had been ones who are unjust. (29:31)
He said: Truly, in it is Lot.
They said: We are greater in knowledge of who is in it.
We will, truly, deliver him and his family, (29:32)
And when Our messengers drew near Lot,
he was troubled because of them
and he was concerned for them, distressed,
and they said: Neither fear nor feel remorse.
Truly, we are ones who will deliver ***you*** *and thy family*
but ***your*** *woman.*
She had been among the ones who stay behind. (29:33)
Truly, we are ones who will cause to descend
on the people of this town
wrath from heaven
because they had been disobeying. (29:34)
And, certainly, We left in it a sign, clear portents
for a folk who be reasonable. (29:35)

Commentary°

Lot's story is mentioned next, after he had emigrated with Abraham and settled in the Jordan Valley. Lot then lived on his own with a tribe close to the Dead Sea, which was later called Lake Lot. The township where the tribe lived was known as Sodom. Lot married one of their women and lived among them.

A certain type of perversion had spread among those people, and the Quran mentions that homosexuality had occurred. In the natural state of things a man is attracted to a woman so that the two form a natural productive unit that ensures the continuity of life through procreation, which is common to all living species. It is God who has created them all in pairs made of males and females. Thus, Lot's people were the first ever to yield to such perversion:

Although it is clear from Lot's address to his people that other types of corruption had spread among them, their main abomination was that they engaged in sex with other men.

Lot's people assaulted travelers on the highways, looting their property. They also raped men, which is an even worse act than their other perversion. Furthermore, they spread corruption in the land, and committed shameful acts in their meeting places. When a community find it acceptable to boast of what is indecent, its moral degeneration has become grave indeed. Thus, there was no hope that they would reform themselves.

The story is given here in a concise manner. It appears that Lot first counseled them gently, telling them to stop their practices, but

they were persistent. He then warned them of God's punishment and spoke clearly about the abomination of what they did.

At this point the curtains fall. When they rise again, the scene depicts God's response. The [signs] move to a third scene in which we see Lot as he received the angels who took the guise of handsome young men. Aware of his people's perversion, he feared for his guests knowing that he could not be of much help to them. He was distressed at their presence at such a difficult time. As told in [these signs], the story does not mention how Lot's people tried to abuse his guests, his remonstrations with them and their paying no heed. It moves straight on to the final outcome with the angels telling him in his overwhelming distress who they were and what their mission was:

This last verse draws an image of the total destruction which was visited on the town and its population, with the exception of Lot and the believers in his household. This destruction was visited upon by means of rain and stones covered with mud.

The remains of this destruction were left for all to see, telling of God's signs and serving as a reminder to anyone who has reason to think and reflect. This was the natural fate of this evil shoot that had rotted and molded so badly that it could no longer yield any fruit. The only thing to do with it was fell it.

Jacob

Jacob's Inner Self Satisfied

Chapter 12: The 53rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And I followed the creed of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It had not been for us that we ascribe anything as partners with God. That is from the grace of God to us and to humanity, except most of humanity gives not thanks.* (12:38)

Commentary°

God, exalted be He, says: And when they entered in the manner which their father had bidden them, that is, separately, it did not avail them anything against God, that is, against His decree; it was but a need in Jacob's soul which he thus satisfied, and this need was his desire to fend off the evil eye from them, out of affection for them. And verily he was possessed of knowledge, because We had taught him; but most of humanity—and they are the ungrateful—do not know, about God's inspiring His elect.

Messengers Followed in Abraham's Footsteps

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We guided. And Noah We guided before and among his offspring are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. And, thus, We gave recompense to the ones who are doers of good.* (6:84)

Jacob Bequeaths His Message to His Children

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And Abraham charged his children to it, and Jacob:*
O my children! Truly, God favored the way of life for you. Then, be not overtaken by death but you be ones who submit to the One God. (2:132)
*Or had you been witnesses when death attended Jacob when he said to his children: How will you worship after me? They said: We will worship **your** God and the God of **your** fathers —Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac—One God. And we are ones who submit to Him.* (2:133)
That was, surely, a community that passed away.

For them is what they earned, and for you is what you earned
and you will not be asked
about what they had been doing. (2:134)

*****

Or say you about Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac
and Jacob and the Tribes had been ones who became Jews
or were Christians? Say: Are you greater in knowledge or God?
And who does greater wrong
than he who had been keeping back testimony from God
that is with him, and God is not One Who is Heedless
of what you do. (2:140)

Commentary°

At this point we come to witness another awesome scene: Jacob on his deathbed, giving his last words of wisdom and advice to his children, gathered around him.

It is indeed a tremendous and solemn occasion. The most important and only issue that concerned Jacob as he drew his last breath was the religion his children were to follow after his death. He was worried about the fate of his legacy and the future of the religion placed in his trust. His children's reply must have been most reassuring and gratifying for him. The chain would not be broken, and the legacy of Abraham was sure to live on for many generations to come.

Jacob asks his children who they will worship after he dies. He thus tells them why he gathered them, and the issue he wanted to be sure of before his death. It is the trust and the heritage of that blessed house. His children reassure Jacob that they would be true to their trust. Thus, the same heritage of Abraham was safe with Jacob's children, who clearly state that they have submitted themselves to God.

. . .

Joseph

Joseph' Dream and Jacob's Advice

Chapter 12: The 53rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Mention when Joseph said to his father:*
O my father! Truly, I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon.
I saw them as ones prostrating themselves to me. (12:4)
*He said: O my son! Relate not **your** dream to **your** brothers*
*so that they contrive cunning against **you**.*
Truly, Satan is a clear enemy to the human being. (12:5)
*And, thus, **your** Lord will elect **you***
*and teach **you** of the interpretation of events.*
*And He will fulfill His divine blessing on **you***
and on the people of Jacob just as He fulfilled it
*on **your** two fathers before, Abraham and Isaac.*
*Truly, **your** Lord is Knowing, Wise.* (12:6)

Commentary°

Joseph's father was Jacob who was the son of Isaac who was the son of Abraham.

Jacob understood from Joseph's vision that God would choose him out for his prophethood and would raise him up above his brothers and therefore he feared on Joseph's account their envy and hatred.

Joseph Suffers the Treatment of his Brothers

Madinah: *Certainly, there had been in Joseph and his brothers*
signs for the ones who ask. (12:7)
Makkah: *When they said: Certainly, Joseph and his brother*
are more beloved to our father than we, although we are many.
Truly, our father is clearly wandering astray. (12:8)
Kill Joseph or fling him to some other region
to free the face of your father for you.
You be a folk after that ones in accord with morality! (12:9)
Said one who says: Kill not Joseph,
but cast him into the bottom of a well.
Some company of travelers will pick him out,
if you had been ones who do this. (12:10)
They said: O our father!
*Why will **you** not entrust us with Joseph*
when we are, truly,
ones who will, certainly, look after him? (12:11)
Send him with us tomorrow to frolic and play.

And, truly, we are ones who guard him. (12:12)
He said: Truly, it disheartens me that you go with him.
And I fear that a wolf eat him
while you are ones who are heedless of him. (12:13)
They said: If a wolf ate him while we are many,
truly, then, we are ones who are losers. (12:14)
So they went with him,
and they agreed to lay him in the bottom of the well.
And We revealed to him:
Certainly, you will tell them of this, their affair,
when they are not aware. (12:15)
And they drew near their father in the time of night,
weeping. (12:16)
They said: O our father!
Truly, we went racing
and we left Joseph with our sustenance
and a wolf ate him and you will not be one who believes us,
even if we had been ones who are sincere. (12:17)
And they brought about his long shirt with false blood.
He said: Nay! Your souls enticed you with a command.
Having patience is graceful.
And it is God, One Whose Help is being sought
against what you allege. (12:18)
And there drew near a company of travelers
so they sent their water-drawer to let down his bucke
He said: What good tidings! This is a bo
So they kept him secret as merchandise
And God is Knowing of what they do. (12:19)
And they sold him for a meager price of coins,
ones that are numbered.
And they had been of him
among the ones who hold him in low esteem. (12:20)

Commentary°

A dream is angelic narratives if it is true, and human or satanic ones if false. His brother, means Benjamin. Joseph and Benjamin were full brothers, their mother being Rachel. (12:8) There is a tradition that Joseph was dearer to Jacob because of the signs that Jacob saw in him and his brothers envied him; so when Joseph had seen the vision, Jacob's love for him increased to such an extent the he could not bear to be parted from him, and their envy was intensified until it impelled them to make an attempt on him. (12:8)

The well in question was that of Jerusalem, or a well in the land

of Jordan, or one between Egypt and Midian, or one three leagues from Jacob's dwelling ... for it is related that when they got out with him into the desert they began hurting and beating him until they well-nigh killed him, and he began crying out and calling or help, and Judah said: Did you not covenant with me that you would not kill him? So they took him to the well and lowered him down into it, and since he clung on to the lip of the well, they tied his hands; and they stripped off his shirt in order to smear it with blood and therewith practice a deceit on his father.

When he was half-way down, they let him go. There was water in the well, and he sank down, but then scrambled onto a rock that was there, and stood on it weeping. But Gabriel brought him an inspiration as is stated in the following words: You will surely tell them what they did to you. Joseph was seventeen years old; or according to other accounts, just approaching puberty, and had been receiving inspiration during his boyhood as was the case with John (Yahya) and Jesus. There is a legend that when Abraham was thrown into the fire, he was stripped of his clothes, but Gabriel brought him a shirt of paradise-silk and put it on him. Abraham handed this on to Isaac, and Isaac to Jacob, who put it into an amulet that he hung on Joseph, and Gabriel brought it out and clothes Joseph with it. (12:15)

Joseph's Firmness in Piety Against the Great Temptation

Makkah: *One from Egypt who bought him*
said to his woman:
Honor him as a guest with a place of lodging.
Perhaps he will profit us or we will take him to ourselves as a son.
And, thus, We established Joseph firmly in the earth
that We teach him the interpretation of events.
God is One Who is Victor over His command,
except most of humanity knows not. (12:21)
And when he had fully grown and come of age,
We gave him critical judgment and knowledge.
And, thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (12:22)
And she in whose house he was solicited him,
enticing him to evil.
And she shut the doors and said:
Come you! He said: God be my safe place.
Truly, he, your husband, is my master
and He gave me a goodly place of lodging.

Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper. (12:23)
She, certainly, was about to act on her desire for him
and he was about to act on his desire for her,
if it were not that he saw proof of his Lord.
Thus, it was that We turn away from him evil and depravity.
And, truly, he was among Our servants,
ones who are devoted. (12:24)
So they raced to the door and she tore his long shirt from behind.
And they both discovered her chief at the door.
She said: What is the recompense of him
*who wanted evil for **your** household,*
but that he be imprisoned or a painful punishment? (12:25)
He said: She solicited me, enticing me to evil.
And one who bears witness bore witness from her household
and said: If his long shirt had been torn from the front,
then, she was sincere,
and he was among the ones who lie. (12:26)
But if his long shirt had been torn from behind,
she lied against herself;
he was among ones who are sincere. (12:27)
When her husband saw his long shirt was torn from behind,
he said: It is of your (f) cunning;
truly, your (f) cunning is serious. (12:28)
Joseph! Turn aside from this!
*To his wife he said: Ask **you** for forgiveness for **your** (f) impiety;*
*truly, **you** (f) had been of the ones who are inequitable.* (12:29)

Commentary°

al-Aziz bought him from the travelers. al-Aziz was in charge of the treasuries of Egypt and his name was Qitfir or Itfir. The king at that time was Rayyan ibn al-Walid, the Amalekite. He believed in Joseph and died during Joseph's life. According to another account he was the Pharaoh of Moses and lived 400 years; this is based on the Quranic statement about Moses' Pharaoh: Joseph came to you previously with clear signs. (40:36) The commonly accepted view is that Moses' Pharaoh was one of the descendants of Joseph's Pharaoh and that the [sign] just cited is an example of descendants being addressed in terms appropriate to their ancestors; circumstances. It is related that al-Aziz bought Joseph when the latter was seventeen years old, and he stayed in his house thirteen years, and Rayyan made him his vizier at the age of thirty-three, and he died at the age of 120. Various opinions are held about the price for which he bought Joseph, by those who hold his sale on this occasion to be different from the

earlier sale; some say it was twenty dinars and two pairs of sandals and two white robes, others that it was his bulk in gold or alternatively in silver.

Qitfir was childless. He detected probity in Joseph. It is said that three people showed themselves pre-eminently skilled in judging men: Aziz of Egypt, Jethro's daughter and Joseph. (12:21)

The age of maturity between thirty and forty; or, according to others, the age of adolescence which begins with the attainment of puberty "wisdom" which is knowledge backed up by action; or, "authority" among humanity. (12:22)

God put the testifying into the mount of one of her family in order that it might be more binding on her. Because this would prove that she had torn his shirt at the front in self-defense; or alternatively that he had hurried after her and stumbled over the hem of the shirt so that the breast of it tore. (12:26)

Because this would prove that she had followed him and grasped at his garment and torn it. (12:27)

There were five of the women, the wives of the chamberlain, butler, baker, prison-keeper and head groom.

Joseph Prefers Prison to the Sinful Enjoyment of Life

Makkah: *And the ladies in the city said:*
The woman of the great one solicits her spiritual warrior,
enticing him to evil.
Surely, he captivated her longing.
Truly, we consider her to be clearly wandering astray. (12:30)
So when she heard of their planning,
she sent for them (f), and made ready for them a banquet.
And she gave each one of them (f) a knife,
and said to Joseph: Go forth before them (f).
Then, when they saw him, they admired him
and cut their hands.
And they (f) said: God save us! This is not a mortal.
This is nothing but a generous angel! (12:31)
She said: This is he about whom you (f) blamed me.
And, certainly, I solicited him,
enticing him to evil,
but he preserved himself from sin.
And now if he accomplishes not what I command,
he will, certainly, be imprisoned
and will be among the ones who are disgraced. (12:32)

He said: O my Lord! Prison is more beloved to me
than what they call me to.
Unless You have turned away their (f) cunning from me,
I will yearn towards them (f)
and I will be among the ones who are ignorant. (12:33)
So his Lord responded to him
and turned away their (f) cunning from him.
Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (12:34)
Again, it showed itself to them.
And after they saw the signs,
it seemed that they should imprison him for a while. (12:35)

Commentary°

He has called it 'cunning' because they concealed it as a cunning person normally conceals his wife; or alternatively because they said it with the object of her showing Joseph to them; or because she had asked them to keep her secret hidden, but they spread it abroad against her.

It is said that she invited forty women, including the five. In order that they might recline with the knives in their hands, there were cushions and when Joseph came out to them they would be astonished and forget themselves, so that their hands, holding their knives would fall on each other's hands and cut them, and they would stand rebuked by this proof of the irresistible nature of Joseph's charms; or else Joseph would be alarmed at her guild when he came out alone before forty women with knives in their hands. They though him marvelous and were awed at his superlative beauty.

Zulaykha confesses to them her guilty conduct now that she realizes that they pardon her as shown by their exclamation he is an angel,' in order that they may assist her in softening his attitude. (12:32)

In view of the outcome in the future life, even in a case where the latter is what one's natural spirit desires and the former is what it hates. The verb 'invite' has 'them' collectively as subject because they tried to intimidate him out of opposing her wishes, and to make obedience to her attractive to him. Or alternatively they invited him to themselves. It is said that he was subjected by God to the trial of imprisonment because of his saying this, for it would have been more proper for him to ask God for safety from trials. For the hearts of people by nature regard passion as good and incline towards it. The wise person does not commit a vile action.... God answered his prayer and strengthened him in innocence so that he acclimatized himself to the rigors of prison, and preferred those rigors to pleasure

involving disobedience to God.

Joseph Preaches Unity of God in Prison

Makkah: *And there entered with him*
in the prison two male spiritual warriors.
One of them said: Truly, I see myself pressing grapes in season.
And the other said:
Truly, I see myself carrying bread over my head
from which birds are eating. They said:
Tell us the interpretation of this.
Truly, we consider ***you***
among the ones who are doers of good. (12:36)
He said: The food you both are provided approaches you not,
but I will tell you of its interpretation before it approaches.
That is of what my Lord taught me.
Truly, I left the creed of a folk who believe not in God
and they, in the world to come, they are
ones who disbelieve. (12:37)
And I followed the creed of my fathers,
Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.
It had not been for us that we ascribe anything
as partners with God.
That is from the grace of God to us
and to humanity, except most of humanity
gives not thanks. (12:38)
O my two prison companions! Are ones that are different masters
better or God, The One, The Omniscient? (12:39)
Whomever you worship other than He are nothing
but names that you named
—you and your fathers
for which God caused not to descend any authority.
The determination is from God alone.
He commanded that you worship none but Him.
That is the truth-loving way of life,
except most of humanity knows not. (12:40)
O my two prison companions!
As for one of you, he will give intoxicants to drink to his master.
And as for the other, he will be crucified.
And birds will eat from his head.
The matter was decided about which you ask for advice. (12:41)
And he said to the one of them
whom he thought should be the one who is saved of the two:
Remember me to ***your*** *master.*
Then, Satan caused him to forget
the remembrance of him to his master

so Joseph lingered in expectation in prison
for a certain number of years. (12:42)

Commentary°

Joseph was placed in prison and it so happened that at that time two others were placed there from among the king's servants, namely his butler and his baker, on suspicion of their desiring to poison the king. They said this because they had seen him in the prison exhorting people and interpreting their visions.

This is as if he wanted to call them to a monotheistic outlook and guide them into the right path before coming on to the question they had asked him; as is the method of Prophets and such learned men as have the same status as prophets in respect of giving spiritual guidance and direction. He has therefore put first a thing which is a miracle vouchsafed on his account, consisting in the giving of information about the supernatural, in order to lead them to have confidence in him in the matter of the call to monotheism and the interpretation, by inspiration and revelation, not by such methods as divination and astrology. All this cites the cause for what has preceded.

This is either part of the citation of the cause for God's teaching Joseph or a fresh sentence paving the way for the call to monotheism and the demonstration of the fact that he belonged to the family of the Prophets, in order to strengthen their willingness to listen to him and rely on him. For this reason it was made legitimate for the humble man to praise himself so that he might be known and his example imitated. The repetition of the pronoun is to indicate that it is they pre-eminently who are unbelievers and thus emphasize their ingratitude in the next world.

Addressed to the two prisoners together with the other Egyptians belonging to their faith. This is an example of rhetorical climax in the call to monotheism and cogency of argument. For first he has explained to them the preferability of monotheism over polytheism by way of oratorical address. Next he has shown that the things they call gods worship depends either on the essential being of the object of worship or on something else and both these alternatives are excluded in the case of those things. Finally he prescribes what is the straightforward truth and upright faith; reason demands nothing else than that, nor can knowledge be satisfied with anything short of it.

Satan caused the butler to forget to mention him to his lord. It may mean that Satan made Joseph forget to make mention of God, with the result that he sought aid from someone else than God. To seek help from mortal men for the relief of troubles, though com-

mendable in general, is not appropriate to the status of Prophets. (12:42)

The King's Dream and Joseph's Interpretation

Makkah: *And the king said:*
Truly, I, I see seven fattened cows
eating seven lean ones
and seven ears of green wheat and others dry.
O Council: Render an opinion to me about my dream
if you had been able to expound dreams. (12:43)
They said: Jumbled nightmares.
And we are not of the interpretation of nightmares
ones who know. (12:44)
And said the man of the two of them who was delivered
and recalled after a period of time:
I will tell you its interpretation so send me. (12:45)
Joseph, O you just person!
Render an opinion to us about seven fattened cows
eaten by seven lean ones and seven ears of green wheat
and others dry so that perhaps I will return to the personages
so that perhaps they will know about you. (12:46)
He said: You will sow for seven years in like previous manner
and of what you reaped, then, forsake ears of wheat,
but a little of it that you may eat. (12:47)
Again, seven severe years will approach after that.
You will eat what you put forward,
but a little of what you keep in store. (12:48)
Again, after that, will approach a year
in which humanity will be helped with rain
and they will press in season. (12:49)

Commentary°

When Joseph's deliverance as at hand, the king saw seven fat cows which had emerged from a dry river-bed and seven lean ones; and the lean ones ate up the fat ones and the dry ones twined over the green ones until they had gained the upper hand over them. The full situation is not described here since it has been considered sufficient to relate what happened in the case of the cows.

The word originally means 'that which is gathered of all sorts of various plants and bundled up together," and hence it comes to be used metaphorically for "a nightmare." The plural is for rhetorical emphasis when applied as here to the single dream which is being characterized as false, so that it is like when you say 'so-and-so rides

horses.' Or alternatively, the plural is used because the dream in question included various matters. By dreams here they imply the specialized meaning for interpretation is applicable only to truthful dreams. This is as it were a second ground advanced in excuse for their ignorance of its interpretation.

Joseph Cleared of the False Charge

Makkah: *And the king said: Bring him to me.*
Then, when the Messenger brought about,
he said: Return to thy master and ask him:
What of the ladies, those who cut their hands?
Truly, my Lord is Knowing of their (f) cunning. (12:50)
He said: What was your (f) business when you solicited Joseph,
enticing him to evil?
They (f) said: God save us! We knew not any evil against him.
The woman of the great one said:
Now The Truth was discovered! I sought to solicit him,
enticing him to evil.
And, truly, he is among the ones who are sincere. (12:51)
Joseph said: That is so that the great one know
that I betray him not in his absence.
And that God guides not the cunning
of the ones who are traitors. (12:52)
And I declare my soul not innocent
Truly, the soul is that which incites to evil
but when my Lord had mercy.
Truly, my Lord is Forgiving, Compassionate. (12:53)
And the king said: Bring him to me
so that I attach him to myself.
Then, when he spoke to him he said:
Truly, this day you are with us secure, trustworthy. (12:54)
Joseph said: Assign me over the storehouses of the region.
Truly, I will be a knowing guardian. (12:55)
And, thus, We established Joseph firmly in the region
to take his dwelling in it when or where he wills.
We light Our mercy on whom We will
and We waste not the compensation
of ones who are doers of good. (12:56)
Truly, the compensation of the world to come
is better for those who believed
and had been God-conscious. (12:57)

Commentary°

He hesitated to come out of prison, and gave priority to the inquiry about the women and a call for an investigation into their case, in order that his innocence might be apparent and that it might be known that he had been imprisoned unjustly, and the envious might not be able to use his imprisonment as a means of blackening his reputation. This passage contains an indication that it is appropriate that one should imply one's best efforts to repel accusations, and that occasions for suspicion should be avoided.

This is what Joseph said when the messenger returned to him and told him of the women's statement. The passage contains an oblique reference to Zulaykha in connection with her having deceived her husband, and an affirmation of Joseph's own faithfulness; which is why it is followed by the next words. (12:52)

He did not wish by that preceding remark to clear himself or to be vain over his condition; but rather to show forth the innocency and grace with which God had favored him.

He saw that he trusted in everything. It is related that when he came out of the prison, he washed and cleaned himself and put on new clothes, and when he entered the king's presence, he said: O God, I ask **You** for somewhat of his good and I take refuge in **Your** glory and power from his evil.'Then he greeted the king and prayed for him in Hebrew. So the king said: What is this language? And he replied: The language of my fathers.

Now the king was acquainted with seventy languages, and addressed Joseph in them, and Joseph replied to him in all of them so that the king was amazed at him and said: I wish to hear my vision from you. So Joseph related it and described to him the cows and ears of corn and their meanings, according as the king had seen them. So the king placed him on the throne and deputed his business to him. There is also a tradition that Qitfir died about that time and the king appointed Joseph to his office, and married Joseph to Zulaykha and Joseph found her a virgin and there were born to him from her Ephraim and Manasseh.

Perhaps Joseph, when he saw that the king was going to employ him on the royal business, necessarily chose a sphere of action of which the benefits would be general and the results substantial. The passage contains an indication that it is legitimate to seek appointment to office, or announce one's readiness to take it, and to accept appointment oat the hand of an unbeliever, if it be known that there is no way to establish justice and control the populace except with the backing of the unbeliever.

It is said that when the king had made Joseph his vizier, Joseph

established justice and strove to make the harvests more abundant and regulate the revenues there from, until the years of scarcity arrived, and famine was general throughout Egypt and Syria and the adjoining regions. The people had recourse to him and he sold the crops first for money, until they had none left; then for ornaments and jewellery; then for animals; then for estates and landed property; then for their person al freedom, until he had enslaved them all. Then he reported the matter to the king, who said, 'Do as you think fit.' So Joseph freed them and returned to them their property. Canaan was afflicted with the same disaster as other lands.

Joseph Measures Out Corn to his Brothers

Makkah: *And Joseph's brothers drew near*
and they entered before him.
He recognized them, but they are ones who know him not. (12:58)
And when he equipped them with their food supplies,
he said: Bring me a brother of yours from your father.
See you not that I live up to full measure
and that I am best of the ones who host? (12:59)
Then, if you bring him not to me,
there will be no full measure for you with me,
nor will you come near me. (12:60)
They said: We will solicit his father for him
and, truly, we are ones who do it. (12:61)
And Joseph said to his spiritual warriors:
Lay their merchandise into their saddlebags
so that perhaps they will recognize it
when they turned about to their household
so that perhaps they will return. (12:62)
So when they returned to their father,
they said: O our father! The full measure was refused to us
so send our brother with us that we will obtain our measure.
And, truly, we will be ones who guard him. (12:63)
Jacob said: How will I entrust him to you
as I entrusted you with his brother before?
But, then, God is Best of One Who Guards.
And He is One Who is the Most Merciful
of the ones who are the most merciful. (12:64)
And when they opened their sustenance,
they found their merchandise was returned to them.
They said: O our father, this is what we desire.
Our merchandise was returned to us
and we will get provision for our household

and we will keep our brother safe
and add a camel's load of full measure.
That is an easy full measure. (12:65)
He said: I will not send him with you
until you give me a pledge by God
that you will bring him back to me,
unless you are enclosed yourselves.
And when they gave him their pledge,
he said: God is Trustee over what we say. (12:66)
And he said: O my sons! Enter not by one door,
but enter by different doors.
I will not avail you against God in anything.
Truly, the determination is but with God.
In Him I put my trust.
And in Him put their trust the ones who put their trust. (12:67)
And when they entered from where their father commanded,
it had not been availing them against God in anything,
but it was a need of Jacob's inner self which he satisfied.
And, truly, he was a possessor of knowledge
because We taught him,
except most of humanity knows not. (12:68)

Commentary°

Jacob advises them not to enter by one door. He advised this because they were men of fine and splendid appearance, and well known in Egypt for their intimacy with the king and honorable treatment by him, so Jacob feared, on their account that they should enter in a single group and so be subject to the evil eye. He probably did not give them this advice on the former occasion because they were at that time unknown. Alternatively, the motive of this advice as his fear for Benjamin. Effects may be brought about by psychological causes, one of which is the evil eye.

Joseph Meets His Brother

Makkah: *And when they entered before Joseph,*
he himself gave refuge to his brother.
*He said: Truly, I am **your** brother,*
so be not despondent for what they had been doing. (12:69)
So when he equipped them with their food supplies,
he laid the drinking cup into their brother's saddlebag.
Again, one who announces announced:
O you in the caravan! Truly, you are ones who are thieves. (12:70)
They said coming forward:

What is it that you are missing? (12:71)
They said: We are missing the king's drinking cup
and for him who brought it about is a camel's load and I am the
guarantor for it. (12:72)
They said: By God, certainly, you knew we drew not near
making corruption in the region.
And we had not been ones who are thieves. (12:73)
They said: What, then, will be the recompense for him
if you had been ones who lie? (12:74)
They said: The recompense for it will be
that he in whose saddlebag it was located will be the recompense.
Thus, we give recompense to the ones who are unjust. (12:75)
So he began with their sacks before the sack of his brother.
Again, he pulled it out of his brother's sack.
Thus, We contrived for Joseph.
He would not have taken his brother into the judgment of the king
unless God wills it.
We exalt in degree whomever We will,
and above all those possessors of knowledge
is One Who is Knowing. (12:76)
They said: If he steals, surely, a brother of his stole before.
But Joseph kept it secret within himself,
not showing it to them.
He said: You are in a worse place
And God is greater in knowledge of what you allege. (12:77)
They said: O the great one! Truly, for him is an old man
as his father so take one of us in his place.
Truly, we consider you among
the ones who are doers of good. (12:78)
He said: God be my safe place that we take
but him with Whom we found our sustenance.
Truly, we, then, would be of the ones who are unjust. (12:79)

Commentary°

This passage is used as evidence by those who assert that God is a 'Knower' in His own essence since they say if He were merely possessed of knowledge there would be according to the text above Him one more knowledgeable than Him. The answer to this is, that every creature endowed with knowledge because the context concerns created beings, and because *al-alim* is God.

Joseph Discloses His Identity

Makkah: *So when in regard to him they became hopeless,*

they conferred privately.
The eldest of them said: Know you not that your father,
surely, took a pledge from you by God
and before that you neglected your duty with Joseph.
So I will never quit this region until my father gives me permission
or God gives judgment in my case.
Return to your father and say:
O our father! Truly, thy son stole and we bore witness
only to what we knew.
And we had not been ones who guard the unseen. (12:81)
And ask the people of the town where we had been
and the people of the caravan in which we came forward.
And, truly, we are ones who are sincere. (12:82)
He said: You were enticed by your souls into an affair.
So patience is graceful.
Perhaps God will bring me them altogether.
Truly, He, He is The Knowing, The Wise. (12:83)
And he turned away from them and said:
O my bitterness for Joseph! And his eyes brightened
because of the sorrow that was choking him. (12:84)
They said: By God! ***You*** *will never*
discontinue remembering Joseph
until thou hast ruined ***your*** *health.*
You *would be among the ones who are perishing.* (12:85)
He said: I make not complaint
of my anguish and sorrow but to God.
And I know from God what you know not. (12:86)
O my sons! Go and search for Joseph and his brother.
And give not up hope of the solace of God.
Truly, no one gives up hope of the solace of God but the folk,
ones who are ungrateful. (12:87)
Then, when they entered to him, they said: O the great one!
Harm afflicted us and our household.
We drew near merchandise of scant worth so live up
to the full measure and be charitable to us.
Truly, God gives recompense
to the ones who give in charity. (12:88)
He said: Knew you what you accomplished with Joseph
and his brother when you are ones who are ignorant? (12:89)
They said: Are ***you****, truly, Joseph?*
He said: I am Joseph and this is my brother.
Surely, God showed us grace.
Truly, He Who is God-conscious and endures patiently,

then, surely, God will not waste the compensation
of the ones who are doers of good. (12:90)
They said: By God! Certainly,
God held you in greater favor above us.
And, truly, we had been ones who are inequitable. (12:91)
He said: No censure on you this day.
God forgive you.
And He is One Who is Most Merciful
of the ones who are most merciful. (12:92)
Go with this, my long shirt and cast it over the face of my father.
He will become seeing.
And bring me your household one and all. (12:93)

Jacob Goes to See His Son

Makkah: *And when they set forward*
with the caravan their father said:
Truly, I find the scent of Joseph
if you think me not weak of mind. (12:94)
They said: By God! Truly, you are long possessed
by thy wandering astray. (12:95)
Then, when the bearer of good tidings drew near,
he cast it over his face and he went back, seeing.
He said: Did I not say to you,
truly, I know from God what you know not? (12:96)
They said: O our father! Ask forgiveness for us for our impieties
Truly, we had been ones who are inequitable. (12:97
He said: I will ask forgiveness for you with my Lora
Truly, He, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate. (12:98)
Then, when they entered to Joseph, he gave refuge to his parents
and said: Enter Egypt, if God willed,
as ones who are safe! (12:99)
And he exalted his parents to the throne.
And they fell down before him as ones who prostrate themselves.
And he said: O my father! This is the interpretation
of my dream from before.
My Lord has made it a reality.
And, surely, He did good to me
when He brought me out of the prison
and drew you near out of the desert
after Satan had sown enmity
between me and between my brothers.
Truly, my Lord is Subtle in what He wills.
Truly, He is The Knowing, The Wise. (12:100)

*My Lord! Surely, **You** had given me of the dominion.*
You had taught of the interpretation of events.
One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth,
You are my protector in the present and in the world to come.
*Call me to Yourself as one who submits to **You***
and cause me to join
with the ones in accord with morality. (12:101)
That is of the tidings of the unseen that We reveal to you
And you had not been in their presence
when they agreed to their affair. And they plan. (12:102)
And most of humanity is not ones who believe,
even if you were eager. (12:103)
You ask them not for any compensation.
It is but a Remembrance to the worlds. (12:104)

Commentary°

The explicit future implied in *saufa* indicates that Jacob postponed the asking of forgiveness until the morning, or until the night prayer, or until the next Friday eve, looking for the time when prayer is most likely to be answered. Alternatively, he postponed it until he could seek sanction from Joseph for this action of their behalf; or, he postponed it until he should know that Joseph had pardoned them; for the pardon of the wronged person is a condition of divine forgiveness.

"Bowing down" in greeting and honor to him; for prostration by their custom served for that purpose. Alternatively, the meaning is "they fell down on his account prostrate to God in thanks." Alternatively, the pronoun in 'to him' refers to God. The plural subject of 'they fell down' refers to Joseph's parents and brothers. The raising up came later in time than the falling down, although it is placed in front of it in word order because the main concern of the passage is with his honoring them both. It is said that Joseph took his father round his treasury, and when Jacob saw the storehouse of papyri, he said: My son, how undutiful you are: you have these papyri in your possession yet you never wrote to me at a distance of only eight days' journey.' Joseph replied: Gabriel bade me not to. Will you not ask him why? inquired Jacob. You are easier in approach to him than I, said Joseph. So Jacob asked him, and Gabriel said: God commanded me so, because of your saying: I fear that the wolf will eat him; God said: Why did you not fear Me? (12:101)

It is said that Jacob stayed with him twenty-four years and then died, and directed that he should be buried in Syria beside his father; so Joseph took him and buried him there, then returned and survived

after him for twenty-three years, after which his soul yearned for the eternal kingdom, and he desired death, and God gathered him righteous and pure to Himself. And the Egyptians disputed about his burial-place until they were on the verge of fighting, so they decided to place him in a marble sarcophagus and bury him in the Nile in such a way that the water would pass over him and thereafter reach all Egypt so that they should all be on an equal footing in regard to him. Later Moses transported him to the burial-place of his ancestors. His age was 120. There were born to him from Rail, Ephraim and Manasseh, who was the ancestor of Joshua son of Nun and Rahmah wife of Job.

Histories of the Ancient People Serve as a Lesson

Makkah: *And how many signs of the heavens*
and the earth they pass by
while they are ones who turn aside from them! (12:105)
And most of them believe not in God,
but they be ones who are polytheists. (12:106)
Were they safe from the approach to them
of the overwhelming event
of the punishment from God or the approach on them
of the Hour suddenly while they are not aware? (12:107)
Say: This is my way. I call to God
I and whoever followed me are on clear evidence
And glory be to God! And I am not
among the ones who are polytheists. (12:108)
And We sent not before you as Messengers,
but men to whom We reveal from among the people of the towns.
So journey they not through the earth
and look on how had been the Ultimate End
of those who were before them?
And, truly, the abode of the world to come is better
for those who were God-conscious.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (12:109)
When the Messengers became hopeless
and thought that they were lied against,
then, Our help drew near.
So We were to deliver whomever We will. And Our Might
will not be repelled from the folk, the ones who sin. (12:110)
Certainly, there had been in their narratives a lesson
for those imbued with intuition.

It had not been a discourse that is devised
except it established as true
what was before and decisively explained everything
and is a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe. (12:111)

Commentary°

The meaning is: Whatever number you choose of conclusive proofs to the Creator's existence and wisdom and the perfection of His power and unity.

"Polytheists" by virtue of worshipping others than Him as do the pagans, or by taking the Doctors of the Law, or attributing to Him the begetting of offspring, or by believing in the principles of light and darkness, or by looking for causes as the Hellenistic philosophers. Some say the verse alludes to the polytheists of Mecca, others to the hypocrites of Madinah, others to the People of the Book, Jews and Christians.

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them
We guided. And Noah We guided before and among his offspring
are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron.
And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)

Joseph the Messenger

Chapter 40: The 60th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, Joseph drew near you*
before with the clear portents,
but you ceased not in uncertainty
as to what he brought about to you.
Until when he perished you said:
God will never raise up a Messenger after him.
Thus, God causes him to go astray, one who is excessive,
one who is a doubter. (40:34)

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MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (ISRAEL), AARON, JETHRO (SHUAYB), THE TOWN BORDERING THE SEA, THE COMPANIONS OF THE WOOD (AL-AYKATI) AND THE COMPANIONS OF MIDIAN

BOOK 27

QURANIC STORIES OF OTHER PROPHETS, MESSENGERS AND ONES WHO ARE SENT

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Book 27

Laleh Bakhtiar

Quranic Stories of Other Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent

Book 27

Moses and the Children of Jacob (Israel), Aaron, Jethro (Shuayb),The Town Bordering the Sea, The Companions of the Wood (al-Aykati) and the Companions of Midian

Library of Islam

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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob* (known as Israel), *Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran.* For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity

within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3 Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (as-salam alaykum) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In

effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in ka). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: antum where the verb ends in masculine: kum) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muham-

mad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

12. All the signs in the text are in chronological order.

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Moses and the Children of Jacob

The Scrolls of Moses

Chapter 53: The 23rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *is in the scrolls of Moses* (53:36)

Commentary°

The Quran mentions Moses referring to the scrolls, tablets or scripture of the Torah and the Quran asks this question of those who turn from the Messenger and his reminder to remember God and who care only for what this world has to offer: Does the Messenger Muhammad claim that he knows the unseen or what is in the scrolls of Moses?

The People of Pharoah Deny Moses

Chapter 54: The 37th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, drew near*
the warning to the people of Pharaoh. (54:41)
They denied Our signs, all of them.
So We took them with a taking,
One Who is Almighty, Omnipotent. (54:42)

Commentary°

These historical accounts are concluded with a brief reference to the rate of a famous community of the ungrateful outside Arabia. (54:41-54:42) Thus the whole story of Pharaoh and his entourage is summed up by mentioning its beginning and end: their receiving warnings, their rejection of all the signs and miracles that the Messenger sent to them showed them, and their subsequent punishment by the Almighty. The reference here to God s might and ability to carry out His will indicate that their end was violent and calamitous. It implies an allusion to the hollowness of Pharaoh's power and his ability to inflict injustice. All his might is shown to be worthless. He could avail himself of nothing. God inflicted such a punishment on him and his host that can only be carried out by the Almighty. This is most fitting because of the injustice and tyranny they practiced for so long.

The People of Pharoah Deny Moses

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Noah before them denied*
and Ad and Pharaoh,
the possessor of the stakes, **(38:12)**

The Message of Moses

Chapter 7: The 39th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Again, We raised up Moses after them*
with Our signs to Pharaoh and his Council,
but they did wrong to them.
So look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who make corruption. (7:103)
And Moses said: O Pharaoh! Truly, I am a Messenger
from the Lord of the worlds. (7:104)
I am approved on condition
that I say nothing but The Truth about God.
Surely, I drew near you with a clear portent from your Lord.
So send the Children of Jacob with me. (7:105)
Pharaoh said: If you had been drawing near with a sign,
then, approach with it if you had been
among the ones who are sincere. (7:106)
Then, Moses cast his staff.
That is when it became a clear serpent. (7:107)
And he drew out his hand.
That is when it was shimmering white
to the ones who look. (7:108)

Commentary°

The chapter now turns to the story of Moses from when he confronted Pharaoh and the leaders of his government with the divine message.

Pharaoh and his people certainly took a wrongful and oppressive attitude, rejecting God's signs and revelations. (7:103) Every tyrant who imposes his law on human beings in preference to God's law is a spreader of corruption.

Here is an encounter between truth and falsehood, faith and rejection. It is a scene that brings the Messenger, who calls on people to believe in the Lord of all the worlds, face to face with a tyrant who claims, and indeed practices, lordship over his people.

Moses addresses the Pharaoh with his plain title, "Pharaoh" (7:104-105). He does not call him: My lord, as do those who do not really know who the true Lord is. Moses combines good manners with self assurance, addressing Pharaoh with his simple title in order to point out to him his true position while asserting at the same time the greatest fact in the universe: I am a Messenger from the Lord of all the worlds. (7:104)

Moses confronted Pharaoh with this great fact in his own capacity as a Messenger from the Lord of the universe, committed to stat-

ing the truth about God who gave him his message. (7:104-105)

Moses was commanded to demand that Pharaoh should release to him the Children of Jacob . (7:104-105) The first statement is the preamble to the logical conclusion given in the second. The two go hand in hand and cannot be separated.

Pharaoh and the leaders of his government were fully aware of the import of the declaration that God is the Lord of all the worlds. They were aware that the declaration implied the termination of Pharaoh's authority, the overthrow of his government and the end to his tyranny. They felt, however, that they had a chance to denounce Moses as a liar. Therefore, Pharaoh demands a sign from Moses to prove his claim (7:106)

Pharaoh felt that if he could prove that Moses was a liar, then all his claims could be refuted and all danger would be removed. But Moses had the complete answer. (7:107-7:108) This came as a complete surprise to Pharaoh and the elders of his people. The staff became a real serpent that was plainly visible. Moreover, when Moses took his hand out of his pocket, it was seen as very white, without any sign of illness. This in itself was a miraculous sign, because he only had to put his hand in his pocket again for it to regain its original dark complexion.

Pharaoh and his Magicians Defeated

Makkah: *The Council of the folk of Pharaoh said:*
Truly, this is a knowing sorcerer. (7:109)
He wants to drive you out from your region
so what is your command? (7:110)
They said: Put him and his brother off
and send to the cities to the place
where ones who assemble are. (7:111)
*Let them approach **you** with every knowing sorcerer.* (7:112)
And the ones who are sorcerers drew near to Pharaoh.
They said: Truly, would we have
compensation if we had been the ones who are victors? (7:113)
Pharaoh said: Yes! And, truly, you will be
of the ones who are brought near to me. (7:114)
*They said: O Moses! Either **you** cast,*
or will we be the ones who cast? (7:115)
He said: You cast. So when they cast,
they cast a spell on the eyes of the personages and terrified them.
And a tremendous sorcery drew near. (7:116)
*And We revealed to Moses that: Cast **your** staff.*
That is when it swallowed what they faked. (7:117)

Thus, The Truth came to pass and proved false
what they had been doing. (7:118)
So they were vanquished there and turned about
as ones who are disgraced. (7:119)
The ones who are sorcerers were made to fall down
as ones who prostrate themselves. (7:120)
They said: We believed in the Lord of the worlds, (7:121)
the Lord of Moses and Aaron. (7:122)
Pharaoh said: You believed in Him
before I give permission to you.
Truly, this is a plan you planned in the city
that you drive out the people from it but you will know. (7:123)
I will, certainly, cut off your hands
and your feet on opposite sides.
Again, I will cause you to be crucified, one and all. (7:124)
They said: Truly, we are ones who are turning to our Lord. (7:125)
***You** have sought revenge on us*
only because we believed in the signs of our Lord
when they drew near us.
Our Lord! Pour out patience on us and call us
*to **Yourself** as ones who submit to God.* (7:126)

Commentary°

Therefore, the great ones began their consultations with Pharaoh. (7:109-7:110) Their consultations were concluded with agreement on a certain procedure. (7:111-7:112)

Pharaoh's aides determined, after their lengthy discussions, that Pharaoh should gain time and fix an appointment with Moses. Meanwhile, he would send heralds to summon to his presence all skilful sorcerers, so that they could overpower what they claimed to be Moses's sorcery. Despite all that we know about Pharaoh's tyranny, his action in this regard was much milder than what twentieth-century tyrants did when they confronted the advocates of divine faith who proclaimed that God is the only Lord in the universe, and thereby threatened the authority of self-proclaimed sovereignty.

They are mere professionals. To them, both sorcery and priesthood are professions. (7:113-7:114)

Pharaoh's sorcerers were reassured that they would have a generous reward, and they looked forward to be in positions close to Pharaoh. They came ready for the match, and began by an open challenge to Moses. Little did they realize that God was storing for them something far better than their promised wages: They said: Moses! Either you shall throw [first], or we shall be the first to throw? He

answered: You throw [first]. (7:115-7:116) It is a clearly apparent challenge. As they gave Moses the choice, they demonstrated their confidence that they would triumph. But we also see Moses unperturbed by the challenge, full of confidence as he answered: You throw first. That short answer reveals how completely assured Moses was. We often find the Quran using a single word to impart such rich connotations.

But then the chapter delivers a surprise. Indeed, Moses himself was surprised as he found himself face to face with very skilful sorcery that strikes awe in people's hearts. (7:116)

But something totally unexpected takes place to surprise Pharaoh and his aides, these sorcerers and the masses gathered in the large square which served as a stage for this contest. (7:117-7:119) They were defeated there and then, and became utterly humiliated. (7:119)

The same fact is driven home to Pharaoh when Moses wins the confrontation with Pharaoh's sorcerers and they declare their acceptance of God's oneness. (7:120-7:122) Again when Pharaoh threatens them with severe punishment, they turn to their Lord and declare that they will always turn to Him in life, death and future life. (7:125-7:126)

But the surprise is not over yet. The scene brings yet another, even greater surprise: The sorcerers fell down prostrating themselves. (7:120-7:122)

Pharaoh felt his throne shake, and it is well known that the throne and the crown represent all that is in the life of a tyrant. Tyrants are always ready to commit any crime, without hesitation, in order to retain power. (7:123-7:124)

Haughty, (7:123) he really expects them to seek his permission before their hearts, consciences and souls open up to receive the truth, when they themselves have no control over these and cannot prevent anything from touching or penetrating them. Perhaps Pharaoh wanted them to repel the truth as it penetrated their souls, or to stifle their faith as its shoots began to spring up and blossom inside their souls, or to cover their eyes so that they could not see the light. That is tyranny: ignorant and stupid, but at the same time arrogant and conceited.

There is another element which influences Pharaoh's attitude: namely, fear that his power is threatened. (7:123)

It was only expected that Pharaoh should issue his fearful warning. (7:123-7:124) Torture, disfigurement and un-abating persecution: these are the methods to which tyranny resorts when it finds itself in confrontation with the truth. The tyrants realize that they

cannot refute the argument of the truth, therefore they have to suppress it by force.

A human being who believes in the message of the truth does not stop to inquire. (7:125-7:126) It is the unshakeable faith that will not submit to any worldly power. It is the faith that is reassured about the future, in the knowledge that all human beings will return to their Lord. With faith, people have the reassurance of being close to Him. (7:125)

When anyone realizes what the battle is all about and to whom he should turn for help, he will not ask his enemy to ensure his own safety. He will only pray to his Lord to give him patience and perseverance in times of adversity, and to help him to continue in an attitude of submission to God until he dies. (7:126)

The Persecution of the Children of Jacob

Makkah: *And the Council of the folk of Pharaoh said:*
*Will **you** forsake Moses*
and his folk to make corruption in and on the earth
*while they forsake **you** and **your** gods? Pharaoh said: We will slay*
their sons and we will save alive their women.
And truly we are ones who are ascendant over them. (7:127)
Moses said to his folk: Pray for help from God and have patience.
Truly, the earth belongs to God. He gives it as inheritance
to whom He wills of His servants.
And that is the Ultimate End
for the ones who are God-conscious. (7:128)
*They said: We were maligned before **you** have*
*approached us and after **you** have drawn near to us.*
He said: Perhaps your Lord will cause your enemy to perish
and make you successors to him on the earth
so that He will look on how you do. (7:129)

Commentary°

Pharaoh was enraged by these words, feeling that his whole regime was seriously threatened. Therefore, he made his brutal intentions clear. (7:127)

Now we see the Prophet Moses speaking to his people in the language and with the passion of a Prophet who truly knows His Lord and how His will works. He impresses on them the need to endure adversity with patience and to seek God's help to overcome it. He enlightens them about the rules God has put in place in the universe, making it clear to them that the whole earth belongs to God alone and that He causes it to be inherited by any group of His ser-

vants according to His will. The ultimate trial will inevitably be given to those who fear none other than God. They complain to him that before he came they endured a wave of persecution and torture similar to that which they now suffer after his arrival. They feel that such persecution is endless. He declares that he sincerely hopes that God will destroy their enemy and cause them to be the heirs of the land to see how they conduct themselves when they are given the trust of building human life on earth. (7:128-7:129)

The Delivery of the Children of Jacob

Makkah: *And, certainly, We took the people of Pharaoh*
with years of diminution of fruits,
so that perhaps they will recollect. (7:130)
And when benevolence drew near them,
they would say: This belongs to us.
But if an evil deed lights on them, they [blame] Moses
and those who were with him.
Certainly, that which are their [fortunes] are with God
except most of them know not. (7:131)
And they said: Whatever sign ***you*** *have brought to us*
to cast a spell on us with it,
we will not be ones who believe in ***you.*** (7:132)
Then, We sent on them the deluge and the locusts and the lice
and the frogs and blood as distinct signs,
but they grew arrogant
and they had been a folk, ones who sin. (7:133)
And when the wrath fell on them, they said: O Moses!
Call to ***your****Lord for us because of the compact made with* ***you.***
If ***you*** *were to remove the wrath from us,*
we would, certainly, believe in ***you.***
And we will send the Children of Jacob with ***you.*** (7:134)
But when We removed the wrath from them for a term,
that which is conclusive, they break their oath. (7:135)
So We requited them and drowned them in the water of the sea
because they denied Our signs
and they had been ones who are heedless of them. (7:136)
And We gave as inheritance to the folk
who had been taken advantage of
due to their weakness, the east of the region
and its west which We blessed.
And completed was the fairer Word of ***your*** *Lord*
for the Children of Jacob
because they endured patiently.

And We destroyed what Pharaoh and his folk had been crafting
and what they had been constructing. (7:137)
And We brought the Children of Jacob over the sea.
Then, they approached on a folk
who give themselves up to their idols.
They said: O Moses! Make for us a god like the gods they have.
He said: Truly, you are an ignorant folk! (7:138)
Truly, these are the ones who are ruined
and falsehood is what they had been doing. (7:139)
He said: Should I look for any god other than God for you
while He gave you an advantage over the worlds? (7:140)

Commentary°

The story also relates how God subjected Pharaoh's people to several trials, allowing different types of hardship to afflict them. Nevertheless, they persist in their rejection of God's message, making all types of excuses. Eventually destruction befalls them. (7:130-7:136)

At this stage in the conflict, the Supreme Power intervenes to settle the issue between the two camps. (7:130) This was a first warning given in the form of drought and poor harvests. In the richly fertile land of Egypt, this was a highly worrying situation that called for reflection and reconsideration Pharaoh's people considered every good fortune that came their way as their due. Affliction and poor harvests were attributed to Moses and his followers as people who brought bad omen. (7: 131)

But Pharaoh's people were too arrogant, always persisting with their evil ways and paying no heed to God's signs or to any test to which they were put. (7:132)

At this juncture, the supreme power of God intervenes. (7:133) They recognized that they themselves had no means of lifting their hardship. (7:134) Every time they broke their promise and resorted to their same ways and practices before the plague had smitten them. But the plague was lifted only in accordance with God's will so as to let them alone for a while until their appointed term had come. (7:135)

The end then takes place in accordance with God's law of punishing the ungrateful after having tested them both with affliction and affluence.

Having given Pharaoh and his people every chance, and assigned for them a term that they were certain to reach, God destroyed Pharaoh and his clique. He also fulfilled His promise to the oppressed who remained patient in adversity. (7:136-7:137)

The swiftness of the punishment has its effect that fills us with awe. (7:136) Just one strike and they are all destroyed. Proud, arrogant and despotic they certainly were, and suddenly they sink right to the bottom of the sea. It is certainly a fitting recompense. (7:136) The compatibility is made clear between their attitude of denying God's signs, choosing to remain heedless of them and this fitting destiny. We are clearly told that events do not come as a result of coincidence. They do not just happen haphazardly, as simple people tend to think.

The chapter glides over all these events and shifts from one period of time to another in order to highlight the fact that they were established and given power to be free to conduct their own affairs. This provides a clear contrast with their state of weakness when they endured Pharaoh's persecution. (7:137)

No sooner did Moses, guided by God, deliver them from Pharaoh's humiliation—He caused Pharaoh and his people to drown before their very eyes—than they inclined themselves to a type of worship akin to Pharaoh's people: We led the Children of Jacob across the sea; and thereupon they came upon people who were dedicated to the worship of some idols of theirs. (7:138)

Motivated by his faith in God, the Lord of the universe, Moses was very angry. He could not understand how his people could relapse into paganism. (7:138) .

Moses explains to his people what may result out of their request, pointing to the terrible end that awaits those whom they wanted to imitate, making gods similar to theirs. (7:139)

But Moses' anger at his people's attitude takes an even stronger expression and in a higher pitch that also wonders at how they could so quickly forget God's grace when its manifestations are still there. (7:140)

That they were favored above all humanity in their own time was reflected in the fact that they were chosen to be the bearers of the divine message of God's Oneness. This is the greatest favor of all. They were also chosen to be the heirs to inherit the blessed land, which was at that time in pagan hands. How could they, after all this, request their Prophet to seek for them a deity other than God, when they were at that very moment enjoying God's grace?

The Physical Eyes Can Never See God

Makkah: *Mention when We rescued you*
from the people of Pharaoh (7:141)
And We appointed thirty nights for Moses.
And We completed them with ten more.

Thus, fulfilled was the time appointed by his Lord of forty nights.
And Moses said to his brother, Aaron:
Be my successor among my folk and make things right
and follow not the way of the ones who make corruption. (7:142)
And when Moses drew near Our time appointed
and his Lord spoke to him, he said: O my Lord!
Cause me to see that I look on ***You****.*
He said: ***You*** *will never see Me but look on the mountain.*
Then, if it stayed fast in its place, then, ***you*** *will see Me.*
Then, when his Lord Self-disclosed to the mountain,
He made it as ground powder and Moses fell down swooning.
And when he recovered he said: Glory be to ***You****!*
I repented to ***You*** *and I am the first*
of the ones who believe. (7:143)
He said: O Moses! Truly, I favored ***you*** *above humanity*
by My messages and by My assertion.
So take what I gave ***you***
and be among the ones who are thankful. (7:144)
And We wrote down for him on the Tablets
something of all things and an admonishment
and a decisive explanation of all things.
So take these with firmness
and command ***your*** *folk to take what is fairer.*
I will cause you to see the abodes
of the ones who disobey. (7:145)
I will turn away from My signs
those who increase in pride on the earth without right.
And if they see every sign, they believe not in it.
And if they see the way of right judgment,
yet they will not take that way to themselves.
But if they see the way of error,
they will take themselves to that way.
That is because they denied Our signs
and had been ones who are heedless of them. (7:146)
And as for those who denied Our signs
and the meeting in the world to come,
their actions were fruitless.
Will they be given recompense
but for what they had been doing? (7:147)

Commentary°

Now we move on to witness the eighth scene in the story when Moses is preparing himself for a meeting with his great Lord in this

life. He gives specific instructions to his brother, the Prophet Aaron, before he leaves for that meeting. (7:142)

Just before leaving for his period of seclusion and dedication, Moses gave his instructions to the man who was to deputize for him. (7:142) Moses was aware that his brother, Aaron, was also a Prophet sent alongside him by his Lord. But a believer always gives good counsel to other believers. Moses was aware of the heavy burden Aaron was about to shoulder, and of the nature of the Children of Jacob. Aaron welcomed the good advice given him by his brother. Advice is felt to be a burden only by wicked people who want to break loose, or by arrogant people who feel that to take advice is beneath them. It is a small man who refuses to take a supporting hand in order to show that he can cope on his own.

The whole mountain was thus leveled down with no obtrusions on the surface of the earth. Moses was overawed. (7:143) He was completely unconscious.

God's Messengers are always the first to believe in the greatness of their Lord and in His revelations. God commands them to declare that they are the first to believe. The Quran reports in several instances that they comply and make that declaration.

Once more God's grace was bestowed on Moses in abundance. He soon received the happy news of his being chosen to carry God's message to his people after they had been saved. His message to Pharaoh and his people focused on that deliverance. (7:144)

The chapter then tells us how Moses was given the message and its contents. (7:145)

At the end of this scene we have a clear statement of what will eventually happen to those who defy every right and behave arrogantly, turning away deliberately from every sign God has given and every directive He has issued. The statement plainly and accurately describes the nature of this type of people, using all the artistic touches of the Quranic style. (7:146-7:147)

The Children of Jacob Begin Worshipping the Calf

Makkah: *And the folk of Moses took to themselves after him*
from out of their glitter a calf,
a lifeless body like one
that has the lowing sound of flocks.
See they not that it neither speaks to them
nor guides them to a Way?
Yet they took it to themselves.

And they had been the ones who are unjust. (7:148)
And when they became ones who are remorseful
and saw that they, surely, went astray,
they said: If our Lord not have mercy on us and forgive us,
we will, certainly, be among the ones who are losers. (7:149)
And when Moses returned to his folk enraged, grieved,
he said: Miserable was what you succeeded in after me.
Would you hasten the command of your Lord?
And he cast down the Tablets.
He took his brother by his head, pulling him to himself.
Aaron said: O son of my mother,
truly, the folk took advantage of my weakness
and are about to kill me.
So let not my enemies gloat over me
and assign me not with the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (7:150)
Moses said: Lord! Forgive me and my brother
and cause us to enter into ***Your*** *mercy*
for ***You*** *are One Who is Most Merciful*
of the ones who are merciful. (7:151)

Mercy Promised to Those Who Accept the Messenger

Makkah: *Those who took the calf to themselves*
attain anger from their Lord
and abasement in this present life.
And, thus, We give recompense to the ones who devise. (7:152)
But those who did evil deeds and repented
and, again, believed, truly, ***your*** *Lord, after that,*
will be Forgiving, Compassionate. (7:153)
And when the anger subsided in Moses, he took the Tablets.
There was guidance and mercy in their inscription for those,
they who have reverence for their Lord. (7:154)
And Moses chose of his folk seventy men for Our time appointed.
And when the quaking of the earth took them,
he said: Lord! If ***You*** *will,*
You *would cause them to perish and me before.*
Would ***You*** *cause us to perish*
for what the foolish among us accomplished?
It is not but ***Your*** *test.*
With it ***You*** *will cause to go astray*
whom ***You*** *will and* ***You*** *will guide whom* ***You*** *had willed.*

You are our protector, so forgive us and have mercy on us for You are Best of the ones who forgive. (7:155)

Commentary°

At this point, the final judgment is passed by the One who has the authority to give such a judgment. God's words follow directly on what the Quran relates of the words in the familiar Quranic fashion. (7:152-7:153)

In his absence, the people of Moses took to the worship of the effigy of a calf made of their ornaments, which gave a lowing sound. Did they not see that it could neither speak to them nor give them any guidance? Yet they took to worshipping it, for they were evildoers. (7:148-149)

That was typical of the nature of the Children of Jacob who could hardly move one step along the straight path before they deviated. They were hardly able to elevate themselves, in their beliefs and concepts, above what is physical and tangible. Even a short lull in exhortation and reminders could see them relapsing into ingratitude.

Eventually, the farce died down, the truth was clear to all, and it was plain to everyone how far into stupid error they had sunk. Error gave way to remorse. (7:149)

All this took place when Moses was with his Lord, addressing his appeal to Him. He was unaware of what his people had done in his absence. At this point, scene eleven is raised before our eyes. (7:150-7:151)

We see how terribly angry Moses was. Anger can be felt in both what he said and did, particularly seizing his brother by the head and dragging him. (7:150)

Those two signs serve as a pause in order to comment on the ultimate destiny of those who worshipped the calf inventing falsehood against God. They come in the middle of this scene, but then the chapter picks it up again. (7:154).

The Seventy Chosen Children of Jacob: The chapter then begins a new scene, in which we see Moses selecting seventy men from among his people. (7:155-157)

Reports differ as to the reason for this appointment. It may have been set so that they would declare their repentance and pray to God to forgive the Children of Jacob after they had sunk back into error and disbelief .They did just that until God told them to stop and accepted their penance. Those seventy men were the best among them. The way the choice is expressed in Arabic makes them stand out from the whole community of Children of Jacob.

Nevertheless, what happened to this choice group? They were seized by a violent trembling and dropped unconscious. The reason for this, as mentioned in another chapter, was that they asked Moses to show them God so that they would believe him and accept the law He has given them in the tablets.The most singular thing is that they should make such a request when they were supposed to declare their repentance and seek God's forgiveness.

Moses, on the other hand, turned to his Lord imploring Him to bestow His forgiveness and mercy, declaring his total submission to Him. (7:155) That is the mark of total submission to God's power. Moses makes sure to declare his own submission as he addresses his supplication to God to forgive his people, end their test and to spare them from destruction because of the deed perpetrated by some fools among them. (7:155)

Thus Moses declares his understanding of what was taking place, that it was all a trial. In every trial, God guides those who understand its nature and recognize it as a test. He also lets those who ignore it to go deeper into error. Moses reiterates his recognition as a prelude to an appeal to God for His help to enable him and his people to pass the trial successfully. (7:155)

We are returning to **You** in repentance. We seek **Your** protection and support. (7:156) We see here how the appeal for forgiveness and mercy by Moses was preceded by a declaration of full submission to God and recognition of the purpose of his trial. It is concluded with a declaration of a return to God to seek His protection. Thus, it serves as an example for supplication to be followed by every good servant of God, the glorious, the beneficent

Prophet Moses and the Twelve Springs of Water

Makkah: *And among the folk of Moses*
there is a community that guides
with The Truth and by it is just. (7:159)
And We sundered them into twelve tribes as communities.
And We revealed to Moses when his folk asked him for water:
*Strike the rock with **your** staff.*
Then, burst forth out of it twelve springs:
Surely, each clan knew its drinking place.
And We shaded them with cloud shadows.
We caused to descend manna and the quails for them.
Eat of what is good that We provided you!
And they did not wrong Us,
but they had been doing wrong to themselves. (7:160)
And mention when it was said to them:

Inhabit this town and eat from it wherever you willed.
Say: Unburden us of sin!
And enter the door as ones who prostrate themselves
We will forgive you your transgressions.
We will increase the ones who are doers of good. (7:161)
But among those who did wrong, they substituted a saying
other than what was said to them.
Then, We sent wrath from heaven
because they had been doing wrong. (7:162)

Commentary°

The chapter resumes its account of the certain aspects of the history of the Children of Jacob, picking it up after the violent trembling that seized the seventy people Moses had chosen for the appointment set by God. Moses was absorbed in a heartfelt supplication to his Lord to save them. We know from the accounts given in other chapter s that these seventy people were resurrected and returned to their folk, full of faith. The chapter picks up the thread of this story, but begins first by stating that not everyone among the Children of Jacob was in error. (7:159)

The chapter then resumes its account of the historical events. (7:160) These are aspects of God's care which continued to be extended to Moses and his people, even after they strayed away and worshipped the calf, then atoned for their error as God told them and He accepted their repentance. This also comes after they demanded to see God Himself and were stunned by the trembling, before God brought them back to life in answer to Moses's prayers. God's care is demonstrated here in organizing them into twelve communities, according to their ancestry. Each community traced their ancestry to one of the children of the Prophet Jacob, who was also known as Israel. They confirmed their allegiance on tribal lines. (7:160)

God's care is also manifest in assigning a spring to each community so that none of them would try to take what belonged to others. (7:160)

Another aspect of God's care was to send clouds to give them shade from the burning desert sun, and to bestow on them from on high manna, a kind of wild honey, and quails to provide them with food after their drink had been guaranteed. (7:160) A further aspect of God's care was the fact that all these good things were made lawful to them, as nothing had been forbidden them yet in punishment for their disobedience. (7:160)

God's care is manifest in all that, but the nature of the Children of Jacob continued to be rebellious, unwilling to keep to the path of

guidance, as clearly appears from the final comment of this sign which mentions all these blessings that gave them water out of the rock, shade in the burning desert sun and wholesome, delicious food. (7:160) Disobedience to God and straying away from His path were the manifestations of their wronging themselves. Such disobedience could cause God no harm, because God has no need of the Children of Jacob or anyone else. Indeed, His kingdom is not affected at all even if they and all creatures were to unite in total disobedience to Him. Nor is His kingdom increased in any way, if all creatures were to continue to obey Him without fail. People simply wrong themselves by disobedience to God and straying away from His path.

Moses Raised Up as a Messenger

Chapter 25: The 42nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We said: You both go to the folk who denied Our signs. Then, We destroyed them, an utter destruction.* (25:35) *Again, We raised up after them Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his Council with Our signs. Then, they grew arrogant, and they had been a folk, ones who sin.* (25:36)

Moses a Messenger and a Prophet

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Moses in the Book. Truly, he had been one who was devoted and he had been a Messenger, a Prophet.* (19:51) *And We proclaimed to him from the right edge of the mount and We brought him near privately.* (19:52) *And We bestowed on him out of Our mercy his brother Aaron, a Prophet.* (19:53)

Commentary°

The chapter moves on, speaking about the same branch of Abraham's seed and reminding us of Moses and Aaron. (19:51-19:53)

Moses is described here as one who was chosen for the task of dedication to God's call. He is identified as a Prophet who is entrusted with a Message that he must deliver to people. A Prophet is not given the same task. He is an advocate of faith that he receives from God directly. Among the Children of Jacob there were many Prophets who were given the task of advocating the message delivered by Moses and judging among people according to the Torah revealed to him by God. (5:44)

The grace granted to Moses is highlighted as he was called out

from the right side of Mount Sinai, that was the right side of Moses as he stood at that moment facing the Mount. He was drawn so close as to be spoken to in communion. We do not know how this communication took place, or how Moses understood it. Was it a voice heard by Moses through his ears in the normal way, or was it an address received by his whole being. Nor do we know how God prepared Moses to receive His own words. But we believe that all this took place. It is simply very easy for God to accomplish it, bringing His servant into communion with Him while at the same time retaining his humanity. We must not forget that the human being acquired his status with the breathing in of God's spirit into him.

Moses Commissioned with the Messengership

Chapter 20: The 45th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Has the conversation of Moses*
*approached **you**?* (20:9)
When he saw a fire, he said to his people:
Abide! Truly, I observed a fire so that perhaps
I will bring you some firebrand from it
or I find guidance at the fire. (20:10)
When he approached it, it was proclaimed: O Moses! (20:11)
*Truly, I—I am **your** Lord! So take off **your** shoes;*
*truly, **you** are one who is in the sanctified valley of Tuwa.* (20:12)
*And I chose **you** so listen to what is revealed:* (20:13)
Truly, I—I am God. There is no god but Me.
So worship Me and perform the formal prayer
of My Remembrance. (20:14)
Truly, the Hour is that which arrives.
I am about to conceal it so that every soul
is given recompense for what it endeavors. (20:15)
*So let none bar **you** from it—whoever believes not in it*
*and followed his own desires—so that **you** not survive.* (20:16)
*And what is that in **your** right hand ,O Moses?* (20:17)
Moses said: This is my staff. I lean on it,
and beat down leaves from a tree with it for my herd of sheep
and for me in it are other uses. (20:18)
He said: Cast it, O Moses! (20:19)
So he cast it. That is when it was a viper sliding. (20:20)
He said: Take it and fear not. We will cause it to return
to its first state. (20:21)
*And clasp **your** hand to **your** armpit.*
It will go forth shimmering white

without any evil as another sign (20:22)
*that We cause **you** to see of Our greater signs.* (20:23)
*Go **you** to Pharaoh! Truly, he was defiant.* (20:24)

The Messengership of Moses

Makkah: *Moses said: My Lord!* (20:25)
Expand my breast for me
*and make **You** my affair easy for me* (20:26)
and untie the knot from my tongue (20:27)
so they understand my saying (20:28)
and assign to me a minister from my people— (20:29)
—Aaron, my brother. (20:30)
Strengthen my vigor with him (20:31)
and ascribe him as a partner in my affair (20:32)
*that we glorify **You** much* (20:33)
*and we remember **You** frequently.* (20:34)
*Truly, **You**, **You** alone had been seeing of us.* (20:35)
*He said: Surely, **you** were given **your** petition, O Moses!* (20:36)

Commentary°

Here, the [signs] demonstrate how God's power intervened right from the outset, but the ultimate victory was only achieved when faith was clearly uppermost in the hearts of those who believed, and when they openly declared the word of truth in the face of ruthless tyranny

At the beginning of the chapter, the Prophet is asked a rhetorical question about whether or not he had heard of Moses' history and how it reflects God's grace and the guidance He provides for those whom He chooses as His Messengers. The signs (20:1-20:24) tell the story of Moses when he leaves Midian to return to Egypt.

Here we see Moses on the road between Midian and Egypt, close to Mount Sinai, returning with his wife after he had completed the term he had agreed with the Prophet Jethro. This agreement meant that Jethro would give him one of his two daughters in marriage in return for eight or ten years during which he would be his assistant. He most probably spent ten years before he felt that he could leave with his wife to return to the country where he grew up. There the Children of Jacob, Moses' people, lived in subjugation.

Why is he returning to Egypt having fled there after killing an Egyptian whom he found quarrelling with one of the Children of Jacob? He had after all found safe refuge with Jethro, his father-in-law. So why would he leave that place of security and return to Egypt? Here we see human homesickness as the tool used by God to

bring Moses to the place where he was to play an important role. Thus is life. We are motivated by feelings, passions, aspirations, hopes and memories, but all these are merely the outward causes of the desired result. They are what we see on the surface, but below them is the will that no sight can see. It is God's will, and He is the Almighty who accomplishes everything He wants.

Thus we see Moses on his way back to Egypt, losing his way in the desert, accompanied only by his wife, and perhaps a servant. He loses his way in the darkness of the night in the open desert. We sense this from the way he says to his companions. (2:10) People living in the desert normally lit their fires on high ground so that those traveling at night could see it, find their way or come over to it where they would find a welcome and hospitality, as well as directions to continue their journey.

Moses saw the fire as he was walking through the desert and he was warmed by hope. He moved towards it in order to fetch a firebrand, as night in the desert is normally cold. He also felt he might find some guidance as to which direction to travel in. He went there to bring back a torch, but was in for a great surprise. For he found the fire that warms souls and spirits, and provides guidance for the greatest journey of all. (20:11-20:16)

This is an awe-inspiring scene. We shudder as we imagine Moses alone in the open desert, engulfed in the complete darkness and silence of the night, making his way towards the fire by the side of the mountain. Then suddenly, the whole universe echoes the great address. (20:12-20:13)

When this announcement of God's honor, reflected in God's selection of Moses as His Messenger is made, he is asked to prepare for what is coming by taking off his sandals. Then he is told to be ready to learn. (20:13)

This was an address to which the whole universe responded. In it, God gave His chosen Messenger the fundamental truth of His Oneness. Moses must have forgotten all about himself and the purpose for which he aimed towards the fire. He was now only following this voice coming to him from on high. He was attentive to the divine instructions being given to him. As he is so absorbed, with his mind and soul fully attentive to it, he is asked a question that requires no answer from him: Now, what is this in your right hand, Moses? (20:17)

Of course Moses had his staff in his hand, but where was his mind at that moment? Well, he remembers and gives his reply. (20:18) The question did not ask about the uses he had for his staff, but rather about the object he was holding

The omnipotent power, however, does with his staff what he could have never imagined. This comes as part of his preparation for his task. (20:19-20:21)

Thus he saw in front of his eyes the great miracle that occurs every moment while people remain oblivious to it. That is the miracle of life: the staff became a rapidly moving snake

The miracle of life took place, and Moses was full of amazement, with fear tearing at his heart. But the command was given. (20:21)

Thus Moses was reassured, he picked up the snake and it was a staff again, regaining its original shape and form

Another command was issued to Moses from on high. (20:22) Moses did as he was told. It should be noted that the Quran uses a different expression to denote the position where Moses was to put his hand, his armpit. It is described as his 'wing' that gives an air of freedom of movement and freedom from the earth's gravity. Thus his hand came out shining white, but its whiteness indicates no illness or malignancy. This is indeed another sign to be added to that of his staff. He is thus made to see some of the great miracles God works out. (20:23) When he has seen these with his own eyes, he will be reassured and able to carry out his great task with greater determination.

Moses Had Killed a Soul

Makkah: *and **you** have killed a soul,*
*but We delivered **you** from lament*
*and We tried **you** with an ordeal.*
*Then,**you** had lingered in expectation years*
among the people of Midian.
*Again, **you** had drawn near*
according to a measure, O Moses! (20:40)
*And I chose **you** for service for Myself.* (20:41)
*Go **you** and **your** brother with My signs*
and you both not be inattentive in My Remembrance. (20:42)
So go both of you to Pharaoh.
Truly, he had become defiant. (20:43)
And both say to him a saying gently,
so that perhaps he will recollect or dread. (20:44)
They both said: Our Lord! Truly, we fear
that he should exceed against us or that he be defiant. (20:45)
He said: Fear not. Truly, I am with both of you.
I hear and I see. (20:46)
So approach you both to him and say:

*Truly, we are Messengers of **your** Lord.*
So send the Children of Jacob with us and punish them not.
*Surely, we drew near **you** with a sign from **your** Lord.*
And peace be to him who followed the guidance. (20:47)
Surely, it was revealed to us
that the punishment is on him who denied
and turned away. (20:48)
He said: Then, who is the Lord of you two, O Moses? (20:49)
So approach you both to him and say:
*Truly, we are Messengers of **your** Lord.*
He said: Our Lord is He Who gave everything its creation;
again, He guided it. (20:50)
Pharaoh said: Then, what of the first generations? (20:51)
Moses said: The knowledge of them is with my Lord in a Book.
My Lord neither goes astray nor forgets. (20:52)
He it is Who assigned for you the earth as a cradle
and threaded ways for you in it
and caused water to descend from heaven.
And We brought out from it diverse pairs of plants: (20:53)
Eat and give attention to your flocks.
Truly, in this are signs for the people imbued with sense. (20:54)

Commentary°

The next favor Moses is reminded of is his escape after having killed a man. (20:40-41) The killing of this man took place some time during Moses' early adult years, having grown up in Pharaoh's palace. He had gone to the market one day and found two people quarreling, one a Child of Jacob the other an Egyptian. The Child of Jacob appealed to him for help, and Moses pushed the Egyptian, but rather too strongly for the latter fell and was killed. Moses did not intend to kill the man, but simply to push him away. When he saw him dead, he was full of grief. It is good to remember here that Moses was brought up under God's own care, right from his early childhood. Therefore, it was only natural that he was filled with remorse, blaming himself for over-reacting. God reminds him here of His favor, as He directed him to seek forgiveness, which alleviated his sorrow.

However, God did not let him simply get away with this without a lesson to learn and benefit from in his future task. Therefore, He set him the test of fearing the consequences of his offense and his subsequent attempt to escape punishment. The test took then another form, forcing him to flee the land where he was born and brought up, departing alone without friend or companion. Moreover, having been brought up in the palace of the greatest ruler of the time, en-

joying every comfort and luxury, he now had to earn a living. Thus, he had to serve others, and work as a shepherd.

At the appointed time, when he attained maturity, after passing the tests to which God subjected him, and when circumstances in Egypt were most suited, with the Children of Jacob subjected to much oppression, Moses was brought in from Midian. He might have thought that he had chosen to travel at that time himself, but the fact of the matter was that stated in the Quranic sign. (20:40) So his return was at a time God had determined as most suitable. (20:41) Thus, Moses was trained and prepared so as to be completely devoted to God's message and to serving His cause. He was purged of all the temptations of this worldly life, so as to be purely dedicated to the task God appointed for him. All that had passed in his life was part of his training to fulfil the mission that was about to be entrusted to him. Here God tells him that neither himself, nor his family, nor anyone else had any claim on his time or services. He was chosen by God for whatever God wanted him to do.

What Moses' statement signifies is that he was not worried about being rejected by Pharaoh and his people; rather, what worried him was that this should happen at a time when he felt ill at ease and when his tongue lacked fluent argument. He suffered from a speech impediment, which he prayed to God to remove it. (20:25-20:28)

Should this difficulty occur while one is speaking, it makes the speaker ill at ease, which in turn makes the impediment worse. Thus, the person suffering from it feels unable to express himself. This becomes a vicious circle and anger inevitably sets in. Therefore, Moses feared that he might suffer this problem when he confronted a despotic tyrant like Pharaoh with God's message. He complains to God of his own weakness, and expresses his fears in respect of delivering his Lord's message. The point of his request is that God include his brother Aaron in carrying out this task. This request does not express any reluctance on Moses' part to carry out God's orders, but reflects his fear of falling short of the task. Aaron is more eloquent, which means that he has an easier temperament. Thus, should Moses suffer a block as he speaks, or should he feel straitened in heart, Aaron could then step in to provide the proper argument. Although Moses prays that God remove his speech impediment, he also requests that Aaron be assigned to help him in the delivery of the divine message.

Thus, God Almighty who has power over all creatures and who creates the universe and all creatures in it, using nothing more than His will to bring them into existence, tells them that He is with them. This should have been sufficient, but God adds to this what increases

their certainty of help. This is evidenced by the fact that He hears all and sees all. What could Pharaoh do against the power of the Almighty, whether in a precipitate reaction or a well considered one?

Coupled with this reassurance Moses and Aaron are given guidance in the form of address they should make to Pharaoh and on how to argue their case. (20:47-20:48)

Thus they should start by stating the foundation of their message. (20:47) This would give him right from the first moment the understanding that it is God who is his and all people's Lord. He is not the Lord of Moses and Aaron, or the Children of Jacob alone. It was a superstition of the days of pagan ignorance that each group of people, or each tribe, had its own deity or deities. Moreover, it was commonly held during some periods of history that Pharaoh was a deity, of godly descent, and as such, he was to be worshipped.

When the basic element of their message was thus outlined, Moses and Aaron explained their immediate concern. (20:47) This was the limit of their message to Pharaoh, to save the Children of Jacob and bring them back to their monotheistic faith. They would then lead them to the blessed land that God had assigned to them for settlement

They further showed Pharaoh a sign to prove that they were telling the truth when they said that they were Messengers from his Lord. (20:47) They follow this with an element of encouragement, hoping that he might respond. (20:47) It might be that when he had listened to this that he would respond to the greeting of peace and accept God's guidance.

They then add an element of implicit warning, in order not to stir his arrogance and hostility. (20:48) It might be that he would decide not to include himself among those who deny the truth and turn away from it.

The chapter paints a vivid picture of the dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh, starting with this question and answer. (20:49-20:50) It is clear that Pharaoh does not wish to acknowledge God's Lordship, which the two Prophets had made clear to him saying they were the Messengers of **your** Lord. Pharaoh realized that Moses was the main advocate of the message. Therefore, he puts his question to him. (20:49) In whose name are you addressing me to demand the release of the Children of Jacob?

Moses replies emphasizing God's attributes of creation, initiation and providing guidance and balance. (20:50)

Here Pharaoh puts another question. (20:51) Where have all those past generations gone? Who was their Lord? What happened to them since they died unaware of the Lord Moses spoke about?

(20:52) Thus Moses refers all this unknown matter to his Lord whose knowledge is perfect, encompassing every single detail of every little creature, and who never forgets anything. It is He alone who knows about all those generations, their past and future. The realm that lies beyond the reach of human perception belongs totally to God, who alone determines the eventual outcome of humanity and their life.

Moses continues to draw Pharaoh's attention to some of the results of God's action in the universe and how these results affect human life. He selects results which could be seen close by, and which were well-known in Egypt with its rich soil, abundant water, and plentiful crops and cattle. (20:53-20:54)

Moses and Pharaoh Dialogue

Makkah: *We created you from it (earth)*
and into it We will cause you to return
and from it We will bring you out another time. (20:55)
And, certainly, We caused Pharaoh to see Our signs—
all of them—but he denied and refused. (20:56)
*He said: Have **you** drawn near us*
*to drive us out of our region with **your** sorcery, O Moses?* (20:57)
*Then, truly, we will bring for **you** sorcery like it.*
*So make something that is promised between us and **you***
*—neither we nor **you** will break it—*
at a mutually agreeable place. (20:58)
Moses said: That promised will be for the Day of Adornment
and let humanity be assembled in the forenoon. (20:59)
So Pharaoh turned away.
Then, he gathered his cunning. After that he approached. (20:60)
Moses said to them: Woe to you!
Devise you not a lie against God
so that He put an end to you with a punishment.
And, surely, he who devised will be frustrated. (20:61)
So they contended between each other about their affair
and they kept secret, conspiring secretly. (20:62)
They said: Truly, these two are the ones who are sorcerers
who want to drive you out
from your region with their sorcery
and take away your most ideal behavior. (20:63)
So summon up your cunning. Again, approach ranged in rows.
And, truly, he who prospered this day is
whoever gained the upper hand. (20:64)
*They said: O Moses! Either **you** will cast or let us*
be the first to cast. (20:65)

He said: Nay! You cast. That is when their ropes and their staffs
seem to him to be,
by their sorcery, as though they are sliding. (20:66)
So Moses sensed awe in himself. (20:67)
*We said: Fear not! Truly, **you**, **you** are lofty! (20:68)*
*And cast what is in **your** right hand.*
It will swallow what they crafted. What they crafted
is not but the cunning of one who is a sorcerer.
And the one who is a sorcerer will not prosper
in whatever he approached. (20:69)
Then, the ones who are sorcerers were cast down,
ones who prostrate themselves.
They said: We believed in the Lord of Aaron and Moses. (20:70)
Pharaoh said: Believed you in Him before I give you permission?
Truly, he is your teacher who taught you the sorcery.
So, certainly, I will cut off your hands
and your feet on opposite sides
and, certainly, I will cause you to be crucified
on the trunks of date palm trees,
and, certainly, you will know which of us
is more severe in punishment and one who endures. (20:71)
*They said: We will never hold **you** in greater favor*
over the clear portents that drew near us
nor over Who originated us.
*So decide whatever **you** will as one who decides.*
***You** will decide not but about this present life.* (20:72)
For us, truly, we believed in our Lord
that He forgive us our transgressions
*and what **you** had compelled us to do because of the sorcery.*
And God is Best of one who endures. (20:73)
Truly, whoever approaches his Lord as one who sins,
then, truly, for him is hell.
Neither will he die in it nor will he live. (20:74)
And whoever approaches Him as one who believes,
who, surely, did as the one in accord with morality,
then, for those, they are of lofty degrees, (20:75)
Gardens of Eden, beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in them forever.
And that is the recompense of whoever purified himself. (20:76)

Commentary°

The chapter continues the reporting of what Moses said, but uses the form of a direct address by God Himself. (20:55-20:56) It is from

this earth, made as a cradle for humanity, and which supports the diverse cultivation of plants for food and grazing, that humanity are created, and to it they shall return and then from it again they are resurrected after death.

The human being is certainly created from the same substance as this earth. All the components of his body are largely the same as the components of the earth. Furthermore, he eats of its produce, drinks its waters, breathes its air, and benefits from it as his cradle. Then, he goes back to it a dead corpse, when his remains become part of its soil and atmosphere. From the earth he is resurrected for a second life, just as he was created for the life of this world

Therefore Moses and Aaron demanded the release of the Children of Jacob. (20:47) His reply to their request was indicative of his fears. (20:57) To Pharaoh, such a release was a step towards ousting him from government.

According to Pharaoh's thinking, Moses made this demand for the release of the Children of Jacob for no other reason, and the only thing he was prepared to put forward in support of his demand was an act of sorcery. It was easy, therefore, to reply to him in kind. (20:58)

With such thinking and motivation, Pharaoh asks Moses to set an appointment which neither shall fail to keep. (20:58) He only asks for the match to be in an open area for the challenge to be seen. (20:58)

Moses accepts Pharaoh's challenge and sets the appointment for a festival day when the people are in the mood to celebrate, gathering in the main squares and open areas. (20:59) Thus he sets the best time when everything is at its clearest and people will be out and about in numbers

In this short sign(20:60) the chapter sums up all that Pharaoh said, the advice he was given by the powerful elite among his government, the discussion with the sorcerers and his encouragement and promises of rich reward to them, as well as the schemes he and his advisers finally plotted. Indeed, this short sign, comprising only six words in the Arabic text, shows three successive movements: first, Pharaoh's withdrawal into his own quarters; second, mapping out his strategy; and third, turning up for the confrontation.

Pharaoh simply stopped arguing. He realized that Moses had the stronger case, supported by the clearest proof, namely, God's signs seen everywhere in the universe, as well as his own two special signs. Therefore, he resorted to an old ploy, often used by tyrants and opponents of God's messages. He pointed an accusing finger at Moses, describing him as a sorcerer, claiming that it was through sorcery

that Moses turned the staff into a snake and made his hand look shining white, without blemish. Magic was the thought presenting itself immediately to Pharaoh, because it was widely practiced in Egypt. The two signs given to Moses seemed, on the surface, similar to magic, which is no more than the deception of the senses that could sometimes lead to false feelings so as to produce tangible effects. Thus, under the influence of magic, a person may see things that are not present, or he may see them in a form other than their own. At times a person who is under a magical spell may be physically and psychologically affected, as though the spell has had its effect on him in reality. But Moses' signs were not of this sort. They were signs given to him by God, the Creator of all things, the One who can bring about both temporary and permanent transformations.

Before the confrontation began, Moses felt that he should give the sorcerers some honest and sincere advice. Thus, he warned them against attributing false fabrications to God. So doing, he hoped that they would accept God's guidance and abandon sorcery, which is blatant falsehood. (20:61)

A sincere piece of advice can touch the hearts of those it addresses. This might have been the case here, for some of the sorcerers were touched by Moses' words and began to have second thoughts. Those who were keen to go through with the showdown however began to argue with them in whispers, fearing that Moses would overhear them. (20:62)

The more hardened of them tried to encourage those who were reluctant, and warned them against a gloomy future under Moses and Aaron. They described the two Prophets as being driven by a desire for power, hoping to rule Egypt and change the faith of its people. To forestall their schemes, they needed to demonstrate their unity and confront them as one body, without hesitation. It was a day of outright and decisive confrontation, and the winner would take all.

One sincere word motivated by faith falls like a powerful explosive in the camp of falsehood. It shakes the hearts of the ungrateful and weakens their ranks. They are no longer sure of their own ability, and they entertain doubts about their own beliefs. Therefore, the doubters needed such encouragement. They were reminded that Moses and Aaron were merely two men, against a much larger group of sorcerers, backed by Pharaoh, his kingdom, wealth and army. They forgot however that Moses and Aaron were supported by God who hears and sees all.

After all this, they came forward, giving Moses the choice. (20:65) This is a challenge aiming to show a united, powerful front and a commendable degree of fairness. Hence, his answer was to ac-

cept the challenge. (20:66) He allowed them to start and produce whatever they wanted so that he could have the final say. And what was the result? They apparently produced a magnificent piece of magic, taking the whole multitude by surprise and even affecting Moses.

The Quranic expression (20:66-20:67) suggests a truly mighty magic, which filled the whole arena. Moses felt fear creep into his heart, even though God was with him hearing and seeing everything as it took place. Needless to say, Moses would not have entertained any fear unless the whole thing was so awesome that for a moment he became oblivious to the fact that he was much stronger. Therefore, he needed reminding that he relied on a much superior power: (20:68-69)

Then Moses threw down his staff. The chapter describes the magnitude of the surprise that then occurred by mentioning how it affected the sorcerers who had come full of hope to win the challenge. Only a few moments earlier, their sorcery, which was of the highest standard, had generated fear among all the spectators, including Moses himself. He, a Messenger of God, thought that their ropes and staffs turned into snakes, alive and moving rapidly.

Now the surprise Moses produced completely transformed their feelings and thoughts. So much so that words could not express their reaction. (20:70) That was like a touch on a very raw nerve, and the whole body is shaken violently. It was like a light being switched on to dispel all darkness. Such power is felt by reawakened hearts, filling them, in a split second, with unshakeable faith

But it was too late for Pharaoh. Faith had touched the hearts of those sorcerers and the small, insignificant person within each of them was now in firm contact with the great source of real power. Therefore, they were now very strong, while all earthly powers were weak. Indeed the whole life on earth is too small when compared to the broad, bright horizons to which those believing hearts now looked up. All that pertains to life on earth is of no consequence. (20:72-20:73)

This is the sort of change faith brings about in the hearts of people who, until a moment earlier, were submissive to Pharaoh, considering their highest achievement to be close to him, receiving his favors. Now they are ready to confront him with a determination that puts his power, throne and wealth in proper perspective. (20:72) Such evidence is much more precious in our view, and God, our Creator, is far dearer to us than anything else. (20:72) This is a challenge to Pharaoh to do his worst. He cannot stop them. (20:72)

These new believers take no notice of a despot's threats, and in-

stead stand up to him with the powerful words of faith. They are profoundly confident, issue a warning based on faith and express their hopes based on a newly-found faith.

The Children of Jacob Follow Moses

Makkah: *And, certainly, We revealed to Moses*
*that set **you** forth with My servants.*
Then, strike for them a dry road in the sea,
neither fearing to be overtaken, nor dreading that. (20:77)
Then, Pharaoh and his army pursued them.
Then, overcame them the water of the sea
by what overcame. (20:78)
And Pharaoh caused his folk to go astray
and he guided them not. (20:79)
O Children of Jacob ! Surely, We rescued you from your enemy
and We appointed someone with you
on the right edge of the mount
and We sent down to you the manna and the quails. (20:80)
Eat from what is good that We provided you,
and be not defiant in it so that My anger not alight on you.
And he on whom My anger alights
surely, will be hurled to ruin. (20:81)
And, truly, I am a Forgiver of whoever repented and believed
and did as one in accord with morality.
Again, he was truly guided. (20:82)
*And what caused **you** to hasten from **your** folk, O Moses?* (20:83)
Moses said: They are those who are close on my footsteps
*and I hastened to **You**, my Lord that I please **you.*** (20:84)
*He said: Then, truly, We tried **your** folk after **you** and the Samaritan caused them to go astray.* (20:85)
Then, Moses returned to his folk enraged, grieved.
He said: O my folk! Promise you
not with your Lord a fairer promise?
Was the compact too long for you to wait?
Or wanted you that the anger of your Lord alight on you,
so you broke what you were to have promised me? (20:86)
*They said: We broke not what was promised to **you***
from what is within our power;
but we were charged with a heavy load
of the adornments of the folk.
Surely, we hurled them because the Samaritan cast. (20:87)
Then, he brought out for them a calf, a lifeless body
that had the lowing sound of flocks.

Then, they said: This is your god and the God of Moses whom he forgot. (20:88)
Then, see they not that it returns not to them a saying and it possesses for them neither hurt nor profit? (20:89)

Commentary°

All we have here is the inspiration given to Moses to depart from Egypt at night with the Children of Jacob, and to strike out for them a dry path across the sea. We see Moses with complete reassurance as he and his followers receive God's care. Thus, he has no fear of his people being overtaken by Pharaoh or of being overwhelmed by the parted sea. God's will which made the sea such a great volume of water with all its characteristics is able to part it for a while to give those believers a dry path through so as to continue their journey

They have passed the danger zone (20:80-20:82) and have surged on towards Mount Sinai, leaving Pharaoh and his army drowned. Their deliverance was a recent event which they remember well, but it is recorded here as a reminder, so that they may give thanks.

The appointment at the right hand side of Mount Sinai is mentioned here as though it is an accomplished event, when it was a meeting for which Moses had to prepare himself for over a period of forty nights. He would then receive the tablets and the laws recorded therein. This was a law to regulate the lives of the people entrusted with a mission in Palestine after their departure from Egypt.

The fact that they were given manna, a sweet type of food that gathers on leaves, and quails, a type of bird that is easy to catch and eat, was another aspect of God's grace, of His taking care of them in the barren desert where they found themselves. God was looking after them, even to the point of providing them with their daily food, and in such a way that required no hard effort.

God reminds them of all these favors and warns them against transgression, in the form of indulgence in physical pleasure and neglect of the duties they left Egypt to fulfill. God is preparing for them an assignment which they must undertake. The Arabic word used here for transgression is the same word that signifies the tyranny they experienced in their very recent past. Therefore, they are warned. (20:81) Pharaoh had thrown himself into such ruin only recently, falling off his throne and drowning in the sea. To experience such ruin is to fall from high, which contrasts with tyranny that exalts the tyrant and assumes for him a high position of power. The Quran here juxtaposes such contrasting elements in word and meaning to achieve both heightened effect and perfect harmony.

With this warning against indulgence in easy pleasures and neglect of the task assigned for them, the door for repentance is left open for anyone who slips so that he may return to the proper path. (20:82)

Thus ends the scene of victory and the comments the chapter has to make on it. The curtains fall and lift again to show us the second scene of an address made directly to God by the side of Mount Sinai.

God has appointed a time for Moses to meet Him at the Mount after forty days, when he would be given the commandments outlining the tasks his people have to fulfil after the victory they were given. Victory carries with it its own responsibilities, as does faith. Therefore, it was necessary for Moses to be psychologically prepared and ready to receive God's commandments.

Thus, Moses went up the Mount, leaving his people at the bottom, after asking his brother Aaron to deputize for him. Moses longed dearly for this encounter, when he would stand in front of his Lord and address Him. He had had this experience once before and was keen to experience it again. Therefore, he made haste to stand in the presence of his Lord. He was however totally unaware of what his people had perpetrated after he had left.

His Lord tells him the news, pointing out what has taken place. The scene is shown to us and we listen to the conversation. (20:83-20:85)

Thus Moses is faced with a terrible shock. He was in haste to meet his Lord, after forty days of diligent preparation, eager to listen to His directives and commandments that would constitute the basis of the new way of life for the Children of Jacob. It was to be a way of life suited for a community that had been freed from the shackles of subjugation so that it would become the bearer of a divine message.

The long period they had spent in subjugation and humiliation under Pharaoh's rule and his idolatrous beliefs had had a damaging effect on the nature of the Children of Jacob. Their ability to withstand the difficulties that attend the fulfilment of a hard task, and to remain true to their promises in the face of hardship, was certainly suspect. Psychologically, they suffered an impairment that made them always keen to have a comfortable life, even if this meant a willingness to be led without troubling to think. No sooner did Moses leave them under Aaron's stewardship than they allowed their faith to collapse at the first hurdle. Hence, they needed repeated tests and trials in a process of psychological rebuilding. The first test to which they were subjected was that of the golden calf that the Samaritan had produced. (20:85) Moses did not know about this test until his

appointment with his Lord.

Thus Moses returned to his people full of wrath and sorrow. (20:86-20:91)

Such was the trial to which the Children of Jacob were put. It is revealed to us as Moses confronts his people. It is not reported in the scene of the meeting between Moses and his Lord. It is left to the scene of inquiry undertaken by Moses upon his return.

Enraged and full of sorrow, Moses asked his people. (20:86) God had promised them victory and to enter the Holy Land as a community believing in His Oneness. Only very recently had they witnessed the initial steps towards the complete fulfilment of this promise. Hence, he remonstrated with them. (20:86) Their action was akin to that perpetrated by one who wants to bring God's condemnation on his head, so he wilfully and deliberately does what incurs it. Moses asked them if this was why they broke their promise to him to maintain the path he had shown them until his return.

They gave him a singular excuse that exposed the effects on their mentality of their long time living in subservience. It is a ludicrous excuse. (20:87)

Again, Moses had not been gone long for the appointment with his Lord to receive the tablets when the Samaritan led them astray as he produced for them the effigy of a calf which made a lowing sound. (20: 88)

The Children of Jacob Deceived by the Samarian

Makkah: *And, certainly, Aaron said to them before:*
O my folk! You were only tempted by it.
And, truly, your Lord is The Merciful.
So follow me and obey my command. (20:90)
They said: We will never quit it as ones who give ourselves up
until Moses returns to us. (20:91)
He said: O Aaron! What prevented ***you***
when ***you*** *had seen them going astray* (20:92)
that ***you*** *have followed me not?*
Have ***you****, then, rebelled against my command?* (20:93)
Aaron said: O son of my mother!
Take me not by my beard nor by my head.
Truly, I dreaded that ***you*** *have said:*
You *had separated and divided between the Children of Jacob*
and ***you*** *have not regarded my saying.* (20:94)
Moses said: Then, what is ***your*** *business O Samaritan?* (20:95)
He said: I kept watch over what they keep not watch,
so I seized a handful of dust from the foot prints

of the Messenger and cast it forth.
And thus my soul enticed me. (20:96)
Moses said: Then go off! Truly for you in this life
is that you may say: Untouchable;
there is for you something promised that you shall never break;
and look on your god that you have stayed with
and given yourself up to;
certainly we will burn it. After that we will certainly scatter it
in the water of the sea in a scattering. (20:97)

Commentary°

Moreover, Aaron, their other Prophet who deputized for his brother Moses, their savior, had given them honest and sincere advice, pointing out to them that it was all a test. (20:90) He assured them that the proper course for them to take was to follow him as they had promised Moses. He told them that Moses was certain to return when his Lord had finished His business with him. Rather than follow his advice, they evaded their responsibility and abandoned their commitment to obey their Prophets. (20:91)

Thus Moses returned, sorrowful and angry. He listened to his people's excuses that revealed the extent of their twisted logic. In his anger, he turned to his brother dragging him by his head and beard, crying in his anger. (20:92-20:93) He scolded him for allowing them to worship the calf without taking effective action to prevent them. But Aaron was merely obeying his brother's orders when he had told him not to do anything serious until he returned. Did Aaron, then, disobey his brother by doing so?

The chapter has already stated Aaron's attitude. Now he explains to his brother what he did, trying to calm his fury and awaken his compassion. He reminds him of their close relationship. (20:94)

Here we find Aaron to be far more in control of his emotions. He touches on a tender point in Moses' feelings, reminding him of their being siblings. He also explains to him that he simply wished to do what his brother had bid him. He feared that should he adopt strong measures the Children of Jacob might split into factions, some worshipping the calf, and others following his advice. Since his brother wanted him to take care of them all, keeping them together, he felt that his attitude was simply one of following the orders he had been given.

Now Moses addresses all his anger to the Samaritan, the perpetrator of the whole trouble. He did not speak to him first because the people themselves should have known better than to follow someone who came up with an outrageous idea. Aaron, as their trusted leader,

was also responsible for making sure that they did not slip, should they be faced with temptation. The Samaritan takes less importance, since he did not use brute force to compel them to follow his lead, nor did he cast a screen over their faculties of thinking. He simply presented a temptation and they fell for it. They could very easily have remained true to the guidance of their first Prophet, Moses, and benefited by the counsel of their second Prophet, Aaron. Hence, responsibility lay with them in the first place, then with their leader, and finally with the perpetrator of the trouble.

(20:95) How come all this has happened because of you? The way the question is phrased is indicative of the seriousness of the whole affair. (20:96)

Be that as it may, Moses punished the Samaritan by expelling him for life from the their community, leaving his destiny in the hereafter to God Almighty. He further took a strong and effective measure concerning the deity he had made with his own hands, aiming to show his people that it was an inanimate object, unable to protect its maker or to save itself. (20:97)

Thus the Samaritan was ostracized: no one could go near him either to harm or benefit him. Nor was he allowed to touch anyone either. This was one of the penalties prescribed in Moses' faith: expelling the offender and ostracizing him to the extent that no one went near him. The other aspect is that of God's punishment at His own time.

Still angry and furious, Moses ordered the calf to be burnt, cast away and its ashes thrown in the sea. Such a strong action seems to be a characteristic of Moses. In this instance, however, his anger is in defense of God's faith. In such a situation, strong action is commendable.

With the false deity being burnt and blown away, Moses declared the basic principle of true faith. (20:98)

With this declaration we come to the end of the story of Moses as related in this chapter. The overriding tone here is that of the grace God bestows on His servants, His care and forgiveness, even when they err.

Moses and Aaron Sent To Pharaoh

Chapter 26: The 47th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And when your Lord proclaimed*
to Moses saying that:
Approach the unjust folk, (26:10)
a folk of Pharaoh saying:
Will they not be God-conscious? (26:11)

He said: My Lord! Truly, I fear that they will deny me (26:12)
and my breast be narrowed and my tongue will not be
loosened. So send for Aaron. (26:13)
And they charge an impiety against me.
I fear that they will kill me. (26:14)
He said: No indeed! Both of you go with Our signs.
Truly, We will be with you, ones who are listening. (26:15)
And both of you approach Pharaoh and say:
We are the Messengers of the Lord of the worlds, (26:16)
so send the Children of Jacob with us. (26:17)
*Pharaoh said: Raise not we **you** up among us as a child?*
*Had **you** not lingered in expectation with us*
*for many years of **your** lifetime?* (26:18)
*And **you** had accomplished **your** accomplishment*
*that **you** had accomplished and **you** are*
among the ones who are ungrateful. (26:19)
Moses said: I accomplished it
when I was of the ones who go astray. (26:20)
So I ran away from you when I feared you.
Then, my Lord bestowed on me critical judgment
and made me among the ones who are sent. (26:21)
*Beyond this past favor with which **you** have*
*reproached me, **you** had enslaved the Children of Jacob.* (26:22)
Pharaoh said: And what is the Lord of the worlds? (26:23)
Moses said: The Lord of the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between the two of them
if you had been ones who are certain. (26:24)
Pharaoh said to whoever was around him:
Listen you not? (26:25)
Moses said: Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers,
the ancient ones. (26:26)
Pharaoh said: Truly, your Messenger
who was sent to you is one who is possessed! (26:27)
Moses said: The Lord of the East and the West
and whatever is between the two of them
if you had been reasonable! (26:28)
*Pharaoh said: If **you** had taken to **yourself** a god other than me.*
*I will, certainly, assign **you** to be imprisoned!* (26:29)
*Moses said: What if I drew near **you***
with something that makes it clear? (26:30)
*Pharaoh said: Bring it, if **you** have been*
among the ones who are sincere. (26:31)
So he cast his staff; that is when it was a clear serpent. (26:32)

And he drew out his hand and that is when it was shimmering white to the ones who look. (26:33)

Commentary°

These two [signs] (26:10-26:11) paint the first scene which shows Moses being given his message. It begins by exposing the people he must go to, declaring that they are 'wrongdoing'. They do themselves a great wrong by denying God's message, and they do much wrong to the Children of Jacob, killing their men but sparing their women and inflicting much torture on them. Therefore, the chapter describes them as wrongdoing before it specifies who they are. It then calls on Moses and all people to wonder at them: Will they have no fear of God? Will they continue to be heedless of the likely outcome of their wrongdoing? Will they not mend their erring ways? Theirs is certainly a singular situation.

(26:14) Again, Moses does not express any fear in confronting Pharaoh with the call to believe in God, nor does he seek to abandon the mission assigned to him; rather, this is all given as an added reason for the need to include Aaron. Should Pharaoh kill Moses, Aaron would be able to carry on the mission and complete the task. Thus, we should read Moses' prayer as a precaution aiming to ensure that the divine message was properly and fully delivered. It is exactly the kind of attitude that can be expected from a Messenger like Moses whom God had chosen and reared under His own watchful eye

Moses and Aaron are told to clearly outline to Pharaoh their assigned mission, fearing nothing and hiding nothing. (26:16)

As Messengers from the Lord of the universe, they make their demands clear: We are Messengers from the Lord of all the worlds. Let the Children of Jacob go with us. (26:16-26:17)

Pharaoh is amazed as Moses makes his unexpected claim to be a Messenger from God, the Lord of the universe. He is further amazed as Moses demands that he free the Children of Jacob. The last thing he knew of Moses was that he was brought up in his palace after being found as a newborn child floating in a basket on the Nile. As a young man he had killed an Egyptian who was involved in a fight with a Child of Jacob and ran away. It is said that the Egyptian he killed belonged to Pharaoh's entourage. This means that there was a huge gap between Moses' status at that time and his new claims which he puts before Pharaoh just a mere ten years later. Hence,

Pharaoh is sarcastic, asking in an affected air of surprise: Did we not bring you up when you were an infant? And did you not stay with us many years of your life? Yet you have done that deed of yours while being an unbeliever. (26:18-26:19) Is this how you repay our

kindness as we looked after you when you were a young child? Is it fair that you come today professing a religion other than ours, rebelling against the authority of the king who brought you up in his palace, and calling on people to abandon his worship?

How come that during all those years you stayed with us you did not mention anything of the wild claims you are now making, giving us no prelude to what was to come? Pharaoh then reminds Moses of the incident leading to the killing of the Egyptian, giving it an air of exaggeration: Yet you have done that deed of yours ... It was a ghastly deed that should never be mentioned or described in real terms. Yet you did it while being an unbeliever. You did not believe then in the Lord of all the worlds, about whom you are now telling us.

Thus we see Pharaoh making what he thought was a final argument and against which Moses would have no reply, especially his killing of an Egyptian and the punishment that could be inflicted on him. His words are clearly meant as an implied threat.

Since God answered his prayer and cured his speech impediment, Moses rejoins with a clear reply: I committed it while I was still going astray; and I fled from you because I feared you. Then my Lord granted me sound judgement and made me one of [His] Messengers. And what sort of favor is this you are taunting me with: was it not because you had enslaved the Children of Jacob? (26: 21-26:22) I did it when I was ignorant, rushing to defend anyone from among my people. This is different from my present commitment to my faith which is based on sound judgement granted me by my Lord. I fled from you because I feared you. But God has been good to me, bestowing on me the gift of wisdom and making me one of His Messengers. I am not a unique phenomenon; rather, one of the chosen group of God's Messengers.

Moses then uses a touch of sarcasm in reply to Pharaoh's own sarcastic remarks, but he only states the truth: What sort of favors is this you are taunting me with: was it not because you had enslaved the Children of Jacob? The fact that I was reared in your palace came about only as a result of your enslavement of the Children of Jacob, and your killing of their children. This was the reason why my mother put me in a basket to float along the Nile. When your people found me, I was brought up in your palace, not in my parents' home. What favor is this that you press against me?

At this point, Pharaoh stops this line of argument and asks Moses for the central point of his claims, but his questioning carries overtones of ridicule and derision aimed at none other than God Himself. Pharaoh said: And what is that 'Lord of all the worlds? (26:23)

How arrogant and insolent! He is saying: what is this Lord of the worlds about whom you describe yourself as His Messenger? Such a question can only mean a denial of the very point it relates to, and a ridicule of the statement and the person making it. He considers the whole situation impossible and unworthy of discussion.

Moses' reply points to God's Lordship over the entire visible universe and all that there is in it: [Moses] answered: He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you want to be sure. (26:24) Thus, his answer refutes Pharaoh's denial, rendering it worthless. He tells him that God is the Lord of the entire universe which neither Pharaoh's power nor his knowledge can ever reach. The utmost that Pharaoh can boast of is that he is a deity over the people of the Nile Valley and its overall lord. But then this is a tiny little particle when compared to the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. We discern in Moses' answer his dismissal of Pharaoh's claims as vain boasts, turning his attention to the vast universe, inviting him to contemplate its size and the One who is Lord over it all. That is certainly the Lord of all the worlds. He concludes his answer with a comment inviting the people to work for the achievement of certainty: "If you want to be sure."

Pharaoh turns to those around him, expressing amazement at this response. Or maybe he wanted them not to be influenced by it. This is typical of all tyrants who fear that simple words of truth might influence the hearts and minds of the masses: [Pharaoh] said to those around him: Do you hear? (26:25) Do you hear this singular statement which was never uttered by anyone we know?

Moses replies by stressing another attribute of God, the Lord of all creatures: [Moses] said: He is your Lord as well as the Lord of your forefathers of old. (26:26) This answer is directed at Pharaoh, his status and claims even more. He tells him that God, the Lord of all the worlds, is also his Lord, while Pharaoh is nothing more than one of His servants. He is certainly not a deity as he claims. His people are also subject to God, their true Lord, while Pharaoh has no lordship over them. Indeed God is the Lord of their forefathers of old, which means that the hereditary aspect on which Pharaoh's claims rely is false. None other than God has ever been Lord of the worlds.

This hit hard at Pharaoh and he could not remain silent when his elders and nobles were listening. Therefore, he derisively states that his adversary is mad: [Pharaoh] said: Indeed, the Messenger who has been sent to you is, of a certainty, a madman. (26:27) His derision is directed at the very issue of bearing God's message so as to turn people away from it. He charges Moses with madness in order to nullify

the effect of his statement that questions the very basis of Pharaoh's political and religious position, as it aims to remind people of their Lord, the Lord of their forefathers.

Nothing of Pharaoh's derision could weaken Moses and his resolve. Therefore, he continues to state the truth that hits hard at all tyrants: [Moses] went on: He is indeed the Lord of the East and the West and of all that is between them, if you would but use your reason. (26:28) The Arabic words *mashriq* and *maghrib*, used for east and west, also denote the processes of planets and stars rising and setting. These are two great scenes which we see every day, but our minds seldom reflect on them because of over familiarity. These two processes are great indeed, and neither Pharaoh nor any tyrant can claim to have any control over them. Who does, then, control them, setting them in a perfect order and timing that ensures their continuity without fail or deviation? Moses' answer shakes dormant hearts and awakens sleeping souls. In this way, he calls on people to reflect and contemplate, if you would but use your reason.

Pharaoh's Sorcerers Embrace the Truth

Makkah: *He said to the Council around him:*
Truly, this is one who is a knowing sorcerer! (26:34)
He wants to drive you out from your region by his sorcery.
What is it, then, that you suggest? (26:35)
They said: Put him and his brother off
and raise up ones who summon in the cities. (26:36)
They will bring every knowing witch to you. (26:37)
So the ones who were sorcerers were gathered
at a time appointed on a known day (26:38)
and it was said to humanity:
Will you, you be ones who gather together (26:39)
so that perhaps we follow the ones who are sorcerers
if they had been the ones who are victors? (26:40)
So when the ones who are sorcerers drew near,
they said to Pharaoh:
Is there a compensation for us
if we had been the ones who are victors? (26:41)
Pharaoh said: Yes! Truly, you will be
the ones who are brought near to me. (26:42)
Moses said to them: Cast what you will as ones who cast. (26:43)
So they cast their ropes and their staffs and said:
By the vainglory of Pharaoh,
we, we will, surely, be the ones who are victors! (26:44)

Then, Moses cast down his staff.
That is when it swallows what they faked. (26:45)
The ones who are sorcerers were cast down,
ones who prostrate themselves. (26:46)
They said: We believed in the Lord of the worlds, (26:47)
the Lord of Moses and Aaron. (26:48)
Pharaoh said: You believed in him
before I give permission to you?
He is, truly, your foremost master who taught you sorcery.
Then, you will know. I will, certainly, cut off your hands
and your feet on opposite sides,
and I will cause you to be crucified one and all. (26:49)
They said: No grievance.
Truly, to our Lord we are ones who are turning. (26:50)
Truly, we are desirous that Our Lord forgive us our transgressions
that we had been the first of the ones who believe. (26:51)

Moses Rescues the Children of Jacob

Makkah: *And We revealed to Moses saying that:*
Set ***you*** *forth by night with My servants.*
Truly, you are ones who will be followed. (26:52)
Then, Pharaoh sent to the cities, ones who summon. (26:53)
They said: These are, truly, a small crowd (26:54)
and, truly, they are ones who enrage us. (26:55)
We are altogether, truly, ones who are cautious. (26:56)
So We drove them out from the gardens and springs (26:57)
and treasures and a generous station. (26:58)
And We, thus, gave them as inheritance
to the Children of Jacob. (26:59)
So they pursued them at sunrise. (26:60)
Then, when the two multitudes sighted each other,
the Companions of Moses said:
Truly, we are ones who are to be overtaken. (26:61)
Moses said: No indeed. Truly, my Lord is with me
and He will guide me. (26:62)
Then, We revealed to Moses saying that:
Strike the sea with ***your*** *staff*
and it divided and each had been
a separate part like a high, tremendous mountain. (26:63)
And, again, We brought the others close (26:64)
and We rescued Moses and whoever was with him,
one and all. (26:65)

Again, We drowned the others. (26:66)
Truly, in this is a sign
and yet most of them had not been ones who believe. (26:67)
And, truly, your Lord,
He is The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:68)

The Children of Jacob and the Ancient Scrolls

Chapter 26: The 47th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, truly, it is in the ancient scrolls*
of the ancient ones. (26:196)
Would it not be a sign for them
that is known to the knowing among
the Children of Jacob? (26:197)

Commentary°

This evidence came from within the Quran itself. The chapter, however, also provides further evidence, but this time it is external. (26:196-197) The description of the Messenger who would receive the Quran from on high, and the fundamentals of the faith he would preach were clearly indicated in the scriptures of ancient peoples. Hence, the learned ones among the Children of Jacob were expecting this last message and Messenger.

Moses Commissioned with Messengership

Chapter 27: The 48th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Mention when Moses said to his people:*
Truly, I, I observed a fire!
I will bring you news from it
or I will approach you with a flaming firebrand
so that perhaps you would warm yourselves. (27:7)
But when he drew near it, it was proclaimed that:
Blessed be He Who is in the fire and Who is around it,
and glory be to God, the Lord of the worlds. (27:8)
O Moses! Truly, I alone am God, The Almighty, The Wise. (27:9)
*Cast down **your** staff. But when he saw it quiver*
as if it were a snake,
he turned as one who draws back to retrace his steps.
O Moses! Fear not!
The ones who are sent fear not My nearness (27:10)
but whoever did wrong does.
Again, he substituted goodness after evil
and, truly, I am Forgiving, Compassionate. (27:11)
*Cause **your** hand to enter into **your** bosom.*

It will go forth shimmering white without evil.
These are among nine signs to Pharaoh and his folk.
Truly, they had been a folk, ones who disobey. (27:12)
But when Our signs drew near them, ones who perceive,
they said: This is clear sorcery. (27:13)
And they negated them
—although their souls confessed to them—
out of injustice and self-exaltation.
So look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who make corruption. (27:14)

Commentary°

The chapter does not tell us anything about the many years that separate its first two episodes: namely Moses' birth and rescue and the second showing him as a mature adult in his prime. We do not know what happened after he was restored to his mother for suckling, how he was brought up in Pharaoh's palace, what sort of relation he had with his real mother after he was weaned, what position he had in the palace or outside it when he grew up. Nor are we told anything about Moses' faith during these years, when God took care of him, preparing him, in the midst of Pharaoh's worshippers and priest, for the mission which would, in time, be assigned to him.

I perceive a fire. This is what Moses first said on sighting the fire. The Arabic text uses the verb for 'perceive' that carries connotations of friendliness. Thus, his words sound like: I can see a welcoming fire that should give us some comfort. We can ask directions that should tell us which way to go, and we could get a brand to warm ourselves. As Moses walked towards the fire, he received the call from on high. (27:8-27:9)

In this case the whole thing is given in a nutshell. The emphasis here is laid on the call to Moses and his assignment. (27:10) When he did as he was told and threw down his staff, he saw it come alive, writhing at speed like a small but fast-moving snake. His spontaneous nature caught up with him as he was totally taken by surprise. He could never have thought the staff would be so transformed on simply being thrown down. Hence, he ran away, with no thought of going back to take a further look at this serpent. His whole reaction suggests complete and utter surprise.

Yet he was soon reassured when the call from on high resumed. This now told him of the nature of his assignment. (27:10) He is told that he is entrusted with a message from God, and God's Messengers entertain no fear in the presence of their Lord, as He informs them of their duties. (27:11) Only those who do wrong should be afraid.

However, those of them who replace wrong with good, abandoning injustice, evil and unbelief, making sure to replace them with justice and faith, and doing righteous deeds will receive God's grace and forgiveness.

Moses is now reassured and calm. Therefore, his Lord gives him his second miracle before even telling him about his mission or its nature. (27:12) Again, Moses did as he was told, putting his hand through the top opening of his robe, and then bringing it out brilliant white. He had no skin disease. What happened was another miracle. God promised to support him with nine miraculous signs of the type of which he had just seen two. At this point Moses is also told of his assignment, for which he has been given such preparation. (27:12)

Here, the chapter does not provide any details of these nine signs, though they are mentioned in Chapter 7, The Elevated Places. These were the years of drought, crop shortages, floods, locusts, ants, frogs and blood. The lack of detail in this instance indicates that the emphasis here is on the miraculous nature of these signs, and the stubborn refusal of Pharaoh's people to acknowledge them and take heed. (27:13-14)

The Quran Relates About the Children of Jacob

Makkah: *Truly, this, the Quran,*
relates about the Children of Jacob
and most of what they are at variance in it. (27:76)
And, truly, it is a guidance and a mercy
for the ones who believe. (27:77)
Truly, your Lord will decree between them with His determination.
And He is The Almighty, The Knowing. (27:78)

The Tiding of Moses and Pharaoh

Chapter 28: The 49th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *That are the signs of the clear Book.* (28:2)
We recount to you the tiding of Moses
and Pharaoh with The Truth for a folk who believe. (28:3)
Truly, Pharaoh exalted himself on the earth
and made his people partisans,
taking advantage of due to their weakness,
a section among them. He slaughters their children
and saves alive their women.
Truly, he had been of the ones who make corruption. (28:4)
And We want to show grace to those
who were taken advantage of due to their weakness on the earth
and to make them leaders

and to make them the ones who inherit (28:5)
and to establish them firmly on the earth.
And We cause Pharaoh and Haman to see
—and their armies from them—
that of which they had been fearful. (28:6)
***
And when he was fully grown, come of age
and he straightened himself up, We gave him critical judgment
and knowledge. And, thus,
We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. (28:14)
And he entered the city at a time of heedlessness of its people.
He found in it two men fighting one against the other.
This who was from among his partisans
and this who was from among his
enemies. The one who was among his partisans cried for help
against him who was among his enemies.
So Moses struck him with his fist
and Moses made an end of him.
He said: This is the action of Satan.
Truly, he is a clear enemy, one who leads astray. (28:15)
He said: My Lord! Truly, I did wrong to myself
so forgive me and He forgave him.
Truly, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate. (28:16)
He said: My Lord! For that with which
***You** were gracious to me*
I will never be a sustainer of the ones who sin. (28:17)
So he came to be in the morning in the city
one who is fearful and is vigilant.
That is when the one who had asked for help
yesterday cries out aloud to him.
*Moses said to him: Truly, **your** are clearly a hothead.* (28:18)
Then, when he wanted to seize by force
the one who he was an enemy of both of them
*—he said: O Moses! Would **you** want to kill me*
*as **you** had killed a soul yesterday?*
***You** would want nothing,*
but to be haughty on the earth?
*And **you** would want not to be*
among the ones who make things right? (28:19)
A man drew near from the farther part of the city,
coming eagerly,
he said: O Moses! Truly, the Council is conspiring
*against **you** to kill **you**, so go forth.*

Truly, I am the one who gives advice to you. (28:20)
So Moses went forth from there as one who is fearful, is vigilant.
He said: My Lord! Deliver me from the folk,
ones who are unjust. (28:21)

Commentary°

These [signs] (28:2-28:5) then relate the story of Moses and Pharaoh, right from its very first moment, when Moses was born. Although Moses' story is related in many other chapters, it is never recounted from the very beginning anywhere else. It is this very beginning, describing the difficult circumstances in which Moses was born, powerless among a people who had long been persecuted and humiliated by Pharaoh, that serves as the main theme of the chapter. It shows the hand of the divine will working openly, without any apparent human medium, striking directly at the root of tyranny and injustice. It thus gives support and empowerment to the oppressed. This is a concept that the small and weak Muslim minority in Makkah needed to fully understand. It was equally important that the powerful majority be made well aware of it too

The first two episodes, which are mentioned only in this chapter, are treated at length because they bring to the fore the open challenge to aggressive tyranny. We clearly see how Pharaoh is totally unable to evade God's will despite all his precautions and maneuvres. (28:6)

Pharaoh exalted himself in the land. (Verses 28:4-28:6)

Thus the stage is set, and the hand that controls events is shown, together with the goal to be achieved. Declaring to whom this hand belongs right at the outset is intentional and fits the drift of the story from beginning to end.

The chapter is silent on all these points. As it starts its narration of the second episode, we see a fully mature Moses, a man endowed with critical judgment and wisdom, and one granted the reward of righteous people. (28:14)

We are told that he 'entered the city', which we understand as the Egyptian capital. Where had he come from so as to enter the city? Was he in the palace at Ein Shams? Or had he deserted the palace and the capital but came in this time when the people were unaware of his presence? He might have come around noon when people were resting? Anyway, however he arrived, he nonetheless witnessed something not to his liking. (28:15)

One of the two was an Egyptian, said to belong to Pharaoh's staff, with some reports suggesting that he was his cook. The other was a Child of Jacob. The two were fighting as Moses came into the city, and the Child of Jacob appealed to him for help against their

Egyptian enemy. How could this happen? How could a Child of Jacob appeal to Moses, Pharaoh's adopted son against another from Pharaoh's court? This would not have happened if Moses was still residing in the palace, or if he was one of Pharaoh's courtiers. It could only have happened if the Child of Jacob was certain that Moses no longer had any contact with the palace, and that he was in reality a Child of Jacob opposed to Pharaoh and sympathetic to his own people's cause. This last possibility is more in line with Moses' character. For it is unlikely that he would have tolerated life in the corrupt environment of the palace.

(28:15) The Arabic word used for "struck', indicates a punch delivered with the full weight of one's arm. We understand that Moses punched the man only once, and that this caused his death. We thus have an idea of Moses' physical strength, his anger and the strength of his opposition to Pharaoh and those of his court.

However, it appears from the drift of the narrative that Moses did not intend to kill the Egyptian. Indeed, when he saw him lifeless, he regretted what he had done, attributing it to Satan's temptation. His action was the result of anger, and anger is a devil or part of what Satan manipulates. (28:15)

He goes on to show genuine regret for what his anger caused, acknowledging that by so doing, he had wronged himself, had burdened himself with such results. He appealed to God for forgiveness. (28:16) God responded to his prayer, knowing that his repentance was genuine.

It appears that his refined sense indicated to him that God had responded to his appeal and forgiven him. A believer's heart, which has reached such a superior level of sensitivity, feels that his prayer has been answered once it is made. As he felt such acceptance, Moses trembled and made a firm pledge, considering this as part of his gratitude for God's favors. (28:17) This is an absolute pledge and commitment to neither side with nor help wrongdoing people. It is a disavowal of wrongdoing in all shapes and forms, even though the person might feel strongly motivated to give such help by the need to rebel against injustice.

Thus Moses shows both his appreciation of God's favors and his profound sorrow at the injustice he had committed. In all this, we see Moses as a passionate, spontaneous person, capable of reacting strongly to events and situations. Indeed, we will see such aspects of his character in several instances, not least in the very next scene: Next morning, he was in the city, fearful, vigilant, when he saw the man who sought his help the day before again crying out to him for help. But then, when he was about to strike the one who was their

enemy, the latter exclaimed: Moses! Do you want to kill me as you killed another man yesterday? You want only to become a tyrant in the land, and you do not want to be one who sets things right. (28:18-19)

Only a day had passed since the first fight ended with the death of an Egyptian, followed by God's acceptance of Moses' repentance and Moses subsequent pledge never to support wrongdoing. Inevitably, he feared his offense be discovered. We see him on his guard, expecting a reaction at any moment. This again reflects his spontaneous character. We are given the impression that as he walked in the city', which is normally a place of security, he experienced real fear.

That Moses should feel such fear suggests that at this stage he did not have any association with Pharaoh's palace. Under tyranny, it is a trifling matter when anyone close to the palace kills a person. Indeed, such a person would not have entertained any fear, let alone expect any harm to befall him. Yet as he walked vigilantly, Moses looked up and there "he saw the man who sought his help the day before again crying out to him for help." (28:18) The same man is again appealing to Moses for more support, and probably wanting him to do with this one what he did to the other the day before.

The image of the man falling dead only the day before was still vivid in Moses' mind, as was his regret, repentance, and pledge to God. His fear that he may come to harm as a result was also genuinely felt, which explains Moses' outburst accusing the Child of Jacob of being quarrelsome. (28:18) The man appeared to be involved in endless quarrels which inevitably enhanced angry feelings against the Children of Jacob at a time when they could not protect themselves or mount a full- scale revolution. Nothing good could come from such animosity.

Yet Moses was nonetheless full of anger against the Egyptian and moved to strike him as he had the other. This again gives us a glimpse of his passionate and spontaneous personality, of how strongly he was affected by the injustice suffered by the Children of Jacob and how keen he was to do whatever he could to repel aggression.

But then, when he was about to strike the one who was their enemy, the latter exclaimed: Moses! Do you want to kill me as you killed another man yesterday? You want only to become a tyrant in the land, and you do not want to be one who sets things right.' (28:19)

It appears that when the man reminded him of events the day before Moses did not proceed. The Egyptian was spared, left to run off and tell Pharaoh and his men that Moses was the killer. Here again

there is a gap in the story. The next thing we are told of concerns a man hurrying from the farthest end of the city to warn Moses of a plot to do away with him. He further advised Moses that he should flee the city to save his life: (28:20)

This is clearly the work of God's hand. At the right moment, something intervenes to carry out His will. The leading personalities of Pharaoh's government were now aware that Moses was responsible for their compatriot's death. They would have seen this as spelling danger, smacking of rebellion by the Children of Jacob. Hence, Moses needed to be removed. Had it been an ordinary case of murder, it would have not deserved that Pharaoh and his chiefs be preoccupied with it. Therefore, God's hand selected one of those very people to precipitate events. Most probably he was the one believer in Pharaoh's household who had kept his faith secret and who is mentioned in detail in Chapter 40, The Believer. He was chosen to go at speed from the farthest end of the city to warn Moses before Pharaoh's men could reach him. It was a simple warning: "Moses! The nobles are plotting to kill you. So get yourself away. I am giving you sincere advice." (28:20)

Once more we see Moses' spontaneous and passionate personality, as he reacts to different situations. He is in fear, on guard, directly appealing to God for help and protection. He seeks his security with God, prays for His care. (28:21)

Moses Weds Jethro's Daughter

Makkah: *When of his own accord he turned his face*
toward Midian he said:
Perhaps my Lord guides me to the right way. (28:22)
And when he went down to the well of Midian,
he found a community there of personages
drawing water and he found
other than them two women who keep away.
He said: What is your business?
They both said: We draw not water
until the ones who are shepherds move on.
And our father is an aged, old man. (28:23)
So he drew water for them.
Again, he turned away to the shade and said:
My Lord! Truly, I am, certainly, of
whatever ***You*** *caused to descend of good to me, in need.* (28:24)
Then, drew near him one of the two women, walking bashfully.
She said: Truly, my father calls to ***you***
that he may give ***you*** *recompense of compensation*

*because **you** had drawn water for us.*
So when he drew near him and related to him the narrative,
he said: Fear not.
***You** were delivered from the folk, ones who are unjust.* (28:25)
One of the two women said: O my father!
*Employ him. Truly, best is that **you** would employ*
the strong, the trustworthy. (28:26)
*He said: Truly I want to wed **you** to one of my two daughters if **you***
*were to hire **yourself** to me for eight years. But if **you** fulfill ten*
*years, then it will be from **you**. For I want not to press **you** hard.*
***You** will find me, had God willed, among the ones who are*
in accord with morality. (28:27)
*He said: That is between **you** and between me*
whichever of the two terms I satisfied.
There will be no deep seated dislike from me.
And God is Trustee over what we say. (28:28)

Commentary°

The chapter follows him as he stealthily leaves the city, keeping on the alert, alone with no support other than what he hopes to receive from God Almighty. (28:22)

Again we note certain prominent traits in Moses' personality as he moves quickly along a desert road, trying to evade his chasers. He aims for Midian, which is to the north of Hijaz in the Arabian Peninsula and to the south of Syria and Palestine. It is a very long journey, one which he undertakes with little preparedness. At the same time, we note how he is full of faith, surrendering himself to God, seeking His guidance. (28:22)

His long trek had taken him to Midian, tired and exhausted. Yet the scene before him is one that a person with sound moral sense cannot condone. Moses sees many herdsmen and shepherds bringing their cattle and sheep to drink at the water, but two women stand aside, prevented from watering their flock. Those with a good sense of integrity and morality would have allowed the two women to water their sheep first and then leave before the men took care of their cattle. Despite his exhaustion, Moses, the stranger, could not accept what he saw. He stepped forward to ask the two women. (28:23)

They appraised him of their situation. (28:23) As women, they could not fend for themselves in the midst of so many men. Furthermore, their father was an old man who could not compete with younger and stronger men. Moses' sense of fairness could not abide this. He stepped forward to put things right. He watered their flock

for them before the rest, as honorable people should have done in the first place. He does not stop to consider his own position first, as a runaway in a place where he knows no one and where he has no support. Yet nothing stops him from acting as the honorable man he is.

(28:24) This testifies to his noble soul, one reared under God's watchful eye. It also speaks of his physical strength, something that makes him feared even when exhausted by his long trek. It might be his mental rather than physical power that made the other shepherds hold him in awe. People are normally more affected by spiritual strength.

This suggests that it was the hot season when Moses undertook his long journey. And then he sends a prayer. (28:24) He seeks the physical shade to rest his tired limbs. He seeks the great shade spread by God, whose generosity is unlimited, to comfort his heart and soul. This is the essence of his prayer. (28:24) In my weakness in this lonely, hot place where I am a stranger, I am, my Lord, in dire need of Your kind help and endless favors. This whispered, passionate prayer reflects the warmth of Moses' heart and his confident pursuit of God's kindness. It tells us of the strong bond Moses feels with his Lord.

We have barely had time to absorb Moses' passionate prayer when the chapter quickly moves on to the next scene that ushers in an end to his troubles. It is as if the heavens rush to respond to Moses' prayer.

One of the two women then came back to him, walking shyly. (28:25) It is a quick rescue granted by God. It comes in the form of an invitation sent by the old man, who wants to extend his hospitality to Moses for his noble action .

Moses was in need of security, as also of something to eat and drink, but his need for the former was stronger. Hence, the account given in the chapter emphasizes this, making the first words the old man says in comment to Moses' story: Have no fear. He wanted him to feel at ease by dispelling his fear. He then explains: You are now safe from those wrongdoing folk. (28:25) They have no authority over Midian.

One of them advises her father to hire him so that he would spare her and her sister the trouble of doing a shepherd's work. She commends him for his ability to do the work as also his honesty and integrity. As she gives this advice, she speaks clearly, without hesitation, fearing no misunderstanding or unworthy suggestion.

The old man acted on his daughter's advice [He suggests] Moses that he marries one of his daughters in return for eight years work.

Should Moses increase the period to ten years, this would be an added favor, not a commitment to which he would be held. (28:27)

Moses accepted the offer, and the contract was made, clear and precise, with God as a witness. (28:28)

Contractual agreements must be made in all clarity, leaving no room for ambiguity. Neither parry should allow shyness or embarrassment to interfere with such purpose. (28:28)

Thus Moses found a place of security in his father-in-law's home, having no fear of Pharaoh and his designs. This was certainly for a definite purpose God wanted to accomplish. We will now let this episode pass, as the chapter does not state anything further about it

When Moses had fulfilled his term, and was travelling with his family, he perceived a fire on the slope of Mount Sinai. So he said to his family: Wait here, for I perceive a fire. Perhaps I may bring you from there some information, or a burning brand from the fire so that you may warm yourselves

Moses Commissioned with Messengership

Makkah: *Then, when Moses satisfied the term*
and journeyed with his people,
he observed at the edge of the mount a fire.
He said to his people: Abide!
Truly, I, I observed a fire so that perhaps I will bring you
some news from there or burning wood of fire
so that perhaps you will warm yourselves. (28:29)
So when he approached it,
it was proclaimed from the right side of the ridge of the valley,
in a corner of the blessed ground from the tree:
O Moses! Truly, I am God, the Lord of the worlds. (28:30)
*Cast **your** staff. But when he saw it quiver*
as if it were a snake, he turned as one who draws back
and he retraces his steps.
O Moses! Come forward and fear not.
*Truly, **you** are among the ones who are safe.* (28:31)
*Insert **your** hand into **your** bosom.*
It will go forth shimmering white without evil
*and clasp **your** arm pits against fright.*
*These are two proofs from **your** Lord to Pharaoh and his Council.*
Truly, they had been a folk, ones who disobey. (28:32)
He said: My Lord! Truly, I killed a soul among them
and I fear that they will kill me. (28:33)

***

Then, when Moses drew near them with Our signs,
clear portents, they said: This is nothing but forged sorcery.
We heard not of this from our
fathers, the ancient ones. (28:36)
Moses said: My Lord is greater in knowledge of who drew near
with guidance from Him
and what will be the Ultimate End in the Abode.
Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper. (28:37)
And Pharaoh said: O Council! I knew not of any god for you
other than me so kindle for me, O Haman, a fire on the clay
and make a pavilion for me so that perhaps I will peruse the God
of Moses. And, truly, I think that
he is among the ones who lie. (28:38)
And he grew arrogant, he and his armies,
on the earth without right
and they thought that they would not be returned to Us. (28:39)
So We took him and his armies
and We cast them forth in the water of the sea.
So look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who are unjust. (28:40)
We made them leaders.
They call to the fire. And on the Day of Resurrection,
they will not be helped. (28:41)
And a curse pursued them in the present.
And on the Day of Resurrection
they will be of the ones who are spurned. (28:42)

Commentary°

When Moses had fulfilled his term, and was traveling with his family, he perceived a fire on the slope of Mount Sinai. So he said to his family: Wait here, for I perceive a fire. Perhaps I may bring you from there some information, or a burning brand from the fire so that you may warm yourselves. (28:29)

The second scene tells us of the great surprise prepared for Moses. (28:30) We see him aiming towards the fire, and on the right bank of the valley. From here on this site is blessed. The whole universe now echoes the sublime address Moses receives "out of the tree', which might have been the only tree there

Moses received the direct call. (28:30)

God then continued to give His instructions: "Throw down your staff?" (28:31) Moses complied with the order, throwing down his staff. Only now it was no longer his staff but instead a writhing serpent, which was large in size but moving very fast. (28:31) Moses was totally unprepared for this. Taken aback, he turned and set to

flight. He did not even think of going back to find out what had happened to his staff, or to better see this preternatural happening. Such is the natural reaction of spontaneous people

He is told to come near and to have no fear. Needless to say, a person whose every step is watched over by God will always be safe and secure. (28:32) Again Moses did as he was instructed, putting his hand inside his garment's top opening. Drawing it out, he received yet another shock. His hand was now a shining white, though clearly healthy. Its original color would have been rather dark, weathered by the sun and elements. This change of color thus symbolized the clear truth: one supported by undeniable, irrefutable evidence.

Again Moses' spontaneous personality caught up with him as he trembled, struck with awe. But God's care was soon forthcoming, giving him another instruction so as to calm him down. (28:32)

So Moses has now been given clear signs, causing him fear at first before he was reassured. Now it is time he learned of what lay ahead of him. (28:32) He is given a message to deliver to Pharaoh and his lieutenants, in fulfillment of the promise his mother was given when he was still a newborn baby. (28:7) Despite the passage of many years, the promise has remained true, given by God who always speaks the truth.

Moses now remembers that he had killed one of Pharaoh's entourage and that he had to flee Egypt in order to save himself. As he was in the presence of his Lord who had honored him beyond his wildest expectations, even to the point of meeting Him and being given clear signs, he felt the need to take precautions so that his message should not be brought to an abrupt end if he himself was killed. (28:33)

The chapter delivers its final strike very quickly, making no mention of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh's sorcerers: such details can be found in brief or in detail in other chapters. Here the chapter moves from the denial of the truth by Pharaoh and his people directly to their destruction. It also includes what will happen to them in the hereafter. This quick movement is deliberate, so as to fit with the general drift of the chapter emphasizing God's direct intervention, through no human agent. Once Pharaoh is seen to be adamant in his rejection of God's message, his end is directly shown. No further details are needed. (28:36)

Moses (peace be upon him) refers the matter to God, because in such a situation where no proof is being requested, it is better to be brief and let God judge between the two parties. (Verse 28:37)

Thus, Pharaoh instructed Haman, his minister, to build him a very high tower so that he might climb and look into the heavens

searching for Moses' God. He also added: I am convinced he is lying. Thus, goodly seemed to Pharaoh the evil of his deed, and he was barred from the right path." (28:37) He deserved to be so barred, having chosen to persist with falsehood and deviancy. The surah's comment makes clear that such scheming can only lead to failure and utter loss. "Pharaohs scheming led only to ruin." (28:37)

Now Pharaoh met his end. (28:39) Given they thought they would never return, they behaved arrogantly, against all right, denying God's signs and warnings. Hence, God's punishment was quick. (28:40) Pharaoh was seized with force and cast into the sea as though he was a little stone

Another glance and this whole world is passed by so as to present a picture of Pharaoh and his hosts on the Day of Judgment calling on people and leading them into hell. (28:41) Evil is the leadership, and evil is the call. (28:41) It is a defeat in this life and a defeat in the life to come, in fair requital for their aggression and transgression. But they will not only be defeated; they are cursed in this world and spurned in the next. (28:42)

Moses' Mission Referred To

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book,*
after We caused previous generations to perish
as clear evidence
for humanity and a guidance
and a mercy so that they recollect. (28:43)
*And **you** had not been on the western edge*
when We decreed the command to Moses
*and **you** had not been*
among the ones who bear witness. (28:44)
But We caused generations to grow
and their lifetimes continued to be long.
*And **you** had not been one who is a dweller*
with the people of Midian
who recount Our signs to them,
but it is We Who had been ones who send. (28:45)
*And **you** had not been at the edge of the mount*
when We proclaimed,
*but as a mercy from **your** Lord, that **you** were to warn a folk*
*to whom no warner approached them before **you***
so that perhaps they will recollect. (28:46)

Commentary°

The chapter leaves out the entire history of the Children of

Jacob's departure from Egypt, and the events that followed, in order to mention Moses' lot after having shown us Pharaoh's. (28:43)

This is certainly a great favor given to Moses. His is an honorable bequest: a book revealed to him by God in order to give humanity new insight and guidance into what is right. Believers must, however, remember how God's power intervened to save the weak and overcome the powerful. They must reflect on how oppressors are destroyed and the oppressed avenged and given power.

Korah's (Qarun) Ruin

Makkah: *Truly, Korah had been of the folk of Moses,*
but he was insolent towards them.
And We gave him of the treasures which truly,
the keys of it were a heavy ordeal to many imbued with strength.
Mention when His folk said to him: Exult not.
Truly, God loves not the exultant. (28:76)
*Look for what God gave **you** for the Last Abode.*
*And forget not **your** share of the present*
*and do good even as God did good to **you**.*
And be not insolent, corrupting in and on the earth.
Truly, God loves not the ones who make corruption. (28:77)
Korah said: I was only given it
because of the knowledge with me.
Knows he not that God caused to perish before him
some of the generations
who were more vigorous in strength than he
and more numerous in multitude
yet the ones who sin will not be asked
about their impieties? (28:78)
So he went forth to his folk in his adornment.
And said those who want this present life:
O would that we had the like of what was given to Korah!
Truly, he is the possessor of a sublime allotment. (28:79)
And those who were given the knowledge said:
Woe to you! The reward for good deeds from God is
better for whoever believed
and did as ones in accord with morality.
And none will be in receipt of it,
but the ones who remain steadfast. (28:80)
So We caused to swallow him the earth and his abode!
Then, there had been not any faction to help him against God.
And he had been of the ones who are helpless. (28:81)
And it came to be in the morning

those who had coveted his place but yesterday, say:
God extends the provision to whomever He wills of His servants
and confines it to whomever He wills.
Were it not that God showed grace to us,
He would have caused the earth to swallow us;
O how the ones who are ungrateful will not prosper! (28:82)

Commentary°

Korah was one of the people of Moses, but he treated them unjustly. We had granted him such treasures that their very keys would have been too heavy a burden for a band of strong men. His people said to him: Do not exult [in your riches]; for God does not love those who are exultant. Seek instead, by means of what God has granted you, the good of the life to come, without forgetting your rightful share in this world; and do good just as God has done good to you, and do not seek to spread corruption on earth; for God does not love the ones who spread corruption.'

Answered he: I have been given this wealth only by virtue of the knowledge that I have. (28:76-28:78)

This is how the story begins, naming its main character, Korah, and his community, "the people of Moses", as well as the way he treated his people, which was unjust. It also tells us right at the very start the reason for such injustice, namely wealth. (28:76) It goes on to explain the events, statements and reactions involved.

And so he went forth before his people in all his pomp. Those who cared only for the life of this world. (28:79-28:80)

Here, we see some people infatuated with the luxuries that the present life can offer, ready to do what they can in order to have their share of it. Others feel that faith is a greater blessing, and hope for God's reward. Thus the value of wealth is set side by side with the value of faith. (28:79)

When the attraction of material splendor and pomp is at its greatest, God intervenes in order to end the test and save the weaker elements of the community from such temptation. Thus arrogance is utterly destroyed in the third, decisive scene of this story. Then We caused the earth to swallow him, together with his dwelling. He had none to give him support against God, nor was he able to protect himself. (28:81)

Moses Given the Book

Chapter 17: The 50th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We gave Moses the Book*

and made it a guidance for the Children of Jacob
Take not to yourselves a Trustee other than Me. (17:2)

Children of Jacob Punished

Makkah: *And We decreed for the Children of Jacob in the Book:*
Certainly, you will make corruption in and on the earth two times.
And, certainly, you will exalt yourselves
in a great self-exaltation. (17:4)
So when the promise drew near for the first of the two,
We raised up against you servants of Ours
imbued with severe might.
They ransacked in the midst of your abodes.
And the promise had been one that is accomplished. (17:5)
Again, We returned to you a turn of luck over them
and We furnished you relief with children and wealth
and made you more in soldiery: (17:6)
If you did good, you would be doing good for yourselves.
And if you did evil, then, it is against yourselves.
Then, when the last promise drew near, We sent your enemies;
they raise anger on your faces
and they enter the place of prostration
just as they entered it the first time,
to shatter all that they ascended to with a shattering. (17:7)
Perhaps your Lord will have mercy on you
But if you reverted, We will revert.
And We made hell a jail for the ones who are ungrateful. (17:8)

Commentary°

In the book which God gave Moses to serve as a source of guidance to the Children of Jacob, He issued them with a warning that they would be doomed to destruction should they spread corruption on earth. The destruction was visited on them twice because its causes were repeated. This is followed by a warning of further episodes of destruction should they revert to their old ways of spreading corruption. This leads to the inevitable operation of God's laws of nature that never fail.

Moses Given Nine Signs

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses nine signs,*
clear portents.
Then, ask the Children of Jacob when he drew near them.
Then Pharaoh said to him: Truly, O Moses,

*I think that **you** are one who is bewitched.* (17:101)
*He said: Certainly, **you** knew no one caused these to descend*
but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as clear evidence.
And, truly, O Pharaoh, I think that
you be one who is accursed. (17:102)
So he wanted to hound them in the region,
but We drowned him
and those who were with him altogether. (17:103)
And We said to the Children of Jacob after him:
Inhabit the region.
So when drew near the promise of the world to come,
We will bring you about a mixed group. (17:104)

Commentary°

Miracles do not initiate faith in hardened hearts. Moses, for example, was given nine such clear signs, but Pharaoh and his people denied them until they suffered God's punishment. (17:101-17:104) This part of the history of Moses and the Children of Jacob is mentioned here because it fits with the context of the chapter. It started by mentioning the Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, and it then related a part of the history of the Children of Jacob with Moses. This is followed by mentioning the hereafter when Pharaoh and his people will be brought forward. This also fits with the scene of the hereafter and the one showing the end of those who deny resurrection, mentioned a little earlier in the chapter.

Moses' nine clear signs to which the chapter refers were his hand turning white, his staff, and the tests to which Pharaoh's people were subjected, such as drought, shortage of fruit, floods, locusts, ants, frogs and blood. (17:101) Thus the word of truth assigning divinity to God alone, and the call to abandon all injustice and tyranny cannot he uttered, according to the tyrant, except by someone bewitched, unable to realize the meaning of what he says. Indeed tyrants like Pharaoh cannot imagine that anyone in his right senses could ever adopt such an attitude or give expression to such demands.

Moses, on the other hand, realizes that his strength is based in the truth he preaches. His message stands out as a source of light. He is certain of God's support and that He will inevitably punish the tyrants. (17:102) Moses makes it clear to Pharaoh that his denial of the truth when he is fully aware that none other than God could have accomplished such clear signs will earn him a terrible punishment. These signs were clear for anyone who cared to look. They show the truth in full light, clear as the bright day. Yet Pharaoh chose to deny them all and deny God. Hence, divine justice will inflict on him a

punishment that leaves him utterly ruined.

At this point, the tyrannical Pharaoh resorts to his own material force, threatening to wipe Moses and his followers off the face of the earth. Such is the method to which all tyrants resort when they are faced with the truth. But God's will is triumphant. His law of punishing the oppressors and supporting the oppressed comes into force. (17:103-104)

Thus was the end of those who denied the clear signs that were shown to them as evidence of the truth. God gave the land to the oppressed to rule. When they are in charge, their actions will be the basis of the judgment they have to face. At the beginning of the chapter we were given a clear idea of their end. Here we are only told that both they and their enemies will be gathered together on the Day of Judgment. (17:104)

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The Messages of Moses Referred to

Chapter 10: The 51st Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Again, We raised up after them*
Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his Council with Our signs.
Then, they grew arrogant,
and they had been a folk, ones who sin. (10:75)
So when The Truth drew near them from Us,

they said: Truly, this is clear sorcery! (10:76)
Moses said: Say you this about The Truth when it drew near you?
Is this sorcery?
And the ones who are sorcerers will not prosper. (10:77)
They said: Had you drawn near to us
to turn us from what we found our fathers on
so that the domination on the earth might be for you two?
We are not ones who believe in both of you. (10:78)
And Pharaoh said: Bring to me
every one who is a knowing sorcerer. (10:79)
And when the ones who are sorcerers drew near,
Moses said to them: Cast down with ones who cast. (10:80)
Then, when they cast Moses said:
What you brought about is sorcery.
Truly, God will render it untrue.
Truly, God makes not right the actions
of the ones who make corruption. (10:81)
And God will verify The Truth by His Words,
although the ones who sin disliked it much! (10:82)

Commentary°

The part of the story related here highlights five points before making a comment elucidating the purpose of relating it in this way. The five points are given in quick succession as follows: Then after those [Prophets] We sent Moses and Aaron with Our signs to Pharaoh and his nobles, but they persisted in their arrogance, for they were hardened offenders. When the truth came to them from Us, they said: This is clearly nothing but sorcery. Moses replied: Do you say this to the truth when it has come to you? Can this be sorcery? But sorcerers will never be successful. They said: Have you come to turn us away from what we found our forefathers believing in, so that the two of you might become supreme in the land? We will never believe in you. (10:75-10:78)

The signs which Moses brought to Pharaoh and his nobles are the nine mentioned in Chapter 7, The Heights. They are not mentioned here in detail because the context does not require such detail. What is important in the present context is the attitude of Pharaoh and his group when they received these signs. (10:75)

The source of these signs is emphasized here, "from Us', (10: 76) to show clearly their terrible offense when they describe as 'clear sorcery' the truth sent to them by God

A part of Moses' first objection is deleted (10:77) because it is indicated by his second one. It is as if he said to them: "Do you say

to the truth when it has come to you that it is sorcery? Can this be sorcery? The first question expresses horror that the truth is described as sorcery, and the second wonders that anyone should actually say it is so. Sorcery does not aim to provide guidance to people, and it does not include a faith or a clear idea about Godhead and His relationship with His servants. It cannot outline a code of living. Indeed sorcery cannot be confused with God's message. No sorcerer ever intended to work for such objectives or move in such a direction. Sorcerers' work is all false, playing tricks on people's imagination. Hence they cannot be successful.

At this point, the nobles supporting Pharaoh reveal their true motives for rejecting the truth: They said: Have you come to turn us away from what we found our forefathers believing in, so that the two of you might become supreme in the land? We will never believe in you. (10:78)

They feared that the new call would destroy their inherited beliefs which formed the foundation of their political and economic systems. They feared that they would lose their power that was conferred on them by the superstitious beliefs they promoted

Then Pharaoh commanded: Bring before me every learned sorcerer. And when the sorcerers came, Moses said to them: Throw whatever you may wish to throw. And when they had thrown, Moses said to them: What you have contrived is mere sorcery which God will certainly bring to nothing. God does not further the work of those who spread corruption. By His words, God proves the truth to be true, much as the guilty may dislike it. (10:79-10:82)

Moses Takes Away the Children of Jacob

Makkah: *But none believed Moses*
but the offspring of his folk because of the fear of Pharaoh
and his Council that he persecute them.
And, truly, Pharaoh was one who exalted himself on the earth.
And he was, truly, of the ones who are excessive. (10:83)
And Moses said: O my folk! If you had been believing in God,
then, put your trust in Him,
if you had been ones who submit to God. (10:84)
Then, they said: We put our trust in God. Our Lord!
Make us not a temptation for the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (10:85)
And deliver us by Your Mercy from the folk,
the ones who are ungrateful. (10:86)
And We revealed to Moses and his brother:
Take as your dwellings,

houses for your folk in Egypt.
Make your houses a direction of formal prayer.
And perform the formal prayer.
And give good tidings to the ones who believe. (10:87)
*And Moses said: Our Lord! **You** had given to Pharaoh*
and his Council adornment and wealth in this present life.
*Our Lord! Cause them to go astray from **Your** way.*
Our Lord! Obliterate their wealth
and harden their hearts so that they believe not
until they consider the painful punishment. (10:88)
He said: Surely, you both were answered,
so go straight both of you
and follow not the way of those who know not. (10:89)
And Pharaoh and his army pursued them in insolence
and acting impulsively until when, overtaken by drowning,
he said: I believed that there is no god but He
in Whom the Children of Jacob believed
and I am among ones who submit to God. (10:90)
*It was said: Now, surely, **you** had rebelled before*
and had been among the ones who make corruption. (10:91)
*On this day We will deliver **you** with **your** physical form*
*that **you** be a sign to whoever is after **you**.*
And, truly, many among humanity
are ones who are heedless of Our signs. (10:92)

Commentary°

Here the curtains are drawn, and when they are lifted again we see Moses with those who accepted his message and believed with him. They are a small group of people. This is one of the lessons to be drawn here (10:83-10:87)

In such a situation the only course is to rely on faith in order to dispel worries and reassure people, helping them to stick to the truth they have recognized. (10:84)

The next sign adds a prayer that is even clearer with regard to the desired outcome. (10:86) These prayers do not conflict with placing their trust in God and seeking His support. Indeed they make such reliance on Him clearer. A believer does not wish for hardship and does not aspire to be the victim of tyranny, but when he is tested by what tyrants do to him, he remains steadfast.

Thus, the two lines were drawn and the two communities were clearly identified. Some people responded positively to Moses. God then advised him and his brother, the Prophet Aaron, to choose special houses for the Children of Jacob, so that they would be ready to

leave Egypt at the appointed time. He also instructed them to purify their homes and their bodies, and to trust to God. (10:87)

Having despaired of any positive response from Pharaoh and his nobles, Moses turned to his Lord with a supplication that He destroy the Egyptians' property and riches because these had lured them away from the truth, so compromising their faith. Thus they had sunk deep into error. He further prayed that the rich remain hardened in their disbelief, so that they would face a grievous punishment. God answered his supplication. (10:88-89)

Moses begins his prayer with a statement. (10:88)

He replied: Your prayer is accepted. (10:89) That then brings the matter to its due end. Continue, both of you, steadfastly on the right path. (10:89) Follow that path until the end, paying no regard to anything different. Do not follow the path of those who are devoid of knowledge. (10:89) Such people move along without guidance.

Their plans are flawed, and they lack certainty. Therefore, they are worried about their destiny, unsure of the path they follow.

The next scene depicts the event as it actually happened. (10:90-10:92) The story is meant, then, to confirm and assert the warnings. (10:90) They managed to cross it under Our guidance and protection. This statement, coming at this point, and attributing the guidance to God alone, is highly significant. They were not chasing them to follow their suit and accept divine guidance, nor was the chasing in defense of any rightful claim they might have had, but was rather an act of aggression and tyranny. Then, in no time at all, the story moves from a scene of brute tyrannical force to one of drowning. (10:91-10:92)

But the response he received came as a total shock, as God said to him: Only now? But before this you were rebelling [against Us], and you spread corruption in the land. (10:91) You believe now, when you no longer have any choice or means of escape? You have been arrogant in your disbelief, rejecting all messages and warnings. But today We shall save only your body. (10:92) His body would remain intact, uneaten by sharks or other sea creatures. It would not be allowed to drift with the waves, but would be saved so that his end would be known to all and sundry: So that you may become a sign to those who will come after you. (10:92) It may be that when others see your body they will take heed and realize that defying God and His warnings brings certain doom. The fact is that a great many people do not heed Our signs. (10:92) They do not turn to them with open hearts and minds, nor do they consider their significance, be they evident in the great universe or within their own selves.

The Children of Jacob at Variance

Makkah: *And, certainly, We placed the Children of Jacob in*
a sound place of settlement and
provided them with what is good.
And they are not at variance
until the knowledge drew near them.
*Truly, **your** Lord will decree between them*
on the Day of Resurrection about
what they had been at variance in it. (10:93)

Commentary°

The final scene in this tragedy of corruption, defiance, disobedience and tyranny is clearly shown and the curtains are drawn. The chapter then continues with a brief statement of what happened to the Children of Jacob over several generations. (10:93)

The Message of Moses

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs*
and a clear authority (11:96)
to Pharaoh and his Council
but they followed the command of Pharaoh.
And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended. (11:97)
He will go before his folk on the Day of
Resurrection and they will be led down into the fire.
Miserable will be the watering place,
that to which they are led down! (11:98)
And they were pursued by a curse in this lif
and on the Day of Resurrection!
Miserable will be, the oblation, that which is offered! (11:99)
That is from the tidings of the towns
*that We relate to **you**.*
Of them, some are ones that are standing up
and some are stubble. (11:100)

***

And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book,
but they were at variance about it.
*And if it were not for a Word that preceded from **your** Lord,*
it would be decided between them.
And, truly, they were uncertain about it,
ones in grave doubt. (11:110)

Commentary°

In the series of historical accounts given in this chapter, the final reference is made to Moses and Pharaoh. We have here only a very brief account with several references to the details of the story, but no specifics are given here. The end which Pharaoh and his people met is recorded, along with a very vivid and real scene of the Day of Resurrection. We also have a statement of a basic Islamic principle whereby individual responsibility cannot be overlooked simply because the individual concerned chooses to follow his master or ruler.

The account given here opens with God's sending Moses to Pharaoh, the great ruler of Egypt, and the chiefs of his government. God gives Moses strength and clear authority. (11:96-11:97) No details are given before the end is stated. The people simply obeyed Pharaoh and disobeyed God, despite all the stupidity, short- sightedness and excesses which characterized all that Pharaoh had done. (11:97)

The people chose to follow Pharaoh blindly, without stopping to think whether he guided them rightly or not. They degraded themselves and trampled over their own freedom and the will with which God had endowed them. Hence, it was only natural, as the Quran states, that Pharaoh will lead them on the Day of Resurrection, and that they will follow him. (11:98)

We have so far been listening to a story that happened in the past and to a promise which will be realized in the future. The scene, however, changes here and what was to be the future is now past. Pharaoh has led his people to hell, and the matter is over: "leading them to the fire." (11:98) He has led them like a shepherd leads his flock. After all, they were sheep moving blindly. They have foregone the very basic essential of humanity, namely, the freedom of choice. He has led them to hell. The Arabic expression used here has the added connotation of aiming to lead them to a fountain where they can drink. What a drink they will have, which satisfies no thirst. (11:98)

We note here that all this, the leadership of Pharaoh, and their destination to which he has led them took place a long time ago. A comment is made on it, followed by ridicule. (11:99)

The curse followed them in this life and will be sure to follow them on the Day of Resurrection. This was the gift Pharaoh gave to his people. He had indeed promised his sorcerers generous gifts. Now everyone realizes what sort of gifts Pharaoh is able to give. What is more is the fact that the gift is always renewable, never ending. (11:99)

Moses Among the Offspring of Abraham

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob.*
Each of them We guided.
And Noah We guided before
and among his offspring are David and Solomon and Job
and Joseph and Moses and Aaron.
And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)

The Divine Revelation to Moses

Makkah: *And they measured not God with His true measure*
when they said: God caused not to descend anything to a mortal.
Say: Who caused the Book to descend
that was brought about for Moses
as a light and guidance for humanity?
You make it into parchments.
You show them some of it and conceal much of it.
And you were taught what you know not, you nor your fathers.
Say: God revealed it.
Again, forsake them playing, engaging in their idle talk. (6:91)

Commentary°

The ungrateful used to stubbornly argue that God had never sent a human Messenger, nor had he ever revealed anything to a human being. They maintained this in spite of the fact that there lived alongside them in the Arabian Peninsula a number of Jewish communities. The Arab idolaters did not deny that the Jews had a revealed book or that the Torah was sent down to Moses. Those Arabs made this argument in the midst of their stubborn refusal to accept the message given to the Prophet Muhammad. Hence, the Quran denounces their claims and reminds them of Moses' scriptures. (6:91)

Moses Given the Book

Makkah: *Again, We gave Moses the Book*
rendered complete for him who did good,
a decisive explanation of all things
and as a guidance and mercy,
so that perhaps they will believe
in the meeting with their Lord. (6:154)

Commentary°

This last passage of the chapter begins by speaking about the

book revealed to Moses, i.e. the Torah. This continues the discussion of God's straight way at the end of the last passage which concluded with the sign stating: Know that this is the way leading to Me, a straight path. Follow it, then, and do not follow other ways, for they cause you to deviate from His way. (6:153) This suggests that God's way stretches long in history, as was outlined in previous divine messages. The most recent code of law given in these messages prior to Islam was that of Moses. To him, God revealed a book in which He spelled out everything, providing guidance and bestowing grace, in the hope that his people would believe in the resurrection and the meeting with their Lord. (6:154)

God's Blessings on Moses and Aaron

Chapter 37: The 56th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly We showed Our grace*
to Moses and Aaron. (37:114)
And We delivered them and their folk
from the tremendous distress (37:115)
and helped them so that they, they
had been the ones who are victors. (37:116)
And We gave them the manifest Book (37:117)
and guided them to the straight path. (37:118)
We left for them a good name with the later ones: (37:119)
Peace be on Moses and Aaron! (37:120)
Truly, thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (37:121)
Truly, they were of Our servants, ones who believe. (37:122)

Commentary°

Here we only have a glimpse of the story of Moses and Aaron, highlighting God's favors bestowed on them first in being chosen to deliver His message, then in saving them and their people from great distress, which is recounted in detail in other chapters. God's favors on them also included their victory over their enemies, Pharaoh and his people, as also giving them the Scriptures and guiding them to the right path. It should be clear that God guides to this right path only those who believe in Him. He further ensured that they would be praised by future generations. This glimpse concludes with a greeting and blessing of peace from God to Moses and Aaron. Again the type of reward given to those who do good and the great value of faith, for which believers are held in honor, is repeated here.

The Disbelievers in Moses

Chapter 40: The 60th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs*
and a clear authority (40:23)
to Pharaoh and Haman and Korah.
But they said: He is one who is a lying sorcerer. (40:24)
Then, when he drew near with The Truth from Us,
they said: Kill the children of those who believed with him
and save alive their women. And the cunning of the
ones who are ungrateful is but going astray. (40:25)
And Pharaoh said: Let me kill Moses and let him call to his Lord.
Truly, I fear that he substitute for your way of life
or that he cause to appear in and on the earth corruption. (40:26)
And Moses said: Truly, I took refuge in my Lord
and your Lord from everyone who increases in pride
and who believes not in the Day of Reckoning. (40:27)
Said a believing man of the family of Pharaoh,
who keeps back his belief:
Would you kill a man because he says:
My Lord is God, and he drew near you
with the clear portents from your Lord?
And if he be one who lies, then, on him will be his lying.
And if he be one who is sincere,
then, will light on you some of what he promises. (40:28

Commentary°

The chapter does not dwell on what happened after this first encounter, omitting the match with the sorcerers when Moses' staff swallowed their trickery and forced them to declare their acceptance of triumphant truth. Instead, it goes on to the situation that prevailed after these initial events. (40:25) A comment on this attitude is given straight away, before the sign is even finished. (40:25)

Whenever tyranny is faced with a clear argument it cannot refute, it resorts to such tactics. It dreads that truth should prevail with its clear and strong arguments that appeal directly to sound human nature. Pharaoh witnessed how his sorcerers, whom he marshaled in the hope that they would defeat Moses, were the first to respond to the truth, immediately declaring themselves as believers. By contrast, Pharaoh, Haman and Korah said to slay the male children. (40:25)

The Believer in God Among Pharaoh's People

Makkah: *Truly, God guides not him*
who is one who is excessive, a liar. (40:28)

O my folk! Yours is the dominion this day,
ones who are prominent on the earth.
But who will help us from the might of God if it drew near us?
Pharaoh said: I cause you to see not but what I see
and what I guide you to is not but the way of rectitude. (40:29)
And he who believed said: O my folk!
Truly, I fear for you like a Day of the confederates (40:30)

*****

And Pharaoh said: O Haman!
Build for me a pavilion
so that perhaps I will reach the routes, (40:36)
the routes to the heavens,
and that I may peruse The God of Moses
but, truly, I think that he is one who lies.
Thus, it was made to appear pleasing to Pharaoh,
the evil of his actions. And he was barred from the way.
And the cunning of Pharaoh was not but in defeat. (40:37)

The Message of Moses

Makkah: *And he who believed said: O my folk! Follow me;*
I will guide you to the way of rectitude. (40:38)
O my folk! Truly, this present life is nothing
but transitory enjoyment and that the world to come
is the stopping place, the Abode. (40:39)
Whoever did an evil deed will not be given recompense
but the like of it. But whoever did as one in accord with morality,
whether male or female, and such is one who believes,
then, those will enter the Garden
where they will be provided in it without reckoning. (40:40)
And O my folk! What is it to me that I call to you
for deliverance and you call to me for the fire? (40:41)
You call to me to be ungrateful to God
and to ascribe partners with Him of what there is no knowledge,
while I call you to The Almighty, The Forgiver.(40:42)
Without a doubt what you call me to has no merit.
It is not a call to the present or to the world to come.
And our turning back is to God.
And, truly, the ones who are excessive,
they will be Companions of the Fire. (40:43)
And you will remember what I say to you.
I commit my affair to God.
Truly, God is Seeing of the servants. (40:44)

So God guarded him from the evil deeds that they planned while
surrounded the people of Pharaoh an evil punishment: (40:45)
The fire to which they are presented
the first part of the day and evening.
And on a Day when the Hour is secure it is said:
Cause the people of Pharaoh
to enter the severest punishment. (40:46)
And when they dispute with one another in the fire,
the weak will say to those who grew arrogant:
Truly, we had been followers of you so will you be
ones who avail us from a share of the fire? (40:47)
Those who grew arrogant would say: Truly, we are all in it.
Truly, God, surely, gave judgment among His servants. (40:48)
And those in the fire would say to ones who are keepers of hell:
Call to your Lord to lighten the punishment
or us for a day. (40:49)
They would say: Be bringing not your Messengers
the clear portents.
They would say: Yea! They would say: Then, you call.
And the supplication of the ones who are ungrateful
only goes astray. (40:50)

Commentary°

Faced with such devious manoeuvring, the believer makes his final say clear, free of ambiguity. He calls on his people to follow him in pursuing the right course leading to God. He emphasizes to them that this present life is worthless, while the life to come provides pure bliss. He warns them against the punishment of the hereafter, exposing the hollow and false nature of idolatrous beliefs: These are the same facts established at the beginning of the chapter. The believer restates them here as he confronts Pharaoh and his noblemen. (40:38) Only a few moments earlier, it was Pharaoh who said: I am guiding you to none other than the path of rectitude. (40:29) This means that the believer was making a clear challenge, stating the word of truth, fearing nothing that the tyrant Pharaoh, or his two ministers, Haman and Korah, could do to him. He tells them of the nature of this present life, whereas the life to come is the lasting home. (40:39) It is the one to be preferred

The chapter does not dwell on what happened between Moses, Pharaoh and the Children of Jacob after this, up to the point of Pharaoh's drowning while Moses and his people were saved. Instead, it affords some glimpses of what happened thereafter, indeed, after life itself.

God delivered him from the evils of their scheming, whereas grievous suffering was to encompass Pharaohs folk. (40:45-40:50)

This present world is over, and we see the first event that succeeds it. We see the believer who stated the truth being saved from Pharaoh and his aides' scheming. They could not cause him any harm in this world, nor after it. By contrast, Pharaoh's folk were engulfed by suffering: (40:46)

We are all weak, lacking all support and help. We are all alike. So why do you put such a question to us when you realize that the noble and the weaker elements are all the same? God has judged between His creatures. There can be no review or change to His judgment. The matter is settled. No creature can reduce or amend God's judgment.

When all realize that no refuge can be sought from God's punishment except with Him, they all humbly appeal to the guards of hell, in a way that makes them all equal. (40:49) They want the guards of hell to intercede on their behalf, hoping that their terrible ordeal can be lifted a little. They ask them to pray to God to reduce their punishment for one day, just to breathe and have a bit of rest. Even a day's reduction is worth such appeals.

The guards of hell, however, do not respond to this humble and passionate appeal. They know their limits, and they are aware of God's law and that the time is long passed. Therefore, they increase the suffering of the dwellers of hell by rebuking them and reminding them of the reasons for their suffering: (40:50)

The question and its answer suffice. There is no need for any more argument. The guards of hell leave them to their fate, allowing them to sink into despair. (40:50) If any praying will change your situation even a bit, why do you not offer such prayers yourselves? The sign concludes with a comment on such prayers. (40:50) Such prayer is ignored, remains unanswered. Those who say it are forgotten, be they the leaders or their followers.

Moses Given Guidance

Chapter 40: The 60th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses the guidance*
and We gave as inheritance
to the Children of Jacob the Book (40:53)
as a guidance and a reminder
for those imbued with intuition. (40:54)

Commentary°

Moses' story shows yet another form of victory: "And indeed,

We bestowed Our guidance on Moses, and passed down the Book to the Children of Jacob as a guide and a reminder to people of understanding (40:53-40:54) Providing guidance and passing the book down to them was a form of victory that clearly reflects the breadth of its scope.

Moses Given the Book

Chapter 41: The 61st Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book.*
Then, they were at variance about it.
And if it were not for a Word that had preceded from your Lord,
it would have been decided between them.
But, truly, they are in uncertainty,
ones in grave doubt about it. (41:45)

Commentary°

A reference follows to Moses and his book, and how his people differed in their attitude to the Quran. God has deferred His judgment on their disputes. He has decreed that judgment on all this will be given on the Day of Judgment. (41:45)

Moses Sent To Pharaoh

Chapter 43: The 63rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs*
to Pharaoh and his Council.
So he said: Truly, I am a Messenger
of the Lord of the worlds. (43:46)
But when he drew near them with Our signs,
that is when they laugh at them. (43:47)
And We cause them not to see any sign,
but it was greater than its sister's sign.
And We took them with the punishment
so that perhaps they would return. (43:48)
And they said: O one who is a sorcerer!
Call for us to your Lord by the compact He made with you.
Truly, We will be ones who are truly guided. (43:49)
But when We removed the punishment from them,
that is when they break their oath! (43:50)
And Pharaoh proclaimed to his folk. He said:
O my folk! Is not the dominion of Egypt for me
and these rivers run beneath me?
Will you not, then, perceive? (43:51)

Or am I better than this one who is despicable,
who scarcely makes things clear? (43:52)
Why were bracelets of gold not cast down on him
or the angels drawn near to him
as ones who are connected with one another? (43:53)
Thus, he irritated his folk. Then, they obeyed him.
Truly, they had been a folk, ones who disobey. (43:54)
So when they provoked against Us,
We requited them and drowned them one and all (43:55)
and We made them a thing of the past
and a parable for later ages. (43:56)

Commentary°

This message proclaims that humanity have attained maturity. This makes man responsible for his choices. Such responsibility is based on individual accountability. Therefore, each one is free to choose, knowing that "your Lord is never unjust to His creatures."

The chapter then recounts an episode from Moses' life history, one that reflects Pharaoh's similarly false values. This account demonstrates how both these values and Pharaoh himself were unworthy. It tells us of the fate that awaits him and all those with similar attitudes.

Throughout this episode, the unity of the divine message is clearly apparent. Similarly, the nature of the tyrannical elders and their reception of the message of the truth is the same. They all cling to the trivial values of this world. We also see the nature of the masses who are easily led astray by their leaders. (43:46-43:47)

The episode starts with a very brief reference to the first meeting between Moses and Pharaoh, as a prelude to the main point intended here, which is to portray the similarity of the objections made by Pharaoh and the pagan Arabs, as also their similar values. It sums up the nature of Moses' message. (Verse 46) It is the same truth stated by every Messenger: that he is a Messenger sent by the Lord of all the worlds. The signs then provides a very quick reference to the signs given to Moses, adding how the people received these. (43:47) The arrogant and the ignorant always behave this way.

This is followed by a reference to the testing hardships God inflicted on Pharaoh and his people, which are detailed in other chapters (43:48-43:50):

Pharaoh knew how to manipulate his peoples hearts and delude them with his riches: (43:52) What he meant by referring to 'this contemptible wretch1 was that Moses was not a king, a prince, or a man of power or wealth. Or perhaps he meant that Moses belonged to the

Children of Jacob, a wretched and enslaved community in Egypt. His other description of Moses as one 'who can hardly make his meaning clear refers to his speech impediment. Nothing now prevented him from making his meaning clear. In the eyes of the masses, Pharaoh, with his terrestrial kingdom, was better than Moses, even though he had the word of truth, was a Prophet, and advocated the faith that ensured safety from hell.

Is such a petty thing as a gold bracelet (43:53) needed to confirm a divine message? Is a mere trifling to be valued as greater than the miracles God gave to His Messenger? Or, perhaps, Pharaoh meant that Moses should have been crowned as king to give him power as well as the message. (43:53) This is yet another deceptive objection, one that is often leveled at God's Messengers

The time of tests, warnings and education was over. God was fully aware that these people would not believe. The masses willingly obeyed Pharaoh, an arrogant tyrant, turning a blind eye to God's light and His clear signs. Therefore, the warning had to be fulfilled and God's word was issued: (43:55-43:56)

Pharaoh and His Army Drowned

Chapter 44: The 64th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We tried a folk of Pharaoh*
before them when there drew near them
a generous Messenger: (44:17)
Give back to me the servants of God, the Children of Jacob.
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you. (44:18)
And rise not up against God.
Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority. (44:19)
Truly, I took refuge in my Lord
and your Lord so that you not stone me. (44:20)
But if you believe not in me, then, withdraw. (44:21)
So he called on his Lord: Truly, these are a folk,
ones who sin. (44:22)
He said: Set you forth with my
servants by night. Truly, you will be
ones who are followed. (44:23)
And leave the sea calmly as it is.
Truly, they will be an army, one that is drowned. (44:24)
How many they left behind of gardens and springs (44:25)
and crops and generous stations (44:26)
and prosperity in which they had been,
ones who are joyful! (44:27)
And, thus, We gave it as inheritance to another folk. (44:28)

And neither the heavens wept for them nor the earth nor had they been ones who are given respite. (44:29)

Commentary°

Moses received an endorsement from God with regard to his evaluation of his peoples' status: they were truly guilty. (44:23-24) That their flight was to occur at night comes in for stronger emphasis in the Arabic text: the verb *asri*, translated as set forth, implies that the march must be under cover of darkness, then the [sign] adds the word *laylan*, meaning by night. Thus they set forth stealthily, at night, unseen by Pharaoh and his watchmen. Furthermore, they were instructed not to make any disturbance in the parted sea as they crossed through it.

Thus, Pharaoh and his army would be tempted to pursue them and God's will would then be as He had determined. Their army is drowned? (44:24) Thus, God's will is done through apparent causes, but these causes are part and parcel of His will and how it is accomplished.

The chapter sums up the scene of this mass drowning in words that express God's will, which inevitably comes to pass. (44:24) This is followed with a comment highlighting Pharaoh's humiliation as also of those who supported his arrogant tyranny.

The scene begins with an image of the splendid comfort in which they dwelled: gardens, fountains, plants, high position, honor and blessings in which they revelled. Yet all this is taken away from them, or they are removed from it, so as to give it to others.

A very brief account of the history of Moses and Pharaoh is then added. It concludes with a mighty strike in this present life, corresponding to the mighty onslaught that will strike them on the day when the skies will bring forth their smoke. (44:17-44:29)

What happened next? Those same tyrants, who had gloried in their power and who were held in awe by people, were removed altogether. None grieved for them. Neither earth nor heaven felt their loss. Nor were they given any reprieve: Neither heaven nor earth shed tears over them, nor were they allowed a respite. (44:29) The statement carries connotations of humiliation and total disregard. No one on earth or in heaven was sorry about how these tyrants met their end. They were crushed like ants under foot. The whole universe hated them because they had split themselves away from it. This is a universe that believes in its Lord while they denied Him. Theirs were evil souls, untouchable by the universe in which they lived. Had these tyrants felt what these words imply, they would have foreseen

their own humiliation and known that the universe looks upon them as creatures apart.

Pharaoh Exalts Himself

Pharaoh. Truly, He had been one who exalts himself
and was of the ones who are excessive. (44:31)

Commentary°

We saved the Children of Jacob from humiliating suffering, from Pharaoh, who was arrogant and a transgressor. We chose them knowingly above all other people. And We gave them signs in which there was a clear test. (44:30-44:33)

It was from humiliating suffering that the Children of Jacob were saved. This contrasts with the humiliation that the Egyptian tyrants and transgressors found themselves in. They were saved from Pharaoh, who was arrogant and a transgressor. (44:31)

The Children of Jacob Delivered

Makkah: *And, certainly, We delivered the Children of Jacob*
from the despised punishment (44:30)
of Pharaoh. Truly He had been one who exalts himself
and was of the ones who are excessive (44:31)
And, certainly, We chose them with knowledge
above the worlds (44:32)
and gave them the signs
in which there was a clear trial. (44:33)

Commentary°

The chapter then mentions the fact that God chose the Children of Jacob, knowing all about them, with both their positive and negative qualities. Yet He chose them in preference to all other people in their own time. God knew that they were, at the time, the best people to be given the trust. Perhaps God made His choice on the basis that whilst they did not then attain the high standard of faith He required, they would nonetheless be the best under a faithful leadership that led them along the straight path of faith and insight.

The Children of Jacob Given the Book

Chapter 45: The 65th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave the Children of Jacob the Book*
the critical judgment and the prophethood
and We provided them from what is good
and We gave them advantage over the worlds (45:16)
and We gave them clear portents of the command.

And they are not at variance until after the knowledge
drew near them through insolence among themselves.
Truly, your Lord will decree between them
on the Day of Resurrection
about what they had been at variance in it. (45:17)

The Children of Jacob Bear Witness

Chapter 46: The 66th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Say: Considered you*
if this had been from God and you were ungrateful for it
and bore witness as one who bears witness
from among the Children of Jacob to its like
and believed in it, yet you grew arrogant,
how unjust you are; truly, God guides not the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (46:10)

Commentary°

This [sign 46:10] may refer to one or more of the Jews who, knowing the nature of the Torah, recognized that the Quran had the same nature as earlier revealed books and, therefore, declared themselves believers in Islam.

The chapter uses a special style in presenting its argument to them: Have you thought: what if this Quran is really from God and you reject it?... (46:10) It aims to shake their stubborn rejection and raise a fear within them concerning the eventual result. Since there is a possibility that the Quran may really be from God, as Muhammad (peace be upon him) says, should they not take precautions lest their rejection of it brings them to a terrible end? Could all the warnings it provides come true? Would they not be better advised to reflect on the whole matter lest they leave themselves open to all that it warns them against? Taking such precautions is all the wiser, considering that one or more of the people of divine faiths confirmed that the Quran is of the same nature as earlier revealed scriptures, and followed this by declaring their belief in it. By contrast, they, whose language the Quran speaks, persist with their rejection. This is indeed blatant wrongdoing as it suppresses the truth. It deserves Gods punishment: u God does not guide wrongdoers." (46:10)

The Book of Moses

Makkah: *Yet before it was the Book of Moses for a leader*
and as a mercy. . (46:12)

Pharoah and his Armies Cast Into the Sea

Chapter 51: The 67th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And in Moses, then,*
We sent him to Pharaoh with a clear authority. (51:38)
Then Pharaoh turned away to his court
He said: One who is a sorcerer, one who is possessed! (51:39)
So We took him and his armies
and cast them forth into the water of the sea
and he is one who is answerable. (51:40)

Commentary°

Another sign is cited from the history of Moses. A brief reference to this is made within the context of the signs from the history of God's Messengers. (51:38-40)

The clear authority God gave to Moses was his powerful argument and irrefutable proof, as well as that people were in awe of his presence. Yet Pharaoh turned away, proud of his power, and rejected the clear truth and the decisive proof. When Moses showed him the miraculous signs God had given him, Pharaoh said that Moses was 'a sorcerer or a madman. This confirms that miracles will not guide a heart that is not prepared to believe. They cannot silence a voice that insists on repeating fabrications.

The chapter does not give details of Moses story. It proceeds straight to its conclusion. (51:40) Pharaoh certainly deserved all blame because of his transgression and rejection of God s message. The phraseology here clearly indicates God's direct action in seizing Pharaoh and his army and casting them into the sea. This is deliberately highlighted as it fits with the exhibition of God s signs on earth, in man and throughout history.

Moses and His Journey to the Meeting of the Two Seas (1)

Chapter 18: The 69th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Mention when Moses*
said to his spiritual warrior:
I will not quit until I reach the place of meeting of the two seas
even if I will go on for many years. (18:60)
But when they reached the place of the meeting between them,
then, they both forgot their great fish
and it took to itself a way through the sea, burrowing. (18:61)
Then, when they crossed, he said to his spiritual warrior:
Give us our breakfast.

Certainly, we met fatigue from our journey. (18:62)
*He said: Had **you** considered?*
When we took shelter at the rock, truly, I forgot the great fish.
And none but Satan caused me to forget to remember it.
And it took to itself to a way into the sea
in a wondrous way. (18:63)
He said: That is what we had been looking for!
So they went back following their footsteps. (18:64)
Then, they found a servant among Our servants
to whom We gave mercy from Us and We taught him knowledge
which proceeds from Our Presence. (18:65)
*Moses said to him: May I follow **you***
*so that **you** will teach me something of what*
***you** were taught of right judgment?* (18:66)
*He said: Truly, **you** will never be able*
to have patience with me. (18:67)
*And how will **you** endure a thing patiently*
*when **you** have not comprehended any awareness of it?* (18:68)
*Moses said: **You** will find me, if God willed,*
one who remains steadfast
*and I will not rebel against **your** command.* (18:69)
*He said: Then, if **you** had followed me,*
ask me not about anything
*until I cause to be evoked in **you***
a remembrance of it. (18:70)

Commentary°

This part of the chapter begins by relating an episode in the life of the Prophet Moses which is not told or hinted at anywhere else in the Quran. The chapter does not give details of where this episode took place other than saying, 'the place where the two seas meet.' Nor does it define the period in Moses lifetime when the events took place. Thus, we do not know whether the events related took place when Moses was still in Egypt, before he led the Children of Jacob on their way to Palestine, or after they had left it. If the latter, was it before he led them into the Holy Land, or when they stopped, refusing to enter because they did not wish to confront its powerful inhabitants? Was it after they had begun their forty years of wandering in the land, going to and fro, in total loss?

The event involves a goodly servant of God's whom Moses meets and accompanies for a period of time. But the chapter does not give us any details of the identity of this person. It does not mention his name or status. Was he a Prophet, a Messenger, a scholar, or

a person favor ed by God for his strong faith and complete dedication to the service of His cause?

Moses said to his spiritual warrior that he shall journey (18:60) Most probably, and God knows best, the place described here as the 'point where the two seas meet' refers to the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and their meeting place is the area where the Bitter lakes and the Timsah lake are found along the Suez Canal. It may also be a reference to the meeting point of the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqabah at the northern end of the Red Sea. This whole area witnessed the history of the Children of Jacob after they left Egypt. Anyway, the Quran only refers to it in passing without defining it further. There are several other reports suggesting where the area was that the two seas meet, but we feel these are all unacceptable.

But when they reached the junction between the two seas, they forgot their fish, and it took its way into the sea and disappeared from sight. And after they had marched on for some distance. (18:61-63)

Most probably, the fish was cooked. Its raising back to life and its moving straight into the sea was a sign given by God to Moses, so that he would know the place where he was to meet the man. This is indicated by the amazement expressed by the servant when he saw the fish swimming in the sea. Had the fish only dropped into the sea and settled at the bottom, there would be nothing strange in the matter. What makes this interpretation more plausible is that the whole trip was full of surprises that go beyond imagination, and this was only one of them.

Moses realized that he had gone beyond the place where he was to meet the man, which was by the rock where he and his servant had stayed for a little rest. Hence he traced his way back to it and there they met the man they sought: (18:64-18:65)

It also seems that this meeting was to remain Moses' secret, given to him by his Lord. His servant did not know anything about it until they met the man. Therefore, the following scenes in the story speak only about Moses and the pious man endowed with knowledge.

First Jolting Shock: Moses addresses the pious sage in a most polite manner. It is the sort of politeness that is worthy of a Prophet. He puts his request, without making any assumptions, and he makes it clear that he seeks proper knowledge from a good servant of God:

The man's knowledge however is nothing like human knowledge with its immediate causes and inevitable results. It is a part of divine knowledge that God has granted him, according to a measure He determined and for a purpose He wanted to accomplish. Moses could not be expected to be patient with the man and his actions,

even though Moses was a Prophet and a Messenger from God. Looked at superficially, these actions may appear to have no logical justification whatsoever. They could not be understood without having access to the wisdom dictating them, and that is part of divine wisdom that people cannot begin to comprehend.

The sage understandably fears that Moses may not have the patience required to make of him a comfortable companion. (18:67-18:68) But Moses is so eager to learn. Hence he resolves to be very patient and obedient, seeks God's help and places God's will ahead of his own resolve. (18:69)

The man reiterates the difficulties ahead, stating to Moses a condition for his companionship: that he remain patient and not question the sage about any action he takes until he himself reveals its purpose. (18:70)

Moses and His Journey to the Meeting of the Two Seas (2)

Makkah: *So they both set out until*
when they embarked in a vessel.
He made a hole in it.
*Moses said: Had **you** made a hole in it*
in order to drown the people?
*Certainly, **you** had brought about a dreadful thing!* (18:71)
*He said: Said I not that **you** will never be able*
to have patience with me? (18:72)
Moses said: Take me not to task for what I forgot
and constrain me not with hardship for my affair. (18:73)
Then, they both set out until when they met a boy;
*then, he killed him. Moses said: Had **you** killed a pure soul*
without his having slain a soul?
*Certainly, **you** had brought about a horrible thing!* (18:74)
*He said: Said I not that **you** wilt never be able*
to have patience with me? (18:75)
*Moses said: If I asked **you** about anything after this,*
then, keep not company with me,
*surely, **you** had reached enough of excusing*
from my presence! (18:76)
Then, they both set out
until when they approached a people of a town.
They asked its people for food.
But they refused to receive them as guests.
Then, they found in it a wall

that wants to tumble down, so he repaired it.
*Moses said: If **you** had willed,*
*certainly, **you** woulds have taken compensation*
*to **yourself** for it.* (18:77)
*He said: This is the parting between me and between **you**!*
*I will tell **you** the interpretation*
*of what **you** were not able to have patience for it.* (18:78)
As for the vessel, it had been of some needy people
who toil in the sea,
so I wanted to mar it as there had been a king behind them
taking every vessel forcefully. (18:79)
And as for the boy, both his parents had been ones who believe,
and we dreaded that he should constrain them
with defiance and ingratitude, (18:80)
so we wanted their Lord to cause for them
in exchange one better than he
in purity and nearer in sympathy. (18:81)
As for the wall, it had been that of two orphan boys in the city
and beneath it had been a treasure for them.
The father of both of them had been one in accord with morality
*so **your** Lord wanted they be fully grown, having come of age,*
*and pull out their treasure as a mercy from **your** Lord.*
And I accomplished that not of my own command.
*This is the interpretation of what **you** were*
not able to have patience for it. (18:82)

Commentary°

Soon afterwards comes the first scene from the trip. (18:71) This is certainly a strange thing to do. The boat carried both men as well as other passengers. They are all in the middle of the sea, and the sage makes a hole in the boat. On the surface, this is an action that exposes the boat and all its passengers to the risk of being drowned. Why would anyone, let alone a learned and devout person, do such an evil thing?

Confronted with such an apparently outrageous action, Moses simply forgets the conversation that he had had with the sage. A human being may accept something when it is discussed in abstract terms, but when he faces it in practice and looks at its consequences, his reaction may be totally different. Practical matters have a totally different effect. Here we see Moses, having already been warned against apparently outrageous actions and having resolved to remain patient, loses all patience when faced with a tough situation.

With such an impulsive nature, Moses could not be patient when

he saw his companion making a hole in the boat. He forgot all about his promise. Human nature is shown not to comprehend matters fully except through practical experience. Hence Moses says in objection. (18:71)

But the sage tolerates this with patience, and he gently reminds Moses of what he said earlier. (18:72) Moses now regrets his overreaction, saying that he completely forgot. He requests the man to accept his apologies and not to rebuke him. (18:73) The man accepts his apologies and the two proceed further.

There are, however, other strange events awaiting Moses which would exhaust his patience. (18:74)

The first action exposed the boat and its passengers to certain risks. Now there is the blatant murder of a young man without provocation or justification. This was too much for Moses to tolerate patiently, despite all the promises he had given not to question anything he saw. (18:74)

This suggests that Moses was not unmindful of his promise. He probably remembered it, but felt unable to keep quiet when he witnessed a murder. To him, the young man was innocent. He had not perpetrated anything to justify his killing. He was perhaps even under age, so that he could not be held accountable for any misdeeds.

Once again the sage reminds Moses of the condition he has made and the promises Moses has given, referring also to what he said in the first place. (18:75) This time, however, the sage goes further and reminds Moses that he said all this to him personally. So the early warning was addressed to Moses personally, but he was not convinced. He had sought to be the man's companion accepting his conditions.

Again Moses reflects, knowing that he has broken his promises twice, forgetting it despite reminders. His regret makes him too apologetic, depriving himself of any possibility of a lengthy companionship with the sage. He gives himself only one last chance:. (18:76)

This brings us to the third and last scene: And so the two went on until they came to a town, where they asked its people for food, but they refused them all hospitality. There they found a wall on the point of falling down, and [the sage] rebuilt it. (18:77)

The two are hungry but find themselves in a town whose population are extremely inhospitable. They receive no guests and give nothing to the poor and hungry. Yet the man finds a wall there about to fall down. The Arabic text is more vivid, making the wall almost like a living creature with a will that makes it want to fall. Yet this stranger occupies himself with rebuilding the wall for nothing.

Moses finds the situation full of irony. Why should such a stranger exert so much effort in rebuilding a wall in a town where they were denied even a little food and all hospitality? He should have at least demanded some money for his labors and then they could have bought some food to eat. He says: Had you wished, you could have taken payment for what you did. (18:77)

This signaled the end of this unlikely companionship. Moses no longer had any excuse to offer. (18:78)

Up to this point Moses, as well as everyone following the story, have been subjected to a series of surprises with no indication as to their meaning or purpose. Our response is the same as that of Moses. We do not even know who the person was who did such singular acts. The Quran does not tell us his name, in order to add to the general air of bafflement surrounding us.

But what would his name add? The sage simply represents higher divine wisdom that does not attach results to their immediate causes. It aims to explain that there are objectives of which we may know nothing about. Hence, keeping his name from us fits in well with the abstract concept he represents.

Furthermore, higher forces dictate the development of the story right from the beginning. Moses is so keen to meet this man, he travels until he is totally worn out. But his servant leaves their food at the rock where they stopped to rest. But his forgetfulness is the cause of their return only to find the man at that very spot. Had they travelled on, they would have missed him. The whole atmosphere is shrouded in secrecy, just like the man's name.

The secret is then revealed: As for the boat, it belonged to some needy people who toiled upon the sea—and I desired to slightly damage it because behind them there was a king who was taking every boat by force. (18:79) This explains that the small damage the boat suffered was enough to save it for its people. Had it been seaworthy, it would certainly have been confiscated by the tyrannical king. Perpetrating some small damage to the boat saved it from the greater harm and ruinous injustice that was certain to take place without it. Hence, causing such damage was a good and kindly action.

And as for the young man, his parents are true believers, and we feared lest he should cause them much grief by his overweening wickedness and unbelief. And so we desired that their Lord grant them in his stead [a son] of greater purity than him, and closer in loving tenderness. (18:80-18:81)

This young man appeared at the time to be deserving of no punishment, but God revealed his true nature to the sage. We realize now that he harbored all the seeds of wickedness and unbelief that were

bound to increase as he grew up. Had he lived, he would have caused his parents, believers as they were, too much trouble. He might have led them, out of love for him, to follow him in his wickedness. Hence, God directed His goodly servant to kill the boy in order to replace him with one who would be better and more dutiful.

Had the matter been left to human knowledge, the sage could not have treated the boy except on the basis of what appeared to him. He would have had no justification in killing him, particularly since the boy appeared to be still under age, having done nothing to deserve capital punishment. It is not up to anyone, other than God Himself or one to whom God imparts knowledge from Him personally, to judge anyone on the basis of his nature. Nor is it permissible to make such knowledge the basis of any action other than that which appearances allow. But God may command what He wills, as He does in this case.

And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys living in the town, and beneath it was buried a treasure belonging to them. Their father had been a righteous man. So your Lord has willed it that when they come of age they should dig up their treasure by your Lord's grace. (18:82)

This wall that the sage labored to rebuild, asking no wages for his labours despite the refusal of hospitality from the townspeople, had a treasure underneath. This treasure belonged to two young orphans in the town. Had the wall been left to fall down, the treasure would have become visible and the two boys would not have been able to claim it, considering their weakness. Since their father was a pious and righteous man, God allowed his children to benefit by his piety while they were weak. He willed to give them the time necessary to grow up and dig up their treasure when they were in a position to keep it.

The sage then disowns any share in this whole matter. It is God's grace that dictated all his actions. It was all by God's command who had imparted to him the necessary knowledge in such cases and others, showing him what to do in each case: I did not do any of this of my own accord. (18:82)

Thus the secret is made clear, and all the actions of the sage that seemed preposterous in the first instance appear to be simple and wise. Now that the curtain has been removed and the secret revealed, the man disappears totally from the scene and no further mention is made of him in this chapter nor indeed throughout the rest of the Quran. The story itself represents God's great wisdom, which reveals itself only when and as needed.

Within the context of the whole chapter , this story about Moses and the sage is closely linked to the story of the young sleepers in

the cave. Both agree that what lies beyond our human perception should be left totally to God, who will conduct it on the basis of His perfect and absolute knowledge. As for us, we know only what is told to us.

The Message of Moses

Chapter 14: The 72nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Moses*
with Our signs saying:
*Bring out **your** folk from the shadows into the light*
and remind them of the Days of God.
Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one. (14:5)
And mention when Moses said to his folk:
Remember the divine blessing of God to you
when He rescued you from the people of Pharaoh
who cause an affliction to befall you—a dire punishment—
and slaughter your children and save alive your women.
And in it was a serious trial from your Lord. (14:6)
And mention when your Lord caused to be proclaimed:
If you gave thanks, I will increase your blessings.
And if you were ungrateful, truly,
My punishment will be severe. (14:7)
And Moses said: Even if you are ungrateful, you
and what is in and on the earth altogether,
then, truly, God is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise. (14:8)

Commentary°

Moses began to fulfill his task and remind his people. (14:6) He reminds them first of God's grace when he delivered them from the great torment inflicted on them by Pharaoh's people. That torment was visited on them time after time, with little reprieve. One of the ghastlier features of that torment was the killing of the male as a means of preventing them from increasing in number. This aimed to ensure their continued weakness and subjugation. The fact that God saved them from all this was a great act demonstrating His grace. It should be remembered with gratitude

Moses continues to explain matters to his people after having reminded them of the Days of God, and directed them to the ultimate objective of the trial. He tells them about the reward God attaches to gratitude and His punishment for ingratitude: (14:7)

It is useful to reflect a little here on this great truth whereby God's blessings are increased for the grateful and whereby severe punishment awaits those who adopt the opposite stance. In the first instance, we feel reassured, since it is a promise by God, and God

always fulfills His promises. It must come to pass. If we want to see it in practice, and look for its material causes, we need not go very far.

The Criterion Given to Moses and Aaron as a Reminder for the God-conscious.

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses and Aaron the Criterion between right and wrong and an illumination and a Remembrance for the ones who are God-conscious.* (21:48)

Commentary°

In this third passage the chapter speaks about the communities that followed God's Messengers, but it is not exhaustive in this respect. Some are not mentioned at all. Some are given only a brief mention, while others are referred to in some detail. We see in these references how God takes care of His Messengers and bestows His grace on them. We also see the fate of those who continued to accuse their Messengers of being liars, even though clear proof was given to them. We are further given an idea of how God tests His Messengers, at times with delightful pleasures and at others with much affliction, and how they pass these tests.

The wisdom behind sending human Messengers is also clear in this passage. The oneness of the faith and the way to be followed by all Messengers, at all times, is also clearly apparent. We feel that they belong to a single community, despite the fact that they lived at different times and in different places. All this testifies to the oneness of the Maker, the will behind all events, and the consistency of the overall law that governs and unites the universe. It directs us all to one end: namely, to serve the One God worthy of worship. (21:92)

The Torah is also described as a guiding light that dispels all the darkness that may engulf the human mind, leading to errant beliefs. It also dispels the darkness that leads people astray and the darkness of falsehood. In such types of darkness both reason and conscience may find themselves at a loss. Indeed, the human heart remains in darkness until the light of faith is kindled within it. Faith thus sets it aglow, clearly setting its approach, guiding it to the path that should be followed, so that confusion does not arise from divergent values and concepts.

Moses and Aaron Sent to Pharaoh

Chapter 23: The 74th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Again, We sent Moses and his brother Aaron*

with Our signs and clear authority (23:45)
to Pharaoh and his Council.
Then, they grew arrogant and they had been a folk,
ones who exalt themselves. (23:46)
Then, they said: Will we believe in two mortals like ourselves
while their folk are ones who worship us? (23:47)
So they denied both of them.
They had been among the ones who are caused to perish. (23:48)
And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book
so that perhaps they will be truly guided. (23:49)

Commentary°

Again in this account we note that the same objection is given to the fact that the Messenger was merely a human being. (23:47) A specific consideration connected with the Children of Jacob's situation in Egypt is also added. (23:47) They are subservient to us and they do our bidding. In this situation, Moses and Aaron deserve, in Pharaoh's and his people's view, to be looked down upon. As for the revelations and the signs they have been given by God, and the clear authority granted to them, these count for nothing according to these people, focused as they are on earthly considerations and false values.

The Book of Moses a Guidance for the Children of Jacob

Chapter 32: The 75th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book.*
So be you not hesitant about meeting Him.
And We assigned it as a guidance
for the Children of Jacob. (32:23)

Pharaoh Rebelled Against the Lord of Moses

Chapter 69: The 78th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Pharaoh and whoever draw near before him*
and the ones that are cities overthrown
were ones of inequity (69:9)
and they rebelled against the Messenger of their Lord,
so He took them with a swelling, taking. (69:10)
When the waters became turbulent,
we carried you in that which runs on water, (69:11)
that We make it an admonition for you,
nd attentive ears would hold onto it. (69:12)

There is a Lesson in the Fate of Pharaoh

Chapter 79: The 81st Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Approached **you** the discourse of Moses* (79:15)
when his Lord cried out to him
in the sanctified valley of Tuwa: (79:16)
*Be **you** gone to Pharaoh. Truly, he was defiant.* (79:17)
*And say: Would **you** purify **yourself**?* (79:18)
*And I will guide **you** to **your** Lord,*
*then, **you** will dread Him.* (79:19)
And he caused him to see the greater sign. (79:20)
But Pharaoh denied and rebelled. (79:21)
Again, Pharaoh drew back, hastening about. (79:22)
Then, Pharaoh assembled them; then, proclaimed. (79:23)
Then, Pharaoh said: I am your lofty lord. (79:24)
So God took him with an exemplary punishment
for the last and for the first. (79:25)
Truly, in that is a lesson for whoever dreads God. (79:26)

Commentary°

The rhythm then slows down a little in order to suit the style of narration. For next we have an account of what took place between Moses and Pharaoh, and the end which Pharaoh met after he had tyrannized and transgressed all bounds.

He showed Pharaoh the mightiest miracle, but Pharaoh cried lies and rebelled. He then turned away hastily. He summoned all his men and made a proclamation to them: I am your supreme Lord, he said. God smote him with the scourge of both the life to come and this life. Surely in this there is a lesson for the God-fearing. (79:15-26)

God teaches Moses how to address this tyrant in the most persuasive manner. (79:18) The first question then is whether or not the tyrant would like to purify himself of the stains of tyranny and abominable disobedience to God. Would he like to know the path of the pious, the blessed? (79:19) The offer here is for Pharaoh to be shown the way acceptable to God. Once he knows it, he will feel the fear of God in his heart. The human being does not transgress and tyrannize unless he loses his way and finds himself taking a road which does not lead to God. His heart hardens as a result, and he rebels and resorts to tyranny.

Moses was told all this when God called to him. He of course puts these questions to Pharaoh when he encounters him. The chapter , however, does not repeat them when it describes the encounter. It skips over what happens after God's call to Moses and deletes what Moses says when he conveys his message. It is as if the curtain falls

after the call to repentance. When it is lifted again, we are presented with the end of the encounter. (79:20-79:21)

Thus, Moses conveys the message with which he has been entrusted in the manner God has taught him. This warm, friendly attitude, however, cannot win over a heart that has been hardened by tyranny and ignorance of the Lord of the universe. So Moses shows him the great miracles of the stick turning into a snake and Moses's own hand becoming a brilliant white, as they are described in other chapters: but he cried lies and rebelled. (79:21) The scene ends with Pharaoh's rejection and rebellion against God.

Pharaoh then turns away to mobilize his forces and bring forward his sorcerers for an encounter between magic and the truth. Essentially, Pharaoh was determined not to accept the truth or submit to right. (79:22-79:24) The chapter does not give any details of Pharaoh's efforts to muster his magicians, sorcerers and men. It simply says that he went away to do so, and then uttered his impertinent proclamation. (79:24)

The Mission of Moses

Chapter 29: The 85th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And Korah and Pharaoh and Haman and, certainly, Moses drew near to them with the clear portents, but they grew arrogant on the earth and they had not been ones who take the lead from Us.* (29:39)

Commentary°

Another very brief reference is made to earlier ungrateful. (29:39) Korah as we learned in the previous chapter was one of Moses' people. He behaved wrongfully towards them, using his wealth and knowledge in oppressive ways. He did not listen to the advice of honest and sincere people who counseled him to follow the path of moderation, humility and justice. Pharaoh was a terrible despot who committed ghastly and horrible crimes, enslaving people and sowing discord between them. In brutal defiance of all justice, he killed the male offspring of the Children of Jacob but spared their females. Haman was his minister who managed his schemes, assisting him in his tyrannical rule. (29:39) Their wealth, power and cunning could not protect them from God's punishment. They could not escape it. It engulfed them all. (29:39) Those who possessed power, wealth, the means to overpower others as well as the means to ensure their own survival have all gone. God destroyed them all after they had long oppressed and persecuted others.

The Children of Jacob Reminded of the Blessings They Received

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *O Children of Jacob!*
Remember My divine blessing
with which I was gracious to you
and live up to the compact with Me.
I will live up to the compact with you.
And have reverence for Me alone. (2:40)
And believe in what I caused to descend,
that which establishes as true what is with you.
And be not the first one who is ungrateful for it.
And exchange not My signs for a little price.
And fear Me, God, alone. (2:41)
And confuse not The Truth with falsehood
nor keep back The Truth while you know. (2:42)
And perform the formal prayer,
and give the purifying alms,
and bow down with the ones who bow down. (2:43)
You command humanity to virtuous conduct
and forget yourselves while you relate the Book?
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (2:44)
And pray for help with patience and formal prayer.
And, truly, it is arduous, but for the ones who are humble, (2:45)
those who bear in mind that,
truly, they, they will be ones who encounter their Lord
and that to Him they will be ones who return. (2:46)

Children of Jacob Warned

Madinah: *And mention when We delivered you*
from the people of Pharaoh who cause an affliction
to befall you of a dire punishment.
They slaughter your children and save alive your women.
And in that there is a tremendous trial from your Lord. (2:49)
And mention when We separated the sea for you,
and We rescued you, and We drowned
the people of Pharaoh while you look on. (2:50)
And mention when We appointed for Moses forty nights.
Again, you took the calf to yourselves after him
and you were ones who are unjust. (2:51)
Again, We pardoned you after that,
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (2:52)
And mention when We gave Moses the Book,

and the Criterion between right and wrong,
so that perhaps you will be truly guided. (2:53)
And mention when Moses said to his folk:
O my folk! Truly, you did wrong to yourselves
by your taking the calf to yourselves to worship,
so repent to One Who is your Fashioner and kill yourselves.
That would be better for you with One Who is your Fashioner.
Then He will turn to you in forgiveness.
Truly, He, He is The Accepter of Repentance,
The Compassionate. (2:54)
And mention when you said: O Moses!
We will never believe you until we see God publicly.
So the thunderbolt took you while you look on. (2:55)
Again, We will raise you up after your death
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (2:56)
And We shaded over you cloud shadows.
We caused to descend to you the manna and the quails.
Eat of what is good that We provided you.
And they did not wrong Us.
Rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (2:57)
And mention when We said: Enter this town,
then, eat freely from it whatever you willed,
and enter the door as one who prostrates oneself and say:
Unburden us of sin! We will forgive you your transgressions.
And We will increase the ones who are doers of good. (2:58)
Then, those who did wrong substituted another sayin
—other than what was said to them—
so We caused to descend on those who did wron
wrath from heaven,
because they had been disobeying. (2:59)

Commentary°

The chapter proceeds to enumerate the favors God had extended to the Children of Jacob, the most significant of which was their deliverance from the tyranny and persecution of the Pharaoh. It portrays their response to these favors that was marked with lack of appreciation and flagrant violation of God's commandments. (Verses 49-50)

The Quran graphically recalls the ordeals suffered by the Children of Jacob's forefathers, as if the later Jews themselves had undergone those experiences. It stresses the act of deliverance as well as the torment and the persecution that preceded it. It makes the specific point that the whole experience contained an element of trial by God to the Children of Jacob, testing their faith and resolve, and their

trust in the Lord. The expression used in this sign in reference to the suffering adds connotations that the suffering was like food given regularly. It highlights one aspect of that suffering, which is the killing of young men. This was meant to weaken the Jews and exhaust their strength.

Having recalled the painful part of the episode, the chapter portrays the scene of delivery when God parted the sea for you, led you to safety and drowned Pharaoh's people before your very eyes. (Verse 50)

Nevertheless, God pardoned them and gave their Prophet, Moses, the Torah as a source of guidance for them. However, there was need for a thorough cleansing of ranks. Such a shaky nature could only be steadied by a very stringent atonement. (Verse 54) Thus, the order was given to kill those who went far astray as a means of cleansing for the whole community

While on Mount Sinai, the Children of Jacob had the audacity to demand from Moses that they should see God in person, to which God responded by striking them with a thunderbolt that left them as dead. Nevertheless, God was again merciful towards them and restored them to consciousness, so that they might appreciate His kindness and show gratitude.

God also recalls for them how He had taken care of their forefathers when they were lost in the wilderness, providing them with food and protecting them against the scorching heat of the sun. Historic records indicate that the Children of Jacob, on leaving Egypt, crossed the Red Sea into the Sinai desert. It was hot and without water, which put them in danger of dying of starvation. But, God bestowed His grace on them and provided them with a special type of food, as sweet as honey, which they called manna. God also sent them flocks of quail that they could easily catch and eat. Clouds would gather above them to protect them from the heat of the desert sun. Thus God alleviated their suffering in the wilderness, but, as the sign comments, they showed no appreciation or gratitude. As such, they were the losers. (2:57)

The chapter reminds the Children of Jacob of more of their acts of intransigence. (2:58-2:59)

The Children of Jacob descended from twelve tribes who went back to the twelve sons of Jacob, or Jacob, father of the Jews. When they needed water in the desert, they asked Moses to provide it for them, and he turned to God for help. God answered his prayers, and asked Moses to strike a rock with his stick, whereupon twelve springs, one for each tribe, spurted out with enough water for all their needs. They were given all this by God's grace, but they were also warned against spreading corruption. (2:60)

Moses' Prayer and the Providential Supply of Water

Madinah: *And mention when Moses*
asked for water for his folk.
Then, We said: Strike the rock with your staff.
Then, twelve springs ran out from it.
Every clan knew their drinking place.
Eat and drink from the provision of God,
and do no mischief in and on the earth
as ones who make corruption. (2:60)
And mention when you said: O Moses!
We will never endure patiently with one kind of food,
so call to your Lord for us to drive out for us
of what the earth is bringing forth of its green herbs
and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions.
Moses said: Would you have in exchange
what is lesser for what is higher?
Get down to a settled country.
Then, truly for you is what you asked for.
And stamped on them were abasement and wretchedness.
And they drew the burden of anger from God.
That was because they had been ungrateful for the signs of God,
and kill the Prophets without right. (2:61)

The Children of Jacob Reminded of Their Blessings

Madinah: *Truly those who have believed*
and those who have become Jews
and the Christians and the Sabeans,
whoever has believed in God and the Last Day
and is one who acted in accord with morality,
then for them, their compensation is with their Lord.
And there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (2:62)
And when We took your solemn promise
and We exalted the mount above you:
Take what We have given you with firmness
and remember what is in it,
so that perhaps you would be God-conscious. (2:63)
Moreover after that you turned away.
And had it not been for the grace of God on you
and His mercy certainly you would have been

among the ones who are losers. (2:64)
And certainly you knew those who committed aggression
among you against the Sabbath to whom We said:
Be you loathed apes. (2:65)
Then We made this an exemplary punishment
for the former of them and for those of succeeding generations
and an admonishment for the ones who are God-conscious (2:66)
And mention when Moses said to his folk:
Truly God commands that you sacrifice a cow.
They said: Have you taken us to yourself in mockery?
He said: I take refuge with God
that I be among the ones who are ignorant. (2:67)
They said: Call to **your** *Lord for us*
to make manifest to us what she is!
Moses said: Truly He says:
She should be a cow that is neither old nor a virgin;
middle-aged between that.
So accomplish what you are commanded. (2:68)
They said: Call to your Lord for us to make manifest to us
what is hue is. He said: Truly He says:
She is a saffron-colored cow,
one that is bright in hue that makes
the ones who look on her happy. (2:69)
They said: Call to **your** *Lord for us to make manifest to us*
what she is. Truly cows are alike to us
and truly had God willed
we will be ones who are truly guided. (2:70)
He said: Truly He says she is a cow
neither broken to plow the earth
nor to draw water for cultivation,
that which is to be handed over without blemish on her.
They said: Now **you** *have brought about The Truth.*
So they sacrificed her
and they almost accomplish it not. (2:71)

The Hard-heartedness of the Children of Jacob

Madinah: *And mention when you killed a soul,*
then, you put up an argument over it.
And God was One Who Drives Out
what you had been keeping back. (2:72)
So We said: Turn him away with some of it!
Thus, God gives life to the dead,

and He causes you to see His signs,
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (2:73)
Again, after that, your hearts became hard,
so that they were as rocks or harder in hardness.
And, truly, from the rocks
there are some that the rivers gush forth from it.
And, truly, there are some that split open
to water goes forth from it.
And, truly, some that from it get down from dreading God.
And God is not One Who is
Heedless of what you do. (2:74)

Commentary°

God's directive, as conveyed to them by Moses was clear and simple: "sacrifice a cow." It hardly needed elaboration, nor was it difficult to carry out. Moses, after all, was the man who had led them out of Egypt and, by the grace of God, brought them to safety. He made it clear that he was simply conveying a commandment from God. Not only was their response insolent and brazen, but they also accused Moses of jesting and making fun of them.

Moses was clearly perturbed and made it immediately clear that he entertained no such idea. (2:67) His gentle, polite response was sufficient to prompt them to reconsider and act upon God's order. He makes it clear to them that mocking at others is unbecoming of anyone other than a person who does not know recognize God's position.

Up to that point, it was still possible for them to sacrifice any cow to fulfill God's order as given to them by His Messenger. (2:68)

That should have been more than adequate for them to choose a cow and carry out the order, discharging their obligation and sparing themselves further complication by narrowing their choices even further. Nevertheless, they insisted on asking more questions. (2:69) Since they asked, they received an answer. (2:69)

They continued to make matters difficult for themselves. Once again they ask about the type of cow they should sacrifice, justifying their new request on grounds that they had a problem of choice. (2:70)

There was now no escaping severe complication and restriction of choice, as more and more features were specified. (2:71)

It was no longer an ordinary, average cow that could be easily found anywhere, but one with a specific description and an unusual combination of features. Then, just as the matter became unduly complicated and the choice really hard, the people relented. (2:71)

It was as though Moses had not, up to that point, been telling them the truth, or they had not been disposed to believe him.

As soon as they carried out the command, God revealed to them its purpose. (2:72-2:73)

The final scene in the story should have been awesome enough to inspire faith, submission and fear of God in the hearts of the Children of Jacob. But despite all the lessons they might have learnt from earlier encounters related in the chapter, there is a gloomy, disappointing conclusion that comes as a complete surprise. (2:74)

The Solemn Promise of the Children of Jacob

Madinah: *And mention when We took a solemn promise*
from the Children of Jacob not to worship other than God,
and goodness to the ones who are your parents
and to the possessors of kinship and the orphans and the needy.
And speak with kindness to humanity.
And perform the formal prayer, and give the purifying alms.
Again, you turned away but a few among you.
You are ones who turn aside. (2:83)
And mention when We took your solemn promise:
You will not shed your blood,
nor drive yourselves out from your abodes.
Again, you were in
accord and you, you bear witness. (2:84)
Again, you are these—killing yourselves,
and driving out a group of people among you from their abodes,
to support one another against them in sin and deep seated dislike.
And if they approach you as prisoners of war, you redeem them,
although expelling them is that which is forbidden to you.
Then, believe you in some of the Book,
and are ungrateful for some?
Then, what will be the recompense
of whoever commits that among you,
but degradation in this present life?
And on the Day of Resurrection,
they will be returned to the hardest punishment.
And God is not One Who is Heedless of what you do. (2:85)

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Commentary°

Reference has already been made to God's covenant with the Children of Jacob, and here we learn of more details of this covenant.

Right at the outset, we learn that the covenant between God and the Children of Jacob contained the fundamental and absolute tenets

of Divine faith that were subsequently confirmed by Islam, which the Jews chose to oppose and deny.

It required that the Children of Jacob submit to, and worship God, other than whom there is no deity. It advocated kindness to parents, relatives, orphans and the poor in society. It urged courtesy towards others, especially in teaching and preaching to them about right and wrong, good and evil. Furthermore, the covenant enjoined upon the Children of Jacob the observance of regular prayer and the giving of alms; all of which are, indeed, the very basic principles and obligations set by Islam.

This leads to a definite conclusion. God's religion is one and the same throughout human history; its last version, Islam, confirms and endorses the fundamentals of all preceding ones.

The chapter then turns to address the Children of Jacob directly, highlighting the inherent contradiction in their attitude. It goes on to point out further contradictions between their present attitude and the terms of their covenant with God. (2:84)

But what have they done after that? (2:85)

The Children of Jacob Worship the Calf

Madinah: *And, certainly, Moses drew near you*
with the clear portents.
Again, you took the calf to yourselves after him.
And you are ones who are unjust. (2:92)
And mention when We took your solemn promise,
and We exalted the mount above you:
Take what We gave you with firmness and hear.
They said: We heard and we rebelled,
and they were steeped with love for the calf in their hearts
because of their ingratitude.
Say: Miserable was what commands you to it of your belief
if you had been ones who believe. (2:93)
Say: If the Last Abode for you had been with God
—that which is exclusively for you—
excluding others of humanity—
then, covet death if you had been ones who are sincere. (2:94)
And they never covet it ever because of what their hands put
forward, and God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust. (2:95)
And, certainly, you will find them
to be eager among humanity for this life,
even of those who ascribed partners with God.
Each one of them wishes that he be given
a long life of a thousand years,

yet he still would not be one who is drawn away
from the punishment,
even if he be given a long life,
and God is Seeing of what they do. (2:96)

The Children of Jacob Reminded of Their Blessings

Madinah: *O Children of Jacob!*
Remember My divine blessing
with which I was gracious to you,
and that I gave you an advantage over the worlds. (2:122)
And be God-conscious of a Day when no soul
will give recompense for another soul at all,
nor will the equivalent be accepted from it,
nor will intercession profit it,
nor will they be helped. (2:123)

Commentary°

Having delivered this decisive warning, the chapter now addresses the Children of Jacob with an amicable and sympathetic appeal, as a fitting end to this extensive debate concerning their history and religious conduct. (2:122-123)

The Children of Jacob Given Clear Signs

Madinah: *Ask the Children of Jacob how many a sign,*
a clear portent, We gave them.
And whoever substitutes the divine
blessing of God after it drew near him, then,
truly, God is Severe in repayment. (2:211)

*****

And, certainly, Moses drew near you with the clear portents.
Again, you took the calf to yourselves after him.
And you are ones who are unjust. (2:92)

The Enemy Weakened by God

Chapter 8: The 88th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *In like manner of the people of Pharaoh*
—and of those before them—
they were ungrateful for the signs of God
so God took them for their impieties.
Truly, God is Strong, Severe in repayment. (8:52)
Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Alter
a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk

unless they first alter what is within themselves.
And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing. (8:53)
In like manner of the people of Pharaoh,
and those before them, they denied the signs of their Lord,
so We caused them to perish for their impieties.
And We drowned the people of Pharaoh.
And they all had been ones who are unjust. (8:54)

Commentary°

The chapter then states a fundamental fact that is relevant to this scene. The infliction of suffering and humiliation on the ungrateful is a permanent law that does not change. It was set into operation a long time ago and it continues to operate without fail. (8:52) God does not determine the fate of human beings haphazardly or on the basis of sudden whims. Their fate follows a law that is meant to apply at all times. What happened to those unbelievers at Badr is likely to happen to them at all times. The same type of thing happened to Pharaoh's people and to other communities before them. They could not protect themselves against His punishment. (8:52)

The People of Pharaoh Deny

Chapter 3: The 89th Chapter Revealed

Madinah *Truly, those who were ungrateful,*
it will not avail them—neither their wealth nor their children—
against God at all. And those, they will be fuel for the fire, (3:10)
in like manner of the people of Pharaoh
and those who were before them.
They denied Our signs so God took them
because of their impiety.
And God is Severe in repayment. (3:11)

Commentary°

Indeed, wealth and children cannot be of any avail in this life, even when they are coupled with power and authority. (3:11) This case has had frequent parallels throughout history. God relates it in detail in this book. It is a case that outlines God's law, which applies to those who reject His revelations as lies. He implements this law as He wills. Hence, no one who rejects God's revelations can have any immunity or safeguard

The Food Allowed the Children of Jacob

Madinah: *All food had been allowed*
to the Children of Jacob. but what Jacob,

forbade to himself before the Torah is sent down.
Say: Then, approach with the Torah and recount it
if you had been ones who are sincere. (3:93)

Commentary°

Abraham did not eat camel's meat nor drink its milk. . . All food was lawful to the Children of Jacob save what Jacob (Israel) forbade for himself, namely, camels: when he was afflicted with sciatica, he made a vow that if he were cured he would not eat of it again, and so it was forbidden him; before the Torah was revealed, which was after the time of Abraham, as it was not unlawful in his time, as they claimed.

The Affliction of Moses

Chapter 33: The 90th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *O those who believed!*
Be not like those who maligned Moses.
God declared him innocent of what they said.
And he had been well-esteemed with God. (33:69)

Commentary°

The chapter directs the believers to say only what is just, true and accurate. They should make sure of what they say and its effects, before they accept what the hypocrites and spreaders of lies say, and before they pay attention to any wild accusation or evil fabrication against the Prophet, their leader and guide. It directs them to say right words leading to right action. God takes care of those who make sure of saying what is right, proper and accurate, guiding their footsteps and making their deeds sound, producing good results. God also forgives the sins of those who say what is right and do righteous deeds, for even they are not immune to slips and errors. They are all human, and by nature humans err and need God's forgiveness.

Violation of the Covenant by the Children of Jacob

Chapter 4: The 92nd Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *The People of the Book ask you*
that you have sent down to them a Book from heaven.
Surely, they had asked Moses for greater than that.
Then, they said: Cause us to see God publicly.
So a thunderbolt took them for their injustice.
Again, they took the calf to themselves
after what drew near to them

—the clear portents.
Even so We pardoned that.
And We gave Moses a clear authority. (4:153)
And We exalted the mount above them for their solemn promise.
And We said to them: Enter the door
as ones who prostrate themselves.
And We said to them: Disregard not the Sabbath!
And We took from them an earnest solemn promise (4:154)
for their breaking their solemn promise and for their
ingratitude for the signs of God
and their killing the Prophets without right
and their saying: Our hearts are encased.
Nay! God has set a seal on them for their ingratitude
—so they believe not but a few (4:155)

God Spoke Directly to Moses

Madinah: *And God spoke directly to Moses,*
speaking directly. (4:164)

Commentary°

If Moses was spoken to directly by God, this was simply one aspect of revelation and none of us knows how it happened. The Quran, which is the only authentic source we have on such matters, has not given us any details. The only thing we know is that God gave this revelation in words. How and in what manner or in what sense or power Moses used to receive it we do not know. All that is part of the knowledge God has kept to Himself. If the Quran does not speak to us about it, then any interpretation is simply guesswork lacking foundation.

Moses Said to His People

Chapter 61: The 109th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And when Moses said to his folk:*
O my folk! Why malign me while, surely,
you know that I am the Messenger of God to you?
So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve.
And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey. (61:5)

Commentary°

Moses was the one who saved the Children of Jacob from Pharaoh and his tyranny. He was God's Messenger to them, their leader and teacher. Yet the grief that they caused him was of the ex-

tended type, taking many colors and forms. His struggle to put them on the right course was hard, tiring and trying. In the accounts the Quran gives of Moses and his people we read about the different aspects of the grief they caused him and how hard he had to struggle to reform their belief system.

For example, they discouraged Moses' efforts to persuade Pharaoh to let them go free. So whilst he exposed himself to Pharaohs wrath, they were safe having accepted their lot and humiliation. They even blamed Moses for worsening their plight:. (7:129) The suggestion being that they did not see much good coming their way as a result of his message, or that they blamed him for this latest round of oppression.

No sooner did Moses, guided by God, deliver them from Pharaoh's humiliation—He caused Pharaoh and his people to drown before their very eyes—than they inclined themselves to a type of worship akin to Pharaoh's people. (7: 138) Again, Moses had not been gone long for the appointment with his Lord to receive the tablets when the Samaritan led them astray. (20: 88)

They were also dissatisfied with their desert food, which was manna and quails. Thus they complained to their Prophet that they wanted more than one kind of food. (2:61) Mention should also be made here of the cow they were required to slaughter, yet they continued to demand explanations, seeking excuses and behaving impolitely to their Prophet and to their Lord. (2:71)

They requested that a day be assigned to them when they would not work. But when the Sabbath was ordained for them, they violated its rules. Later, when they were close to the Holy Land, which God told them they would enter, they stalled, not daring to go forward, while at the same time they spoke insolently to Moses saying they would not enter the land until those who were there left. (5:22) He kept encouraging them, assuring them of the great success awaiting them, if they would only do what God had bidden them to do. Nonetheless, their insolence and disbelief reached new heights. (5:24)

They gave Moses much more grief, putting questions to him, making suggestions, and even starting a rebellion. The chapter mentions here how Moses remonstrated with them in a friendly way. (61:5) They knew for certain that he was God's Messenger, but he did not put this fact across in a strong and assertive way. Rather, he simply gave them a remonstrating reminder. The result was that they swerved from the right way after being given every possible means of sticking to it. Hence, God let them go further astray and their hearts were no longer fit to receive guidance. (61:5)

The Children of Jacob Break the Covenant

Chapter 5: The 112th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And mention when Moses said to his folk:*
O my folk!
Remember the divine blessing of God on you
when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings
and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds. (5:20)
O my folk! Enter the region, one that is sanctified,
that God prescribed for you and go not back, turning your back,
for, then, you will turn about as ones who are losers. (5:21)
They said: O Moses! Truly, in it is a haughty folk
and we will never enter it until they go forth from it,
but if they go forth from it, then,
we will, certainly, be ones who enter. (5:22)
Two men to whom God was gracious said
among those who fear to disobey:
Enter on them through the door!
And when you entered it, you will, certainly,
be ones who are victors.
And put your trust in God
if you had been ones who believe. (5:23)
They said: O Moses! We will never enter it
as long as they continued in it,
so you and your Lord, you two go and fight.
We are here, ones who sit at home. (5:24)
He said: My Lord! I control no one but myself
and my brother so separate You between us
and between the folk, the ones who disobey. (5:25)
He said: Truly, it is that which is forbidden to them for forty years.
They will wander about the earth.
So grieve not for the folk, the ones who disobey. (5:26)

Commentary°

At this point in the chapter, the attitude of the Children of Jacob towards God's Messenger sent to them, Moses (peace be upon him), is given. Moses was their savior who led them out of Egypt towards the holy land God had assigned to them. The chapter also exposes their attitude to the covenant they made with their Lord and how they violated it and were punished for that violation

Moses' words (5:20-21) give us the impression that he may have been worried lest his people disobey. He had tried them before on several occasions. He had led them out of Egypt, liberated them from subjugation with God's help, who parted the sea for them and caused

Pharaoh and his soldiers to drown. Nevertheless, when they came by a community engaged in pagan worship, they said to him: Moses, set up a deity for us as these people have deities. (7: 138)

On another occasion, he had hardly left them for his appointment with his Lord when the Samaritan used the jewelery stolen from Egyptian women to make them an effigy of the calf which made a lowing sound. They started to worship the calf and claimed that it was the god Moses went to meet.

Another experience which Moses remembered well was when God made springs of water gush out for them in the desert and sent down to them manna and quail, a very wholesome food to eat. Nonetheless, they wanted to have the types of food they were familiar with in Egypt, the land where they were humiliated. They asked Moses to pray to God to bring forth for them herbs, cucumber, garlic, lentils and onions. They would not sacrifice their familiar food for a life of dignity, liberation and the pursuit of a noble goal. He also tested them when he conveyed to them God's order to slaughter a cow but they kept postponing the implementation of this order.

When they finally slaughtered it, they did so most reluctantly. When he returned from his appointment with his Lord carrying the tablets that outlined the covenant they should make with God, they refused to make that covenant and fulfill their pledges to their Lord. Despite what God had bestowed on them and the forgiveness of their sins which He granted them, they did not give their pledges until they saw with their own eyes the mountain raised over their heads, and felt that it was about to fall on top of them.

Moses had tested them on several occasions and now they were close to the holy land, their destination. God had promised them they would be the rulers in this land and that He would raise up among them Prophets so that they remained in God's care. Moses, however, was worried lest they should disobey. He, therefore, coupled this, his last appeal with a reminder of the happiest memories, best incentives and strongest warnings. (5:20-21)

God's promise never fails. He promises here to raise up Prophets among them and to make them kings. The fulfillment of this promise brought them what God granted to no other nation until that period in time. The holy land, which they were approaching, was assigned to them by God's promise, which meant that they were certain to have it. They had already known from experience that God always fulfils His promises. Now, they were called upon to meet the conditions for yet another of His promises. To turn back was sure to bring them to ruin. (5:22)

Victory, however, does not come in this manner as the Jews

wanted. (5:23) The value of having faith and of being God-conscious appears very clearly. These were two men who feared God, and being God-fearing made them totally fearless when they confronted mighty people. They had all the courage needed to dispel the imaginary danger. They made this testimony, highlighting the importance of faith and the time of trial and difficulty. They wanted to show what it meant to fear God alone at times when people fear each other. God does not combine the two feelings of fear in any one person's heart: fearing Him and fearing human beings. A person who fears God fears no one else.

This is a basic rule (5:23) in how to fight the enemy. The Jews are advised here to launch an offensive which takes them right through into the other people's homes. Once they are in, the others will be demoralized while their own morale will be high indeed. Those attacked will suffer a total loss of confidence and the attackers will win. (5:23)

A believer relies on no one other than God. This is the distinctive mark and the correlative of faith. But who were these two men addressing them with these true words? They were after all addressing the Children of Jacob. (5:24)

A perfect example of weak people (5:24) who realize that rudeness costs nothing but words. Fulfillment of their duty, on the other hand, requires them to fight in a real war. He is, then, not their Lord if his lordship means that they will have to fight. We neither desire a kingdom, nor sovereignty, nor even the promised holy land, if it means that we will have to fight these mighty people.

This is now the end for Moses (peace be upon him) after the strenuous efforts he exerted with the Children of Jacob and after bearing all impudence and deviation. The result was simply to turn back, to turn away from the holy land when they stood at its doors. This was a clear violation of the covenant they had made with God. But the covenant applied to Moses also. What should he do now? Whose help should he seek?

This is a prayer uttered in pain. (5:25) It is an appeal to God and one of total submission to Him. It also expresses total determination and a total break with those who disobeyed.

God answered His Prophet's prayer and pronounced His judgment of the wrongdoers. (5:26) As they approached the holy land which God had promised them, He abandoned them to their aimless wandering. He forbade them the land He had assigned to them. The weightier view suggests that the land was forbidden to that particular generation of them, until a new generation came of age, aware of the lessons and strengthened by their upbringing in the desert. The first

generation had long been used to subjugation and tyranny in Egypt. As such, it could not shoulder the tough responsibility. Tyranny and humiliation corrupt the nature of individuals as well as communities.

Some of the Children of Jacob Are Ones Who Are Excessive on the Earth

Madinah: O*n account of that*
(i.e. Cain killing his brother Abel),
We prescribed for the Children of Jacob
that whoever killed a person,
other than in retribution for another person,
or because of corruption
in and on the earth, it will be as if he had killed all of humanity.
And whoever gave life to one, it will be as if he gave life
to all of humanity. And, certainly, our Messengers drew near them
with the clear portents. Again, truly, many of them after that were
ones who were excessive in and on the earth. (5:32)

Commentary°

[This sign] then makes use of the profundity of relating this story by enhancing a positive response to the legislation enacted to deal with such a crime. The legislation achieves the dual purpose of weakening the motive to commit a murder and establishing the just punishment for such a crime whenever it takes place. (5:32)

This type of person exists and aggression is committed against peaceful and good- natured people who harbor neither grudges nor ill-feelings towards others. A reminder and a warning may achieve nothing with those who have an evil nature. Adopting a peaceful attitude may not be sufficient to prevent aggression. For all this, the ghastly crime of killing one person is considered so grave and so sordid that it is equated with the crime of killing all humanity. On the other hand, efforts to prevent killing and to spare the life of one person are considered a great action, equal to saving all humanity. The law given to the Children of Jacob included this principle that equates the life of any human being with every life. The right to live is applicable to all. Hence, killing one person is an aggression against the right to live in which all people stand equal. Similarly, preventing murder and sparing the life of one person, either through defending the would-be victim or inflicting the death penalty on the killer in order to prevent the murder of another, is to save the basic right of life applicable to all.

The Children of Jacob Gave a Solemn Promise

Madinah: *Certainly, We took a solemn promise*
from the Children of Jacob and We sent Messengers to them.
Whenever a Messenger drew near them
with what they themselves yearn not for,
a group of people denied them
and a group of people kill them. (5:70)

Commentary°

[This sign] gives us an account of a part of the history of the Children of Jacob, the Jews, that shows that they have nothing to stand on and that the message of Islam must be conveyed to them so that they have a chance to believe in the Divine faith. On the other hand, this history shows the Muslims that the nature of the Jews has not changed. Hence, the importance of the Jews will be reduced in their minds and they will not condone any alliance or patronage when they have such an attitude to the truth and to faith: "Surely, We accepted a solemn pledge from the Children of Jacob, and We sent to them Messengers. But every time a Messenger came to them with something that was not to their liking, [they rebelled:] some they denounced as liars and some they put to death. They reckoned no harm would come to them, so they were willfully blind and deaf [to the truth]. Thereafter, God accepted their repentance: still many of them acted blind and deaf. But God sees all that they do. (5:70-1)

Aaron

Aaron Appointed as a Minister

Chapter 25: The 42nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book*
and assigned his brother Aaron to him as a minister. (25:35)
And We said: You both go to the folk who denied Our signs.
Then, We destroyed them, an utter destruction. (25:36)

Aaron Appointed as a Prophet

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We proclaimed to him*
from the right edge of the mount
and We brought him near privately. (19:52)
And We bestowed on him out of Our mercy
his brother Aaron, a Prophet. (19:53)

Aaron's Encounter with Pharaoh

Chapter 20: The 45th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Then, the ones who are sorcerers were cast down,*
ones who prostrate themselves.
They said: We believed in the Lord of Aaron and Moses. (20:70)

Aaron and the Samarian

Makkah: *And, certainly, Aaron said to them before:*
O my folk! You were only tempted by it.
And, truly, your Lord is The Merciful.
So follow me and obey my command. (20:90)
They said: We will never quit it as ones who give ourselves up
until Moses returns to us. (20:91)
*[Moses] said: O Aaron! What prevented **you***
*when **you** had seen them going astray?* (20:92)
*that **you** have followed me not?*
*Have **you**, then, rebelled against my command?* (20:93)

Aaron More Oratorical in Language

Chapter 28: The 48th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And my brother Aaron,*
he is more oratorical in language than I,
so send him with me as a helpmate to establish me as true.
Truly, I fear that they will deny me. (28:34)
*He said: We will strengthen **your**arm through **your** brother*

and assign to you both authority
so that they reach not out to you both.
With Our signs, you two and
whoever followed you two will be
the ones who are victors. (28:35)

Moses and Aaron Raised Up to Pharaoh and His Council

Chapter 10: The 51st Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Again, We raised up after them Moses and Aaron*
to Pharaoh and his Council with Our signs.
Then, they grew arrogant,
and they had been a folk, ones who sin. (10:75)
So when The Truth drew near them from Us,
they said: Truly, this is clear sorcery! (10:76)
Moses said: Say you this about The Truth
when it drew near you? Is this sorcery?
And the ones who are sorcerers will not prosper. (10:77)
They said: Had you drawn near to us
to turn us from what we found our fathers on
so that the domination on the earth might be for you two?
We are not ones who believe in both of you. (10:78)
And Pharaoh said: Bring to me every one
who is a knowing sorcerer. (10:79)

Moses Among the Offspring of Abraham

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob.
Each of them We guided.
And Noah We guided before and among his offspring
are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph
and Moses and Aaron. And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)

God's Blessings on Moses and Aaron

Chapter 37: The 56th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly We showed Our grace*
to Moses and Aaron. (37:114)
And We delivered them and their folk
from the tremendous distress (37:115)
and helped them so that they, they
had been the ones who are victors. (37:116)
And We gave them the manifest Book (37:117)

and guided them to the straight path. (37:118)
We left for them a good name with the later ones: (37:119)
Peace be on Moses and Aaron! (37:120)
Truly, thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (37:121)
Truly, they were of Our servants, ones who believe. (37:122)

Moses and Aaron Given the Criterion

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

And, certainly, We gave Moses and Aaron
the Criterion between right and wrong
and an illumination and a Remembrance
for the ones who are God-conscious, (21:48)

Moses and Aaron sent to Pharaoh

Chapter 23: The 74th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Again, We sent Moses and his brother Aaron*
with Our signs and clear authority (23:45)
to Pharaoh and his Council.
Then, they grew arrogant and they had been a folk,
ones who exalt themselves. (23:46)
Then, they said: Will we believe in two mortals like ourselves
while their folk are ones who worship us? (23:47)
So they denied both of them.
They had been among the ones who are caused to perish. (23:48)
And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book
so that perhaps they will be truly guided. (23:49)

The Town Bordering the Sea

Chapter 7: The 39th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And ask them about the town*
—that which had been bordering the sea—
when they disregarded the Sabbath,
when their great fish would approach them
on the day of the Sabbath,
one that was visible on the shore.
And the day they keep not the Sabbath, they approach them not.
Thus, We try them because they had been disobeying. (7:163)
And mention when a community of them said:
Why admonish a folk whom God is
One Who Causes them to Perish or
One Who Punishes them with a severe punishment.
They said: To be free from guilt before your Lord
and so that perhaps they will be God-conscious. (7:164)
So when they forgot of what they were reminded,
We rescued those who prohibited evil
and We took those who did wrong with a terrifying punishment
because they had been disobeying. (7:165)
Then, when they defied
what they were prohibited We said to them:
Be you apes, ones who are driven away. (7:166)
*And mention when **your** Lord caused to be proclaimed*
that He would, surely, raise up against them
until the Day of Resurrection
who cause an affliction to befall on them of a dire punishment
*Truly, **your** Lord is Swift in repayment.*
And, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate. (7:167)
And We sundered them in the region into communities.
Some of them were the ones in accord with morality
and others were other than that.
And We tried them with benevolence and evil deeds
so that perhaps they will return to obedience. (7:168)
Then, after that succeeded successors who inherited the Book.
They take advantage of this nearer world,
and they say: We will be forgiven.
And if an advantage approaches them like it,
they will take it. Is not a solemn promise
taken from them with the Book
that they would say about God only The Truth?
And studied they not what is in it, and know that
the Last Abode is better for those who are God-conscious?

Will you not, then, be reasonable? (7:169)
And those who keep fast to the Book
and performed the formal prayer,
We will not waste the compensation
of the ones who make things right. (7:170)
Mention when We shook up the mountain over them,
as if it had been an overshadowing,
and they thought it was that which would fall on them:
It was said: Take with firmness what We gave you
and remember what is in it
so that perhaps you will be God-conscious. (7:171)

Jethro (Shuayb)

The Message of Jethro

Chapter 7: The 39th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And to Midian God sent*
their brother Jethro (Shuayb).
He said: O my folk! Worship God!
You have no god other than He.
Surely, a clear portent drew near you from your Lord
so live up to the full measure and the balance
and diminish not the things of humanity
nor make corruption in and on the earth
after things were made right.
That will be better for you
if you had been ones who believe. (7:85)
And sit not by every path intimidating
and barring from the way of God
those who believed in Him and you desire it to be crooked.
And remember when you had been few and He augmented you.
And look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who make corruption. (7:86)
And if there had been a section of you who believed in
what I was sent with and a section believe not,
have patience until God gives judgment between us.
And He is Best of the ones who judge. (7:87)
Said the Council of those who grew arrogant from among his folk.
*O Jethro! We will, certainly, drive **you** out—*
*and those who believed with **you**—*
from our town or else you revert to our creed.
He said: Even if we had been ones who dislike it? (7:88)
Surely, we would have devised a lie against God
if we reverted to your creed after God delivered us from it.
And it will not be for us that we revert to it unless God,
our Lord, wills. Our Lord encompassed everything in knowledge.
In God we put our trust.
Our Lord! Give victory between us and between our folk in Truth
*and **You** are Best of the ones who are deliverers.* (7:89)
But said the Council of those who were ungrateful
among his folk:
If you followed Jethro ,
then, truly, you will be ones who are losers. (7:90)
Then, the quaking of the earth took them

and they came to be in the morning
ones who are fallen prostrate in their abodes. (7:91)
Those who denied Jethro had been
as if they had not dwelt in them. Those who denied Jethro
they, they had been the ones who were losers. (7:92)
So he turned away from them and said:
O my folk! Certainly I have expressed to you messages
of my Lord and I have advised you.
Then how should I grieve for a folk,
ones who are ungrateful? (7:93)

Commentary°

So the journey continues and the story unfolds. The long line of noble advocates of faith, formed by God's Messengers, call out with compassion to erring humanity, reminding them of the truth and warning them against following a course that is certain to lead to ruin. But those who are deep in error confront this compassionate address with rejection at first and later with force, persecution and tyranny. When God's Messengers have fulfilled their duties of reminding and warning, standing up to opposition and persecution by their peoples, ultimately moving away and declaring their allegiance to faith, God Himself takes over the conduct of the fight.

[These signs] gives accounts of the Prophets Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot and Shuayb with their respective communities. They all present one never-changing truth. (7:59, 65, 73, 85) Their people argued with them, rejecting the very concept of God's Oneness and His being the only Lord in the universe. They also wondered about God sending human Messengers. Some of them argued that religion had nothing to do with people's lives or with the regulation of financial and business transactions. This is echoed by some people in today's state of ignorance (*jahiliyyah*), despite the passage of many centuries. They describe their old, ignorant and futile argument as 'liberalism,' and 'progress'. At the end of each account, the [signs] show the fate of those who rejected God's message.

When we look carefully at the way these stories are presented, we cannot fail to note that all Messengers said the same words to their communities: My people, worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. Every Messenger presents this central truth to his people in the manner of a caring and honest adviser who fears for his people the inevitable doom of which they remain oblivious. None of these communities appreciated the advice given by their Messenger. None thought about their fate. None recognized the profound sincerity of their Messenger, nor of his having no personal interest in the matter.

At this point we may refer to the first account of the Prophet Noah (7:59-64) and the last one referring to the Prophet Shuayb (7:85-93). These two show the truth of the single faith which all God's Messengers preached, each to his own people. All received the same rejection by people in power and their weak followers. In each account we cannot fail to note the clarity and power of faith in the hearts of the Messenger and the believers who follow him, or the Messenger's keen desire to guide his people to the truth, or his taking a stand away from them after having completed his mission.

The Message of Jethro

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We sent to Midian their brother Jethro.*
He said: O my folk! Worship God. You have no god other than He.
And reduce not the measuring vessel and balance.
Truly, I consider you as good. And, truly, I fear for you
the punishment of an Enclosing Day. (11:84)
And O my folk! Live up to the measuring vessel
and balance in equity. And diminish not of humanity their things.
And do no mischief in and on the earth
as ones who make corruption. (11:85)
God's abiding wisdom is best for you
if you had been ones who believe.
And I am not a Guardian over you. (11:86)
*They said: O Shuayb! Is it that **your** formal prayer*
*commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship*
or that we accomplish not with our possibilities whatever we will?
*Truly,**you** are the forbearing, the well-intentioned.* (11:87)
He said: O my folk! Considered you that I had been
with a clear portent from my Lord.
He provided me fairer provision from Himself.
And I want not to go against you in what I prohibit you.
I want only making things right so far as I was able.
And my success is not but from God.
In Him I put my trust and to Him I am penitent. (11:88)
And O my folk! Let not your breach with me drive you into being
lit on by the like of what lit on a folk of Noah or a folk of Hud or a
folk of Salih. And a folk of Lot are not far from you. (11:89)
And ask for forgiveness from your Lord.
Again, repent to Him.
Truly, my Lord is Compassionate, Loving. (11:90)
They said: O Jethro! We understand not much
*of what **you** say*

*And, truly, we see **you** weak among us.*
*If it had not been for **your** extended family,*
*we would have stoned **you***
*And **you** are not mighty against us.* (11:91)
He said: O my folk! Is my extended family mightier to you
than God whom you took to yourselves to disregard?
Truly, my Lord is One Who Encloses whatever you do. (11:92)
O my folk! Act according to your ability
and, truly, I am one who acts.
You will know to whom approaches a punishment
covering him with shame and who, he is one who lies.
And be on the watch! Truly, I am watching with you. (11:93)
And Our command drew near. We delivered Jethro
and those who believed with him by a mercy from Us.
And the Cry took those who did wrong.
It came to be in the morning in their abodes
ones who are fallen prostrate, (11:94)
as if they had not dwelled in them.
Away with the Midian just as Thamud was done away. (11:95)

Commentary°

Submission to God alone (11:84) is the first article of faith as well as the first rule of life and the first principle of law and human transactions. It is the principle without which faith, worship or human dealings cannot take their proper shape.

The main issue here is honesty and justice, which comes second only to the issue of faith and submission to God. (11:84-11:86) In other words, it is the issue of the law that governs business dealings on the basis of faith. The people of Midian, whose country was an enclave of land lying between Hijaz and Syria, used to give short measure and weight, thus wronging other people in respect of what was rightfully theirs. That is, they used to give other people less than the value of their goods. Their misconduct reflected badly on their integrity and honor and showed that they were far from clean both externally and at heart. Their geographical position meant that they were able to control the trade route of the caravans moving between the north and the south of Arabia. This enabled them to dictate unfair terms on other peoples" trade.

Here we see the link between believing in God's oneness and submission to Him alone on the one hand, and honesty, fair-trading, honorable transactions and combating all kinds of cheating and stealing, whether perpetrated by individuals or governments, on the other. This relationship appears to be a safeguard ensuring a better human

life, justice and peace among people. It is the only safeguard based on fearing God and seeking His pleasure. Hence, it has a very solid foundation that cannot be influenced by special interests or personal desires.

In the Islamic view, business dealings, and morality generally, must have a solid basis that is not influenced by changeable factors. Thus Islam differs fundamentally with all other social and moral theories devised by human beings and governed by their differing bents of thought and their temporary interest.

When business dealings and morality have such a solid basis, they are not influenced by immediate or material interests or by differing environments with different factors and considerations. Hence, rules of morality and those that govern human dealings are not subject to whether people are nomadic, agrarian or industrialized. Such changeable factors lose their influence on the moral concepts of society or the moral values that govern business transactions when the basis of legislation for all spheres of life is divine law. Then the essential basis of morality is to seek God's pleasure, hoping to win His reward and avoid His punishment. All that is advanced by human-made theories and doctrines about morality being the product of the economic situation and the social conditions prevailing in a particular society become meaningless in the light of Islamic moral theory.

God has given you ample provision for your sustenance, so you have no need to indulge in vile practices to add to your riches. (Verse 84) You will not become poor if you give full measure and weight and give people what is rightfully theirs. Your happy state is indeed threatened by your cheating practices and your unlawful earnings. (11:84) This may come on the Day of Judgment, or it may indeed occur in this life when your cheating practices yield their bitter fruits and rebound on your society and your trade. People will then suffer injustice brought about by some of them against others.

Shuayb repeats his advice positively after having expressed it in the form of a prohibition. (11:85)

To give full measure and weight is more expressive than not falling short on both of them. It is closer to giving others more than their due. Different forms of expression have different connotations and leave different effects. The effect of giving full measure and full weight is much more kindly than that of not falling short.

This is much more general (Verse 85) than what is valued according to measure and weight. It stresses the fair evaluation of everything which belongs to others, whether this evaluation is in weight, measure, price or otherwise. It also includes material as well as moral evaluations. It may be said to further encompass actions

and personal qualities. The Arabic term used here includes both the material and the abstract.

When people suffer maltreatment in respect of what rightfully belongs to them, this gives rise to bitterness, grudges and despair. Such feelings can only ruin society and destroy social links as they adversely affect consciences and hearts. They leave no room for anything good in life.

(11:85) They must not willingly seek to spread corruption because it rebounds on them. Instead, their hearts should awaken to something far better and far more rewarding than their stained earnings. (11:86) What is with God is far better and lasts much longer. At the outset, Shuayb called on his people to worship God alone. He reminds them of this here, when he mentions their lasting reward that they will receive from God if they respond to his call, and follow his advice in their business dealings. After all, his advice is part of that faith.

Having called on them to believe in God alone, he leaves them to Him, declaring that he cannot influence their destiny, and is not their guardian. He is not responsible for preventing them from error and is not answerable for their erroneous practices, should they choose to indulge in them. His task is to convey his message to them, which he has done. (11:86) This expression awakens the addressees to the gravity of the matter and to their heavy responsibility. It puts them face to face with what awaits them in the end, when they will have no guardian or intermediary.

The people of Midian were hardened in their corrupt practices. Their reply was sarcastic. Every word of it smacked of sarcasm. Yet it also indicated their ignorance and mulish obstinacy. (11:87) They did not realize, nor wanted to realize, that prayers are required by faith, as a manifestation of true submission to God. Faith cannot be established without the recognition of God's oneness and the renunciation of everything else they or their forefathers worshipped. Likewise, it cannot be established unless God's legislation in matters of trade and finance, as well as in all spheres of life, are implemented. All these are a complete whole, and faith cannot be separated from prayers or legislation which caters for all aspects of human life.

The people of Midian, who had such an ill-conceived idea of the connection between faith and worship, and between the two and business transactions lived a long time ago. But rather than denounce their attitude at length we should remind ourselves that people today stick to certain concepts which are not much different from those of Shuayb's people. The world of jahiliyyah which we see around us today is not much better or more intelligent than the earlier one. The

sort of ascription of Godhead to other beings alongside God, which was practiced by Shuayb's people, is still practiced today by most of mankind, including those who claim to be Jews, Christians, or Muslims. All try to establish a barrier separating faith and worship on the one hand and law and business transactions on the other. They claim that faith and worship belong to God and should be conducted according to His instructions, while the law and business do not concern Him. These should be conducted according to the bidding of some other authority. This is indeed the essence of attributing partners to God.

We must not forget that the Jews today are the only people who are determined to conduct their transactions according to their faith and religious law.

We find among us today some who claim to be Muslim questioning the validity of any link between faith and morality, especially when they consider financial dealings. Some of our intellectuals who have higher degrees awarded by various universities affect amazement as they wonder: what has Islam got to do with personal affairs? Why should Islam be concerned with how we dress on the beach, or how a woman appears in public, or how we satisfy our sexual urges? Why should Islam concern itself with drinking a glass of wine, or indeed with anything done by those who classify themselves as civilized? Now we ask what is the difference between such questions and those put by the people of Midian to their Prophet Shuayb (11:87)

The second part of their question implies a very strong objection to religion having anything to do with the economy. To them, business dealings have no connection whatsoever with faith or even with moral values, taken separately from faith. Why should religion be concerned with financial transactions or with devious business methods which evade man-made laws? Indeed these people, living in our midst, arrogantly claim that the economy would collapse if moral values were allowed to interfere with it. They object even to some Western economic theories, such as the moral theory, and label it as confused reactionary thinking.

Let us then not claim for ourselves a standard much higher than that of the people of Midian in their ancient jahiliyyah, when we live today in an even darker jahiliyyah which boasts of its enlightenment, advanced knowledge and civilization. Our state of jahiliyyah today motivates many among us to accuse those who maintain that there is an important link which groups together faith in God, personal behavior in all spheres of life and financial dealings, of being reactionary, advocating obsolete ideas.

Faith in God's oneness cannot be rightly and firmly established in people's hearts when God's laws, which regulate individual behavior and social and financial dealings, are abandoned in favor of manmade laws. It is not possible for faith and unfaith to coexist in the same heart side by side. Unfaith, or the acknowledgement of other gods alongside God, can take different forms such as the ones which prevail in our societies today. This still represents the acknowledgement of other gods, which is a criterion common to all unbelievers throughout history.

The people of Midian were sarcastic when they addressed their Prophet Shuayb, just as certain people today resort to sarcasm when they speak of those who advocate submission to God alone in all affairs. They said to Shuayb. (11:87) They obviously meant the opposite. To them, wisdom and right meant that they should follow in their fathers" footsteps and worship the same gods they worshipped. It also meant that they should separate worship from business. The same ideas are advocated by present-day intellectuals who do not hide their sarcasm when they speak of the advocates of Islam and describe them as reactionary.

Shuayb, fully confident of the truth of his message, and aware of his people's ignorance and short-sightedness, does not let their sarcasm affect him. On the contrary, he seeks to inform them politely that he takes his stand on clear evidence from his Lord, which he feels in his innermost heart. He explains to them that he is fully confident of the truth of what he advocates because his knowledge far exceeds theirs. When he calls on them to stick to honest dealings, the effects of such honesty also apply to him since he is a businessman. He is after no personal gain which he seeks to realize for himself. He does not intend to do behind their backs what he has forbidden them so that he enjoys a market free from competition. His call is one of reform which includes himself. The path he enjoins them to follow will not cause them any losses, as they mistakenly think.

He said: Think, my people! If I take my stand on a clear evidence from my Lord and He has provided me with goodly sustenance which He alone can give? I have no desire to do, in opposition to you, what I ask you not to do. All that I desire is to set things to rights in so far as it lies within my power. My success depends on God alone. In Him have I placed my trust, and to Him I always turn." (11:88)

Shuayb addresses them in a friendly and appealing way, reminding them of his close links with them. (Verse 88) I am after no personal gain that I may realize by so doing. (11:88)

It is, then, the general reform of society that Shuayb is after. It is a reform that brings benefit to every individual and every community. Some may think that to adhere to moral values and implement the divine law may make them lose some chances that may be open to them, or lose some gain that they would otherwise achieve. But implementing the divine law can only make them lose evil gains and wicked opportunities. It compensates them with goodly gains and lawful provisions. It also establishes a society that is characterized by the co-operation of its individuals. It is a society that is free from grudges, treachery and selfish quarrels.

He alone can grant me success, as He knows my intentions and the sincerity of my efforts. (11:88) From Him alone I seek help to overcome the difficulties that may beset me and to Him alone I submit my work and efforts.

Shuayb then tries another way of reminding them of the truth. He reminds them of the doom that befell the peoples of Noah, Hud, Salih and Lot. This may open their hardened hearts in a way which rational, cool and well-argued reminders may not. (11:89)

He tells them that they must not let their opposition to him harden their attitude of blind rejection. He says to them plainly that he fears that they may bring upon themselves a doom that is not unlike that which befell earlier communities. He reminds them especially of the people of Lot who lived close by and who had recently been destroyed.

When he has raised this prospect before them he then opens the doors to forgiveness and repentance. He uses the kindest and gentles terms in order to assure them of God's mercy and compassion. (11:90)

Thus Shuayb tries all methods of admonition and remonstration in the hope that his people's hearts will open up and respond to the truth. They, however, are so hardened in their erring ways and in their misconceptions of values and motives that their response remains negative. We have seen an example of their response in their mocking at Shuayb and his prayer.

(11:91) The people of Midian made it clear to Shuayb that they were fed up with him and with his message. They did not want to know anything about the truth he was presenting and did not care for anything which differed with their attitude to life or with their practices. Thus, in their view, only physical strength mattered. Plain truth was of no real significance, regardless of the strength of its argument, if it was not supported by physical power. What restrained them from doing so was the fact that they reckoned with the power of Shuayb's clan and family who were supposed to come to his defense. They did

not reckon with the power of God who would not leave His messenger to the mercy of His enemies. They had no respect for him as a noble person, nor for his own strength. They only had to consider what his clan might do if anything happened to him.

When people are devoid of proper faith, sound values and noble ideals, they care nothing for anything beyond their immediate interests or their material well-being. To them, any good cause or apparent truth has no sanctity whatsoever. They do not hesitate to assault the advocates of God's cause if these have no apparent power to protect them.

Shuayb was angry with his people for their arrogance towards God. He made it clear that he did not derive his power from his clan or family. He confronted them with their misjudgment of the true powers which can influence things in the universe, and pointed out to them that their insolence would not benefit them with God, aware as He always is of people's actions. Shuayb said his last word and parted ways with his people on the basis that there was no common ground of faith between them. He warned them against the suffering that befell all people who adopted their attitude and then left them to their destiny.

(11:92) Any group of people, strong and powerful as they may be, are, after all, human, subject to God's power. Hence, they are weak. How can you then give such a group of human beings more importance than you give to God? How can you fear them more than you fear Him? ""You have turned your backs on Him."" This is an image of physical rejection that heightens the enormity of their error. They turn their backs on God who has created them and who has given them all the goods they enjoy in this life. Their attitude is one of ingratitude and insolence as much as it is one of rejection of faith.

The Arabic expression used here gives an image of complete and perfect knowledge, as well as complete and overall power. Angry at his people's impudence towards God, Shuayb takes the proper attitude of a true believer. He does not find any gratification or reassurance in the fact that his own family and clan enjoyed such respect and power that afforded him protection from possible assault. This is evidence of true faith. A true believer finds no real power or protection other than that given him by God. He is unhappy to have a community to protect him, which is held in awe by others, when God, his Lord, is not held in awe. The true loyalty of a person who submits himself to God is not to his clan or nation; it is to God and to his faith. This is the parting point between the Islamic concept of loyalties and the un-Islamic one.

Shuayb's anger and his disavowal of any protection given him

by anyone other than God prompt him to challenge his people and then disassociate himself from them totally. (11:93) He challenges them to do what they can, to go along their way to the end. He will work according to his method and program. Time will tell who will suffer and who will prosper. The way he throws down his challenge and invites them to watch for the outcome tells of his absolute trust in God.

The curtains fall here to open up again when the issue is finally resolved. We see the people of Midian prostrate, lifeless in their homes, after having been overtaken by a dreadful cry, similar to that which overwhelmed the Thamud, Salih's people. There is great similarity between what happened to both peoples. In both cases, their houses were no longer inhabited, as if they never lived there: (11:94-95) Another black page of history was turned after God's word came to pass against those who rejected His warnings.

The Mission of Jethro

Chapter 29: The 85th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And to Midian, their brother Jethro. He said: O my folk! Worship God and hope for the Last Day and do not mischief in and on the earth as ones who make corruption.* (29:36)

And they denied him. So the quaking of the earth took them and it came to be in the morning in their abodes, ones who are fallen prostrate. (29:37)

Commentary°

The [sign] then gives brief references to different communities of unbelievers and the ends they suffered, starting with Shuayb's people. (29:36-29:37)

In this reference to the Prophet Shuayb we see the unity of the divine message and the essence of faith. (Verse 36) Worshipping God alone is the basic rule of faith. Looking forward to the Day of Judgment would ensure that they stopped their evil ways. For example, they deliberately defrauded people when they measured or weighed for them in business. They also looted from those who passed through their lands, deprived them of what they had, and generally spread corruption, behaving arrogantly.

Furthermore, they took a stand against their prophet, accusing him of lying; therefore, God destroyed them. He brought into force His law of punishing unbelievers who deny their messengers. (Verse 37) We mentioned previously the earthquake that shook their land after a great blast left them stunned in their homes, unable to stir. Thus they were left lifeless in fitting requital for their repeated terrorization of others.

The Companions of the Wood

The Companions of the Wood Deny Their Messenger

Chapter 50: The 34th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The folk of Noah denied what came before them,*
and the Companions of the Rass and Thamud, (50:12)
and Ad and Pharaoh and the brothers of Lot, (50:13)
and the Companions of the Wood and the folk of Tubba.
Everyone denied the Messengers,
so My threat was realized. (50:14)
Were We wearied by the first creation?
Nay! They are perplexed about a new creation. (50:15)

Commentary°

The Companions of the Wood signifies a well over which there is no built wall, and the dales signifies an area thick with trees. The people of the wooded dales most probably refer to Jethro's (Shuayb's) people. We have no information about them other than this reference here and a similar one in Chapter 25 (25:38). The same applies to the people of Tubba, a title used by the Yemeni kings of the Himyar dynasty. The other peoples mentioned in this short passage are known to anyone who reads the Quran.

The purpose of this quick reference to these peoples is certainly not to give any detailed information about them. It is only a reminder of the fate of earlier disbelieving communities. What is worth noting is that the sign mentions that each denied 'God's messengers', in the plural. This emphasizes the unity of the divine message as all messengers preached the same faith. Thus, whoever denies anyone of Gods messengers actually denies them all, because he rejects the same message delivered by them all. Gods' messengers are brothers forming one community. They are like a tree with roots stretching far back into time. Each branch of that tree projects all its essential qualities, giving an image of the whole. Therefore, whoever cuts a branch actually cuts the tree and all its branches. Therefore, God's warnings came true and those communities suffered the fates known to listeners.

The Companions of the Wood

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

and Thamud and a folk of Lot and the Companions of the Wood.
Those were the confederates. (38:13)

All of them denied the Messengers
so My repayment was realized. (38:14)

Jethro's Mission to the Companions of the Wood

Chapter 26: The 47th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *The Companions of the Wood*
denied the ones who are sent. (26:176)
When Shuayb said to them:
Will you not be God-conscious? (26:177)
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you (26:178)
so be God-conscious and obey me. (26:179)
And I ask you not for any compensation for it.
My compensation is only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:180)
Live up to the full measure
and be not of the ones who cause loss to others by fraud. (26:181)
And weigh with a straight scale (26:182)
and diminish not to humanity their things
nor do mischief in or on the earth
as ones who make corruption. (26:183)
And be God-conscious of Him Who created you
and the array of the ancient ones. (26:184)
They said: You are only ones
against whom a spell is cast. (26:185)
And you are nothing but a mortal like us.
And, truly, we think you to be among the ones who lie. (26:186)
So cause pieces of heaven to drop on us,
if you had been among the ones who are sincere. (26:187)
He said: My Lord is greater in knowledge
of what you do. (26:188)
But they denied him.
So took them the punishment on the overshadowing day.
Truly, that had been the punishment
of a tremendous Day! (26:189)
Truly, in this is a sign.
Yet most of them had not been ones who believe. (26:190)
And, truly, your Lord, He is, certainly,
The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:191)

Commentary°

This passage (26:176-26:178) tells the story of the Prophet Jethro (Shuayb). It is told here for the lessons involved in all the stories given in this chapter. The dwellers of the 'wooded dales' were

most probably the people of Midian. It seems that Midian was close to this wooded land, thick with trees, as the Quranic description implies. Midian lies close to the Gulf of Aqaba, in the area between the Hijaz province of Saudi Arabia and Palestine. Jethro (Shuayb) began in the same way as other prophets calling on people, explaining to them the basic essentials of faith, and making it clear that he sought no gain in return for his advocacy. He then spoke to them about the ills that plagued their own society.

The Companions of Midian

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We sent to Midian their brother Jethro.*
He said: O my folk! Worship God. You have no god other than He.
And reduce not the measuring vessel and balance.
Truly, I consider you as good. And, truly, I fear for you
the punishment of an Enclosing Day. (11:84)
And O my folk! Live up to the measuring vessel
and balance in equity. And diminish not of humanity their things.
And do no mischief in and on the earth
as ones who make corruption. (11:85)
God's abiding wisdom is best for you
if you had been ones who believe.
And I am not a Guardian over you. (11:86)
*They said: O Shuayb! Is it that **your** formal prayer*
*commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship*
or that we accomplish not with our possibilities whatever we will?
*Truly, **you** are the forbearing, the well-intentioned.* (11:87
He said: O my folk! Considered you that I had bee
with a clear portent from my Lora.
He provided me fairer provision from Himself.
And I want not to go against you in what I prohibit you.
I want only making things right so far as I was able.
And my success is not but from God.
In Him I put my trust and to Him I am penitent. (11:88)
And O my folk! Let not your breach with me drive you into being
lit on by the like of what lit on a folk of Noah or a folk of Hud
or a folk of Salih. And a folk of Lot are not far from you. (11:89)
And ask for forgiveness from your Lord.
Again, repent to Him.
Truly, my Lord is Compassionate, Loving. (11:90)
They said: O Jethro! We understand not much
*of what **you** say*
*And, truly, we see **you** weak among us.*
*If it had not been for **your** extended family,*
*we would have stoned **you***
*And **you** are not mighty against us.* (11:91)
He said: O my folk! Is my extended family mightier to you
than God whom you took to yourselves to disregard?
Truly, my Lord is One Who Encloses whatever you do. (11:92)
O my folk! Act according to your ability
and, truly, I am one who acts.
You will know to whom approaches a punishment

covering him with shame and who, he is one who lies.
And be on the watch! Truly, I am watching with you. (11:93)
And Our command drew near. We delivered Jethro
and those who believed with him by a mercy from Us.
And the Cry took those who did wrong.
It came to be in the morning in their abodes
ones who are fallen prostrate, (11:94)
as if they had not dwelled in them.
Away with the Midian just as Thamud was done away. (11:95)

Commentary°

Submission to God alone (11:84) is the first article of faith as well as the first rule of life and the first principle of law and human transactions. It is the principle without which faith, worship or human dealings cannot take their proper shape.

The main issue here is honesty and justice, which comes second only to the issue of faith and submission to God. (11:84-11:86) In other words, it is the issue of the law that governs business dealings on the basis of faith. The people of Midian, whose country was an enclave of land lying between Hijaz and Syria, used to give short measure and weight, thus wronging other people in respect of what was rightfully theirs. That is, they used to give other people less than the value of their goods. Their misconduct reflected badly on their integrity and honor and showed that they were far from clean both externally and at heart. Their geographical position meant that they were able to control the trade route of the caravans moving between the north and the south of Arabia. This enabled them to dictate unfair terms on other peoples" trade.

When business dealings and morality have such a solid basis, they are not influenced by immediate or material interests or by differing environments with different factors and considerations. Hence, rules of morality and those that govern human dealings are not subject to whether people are nomadic, agrarian or industrialized. Such changeable factors lose their influence on the moral concepts of society or the moral values that govern business transactions when the basis of legislation for all spheres of life is divine law. Then the essential basis of morality is to seek God's pleasure, hoping to win His reward and avoid His punishment. All that is advanced by human-made theories and doctrines about morality being the product of the economic situation and the social conditions prevailing in a particular society become meaningless in the light of Islamic moral theory.

God has given you ample provision for your sustenance, so you have no need to indulge in vile practices to add to your riches. (Verse

84) You will not become poor if you give full measure and weight and give people what is rightfully theirs. Your happy state is indeed threatened by your cheating practices and your unlawful earnings. (11:84) This may come on the Day of Judgment, or it may indeed occur in this life when your cheating practices yield their bitter fruits and rebound on your society and your trade. People will then suffer injustice brought about by some of them against others.

Shuayb repeats his advice positively after having expressed it in the form of a prohibition. (11:85)

To give full measure and weight is more expressive than not falling short on both of them. It is closer to giving others more than their due. Different forms of expression have different connotations and leave different effects. The effect of giving full measure and full weight is much more kindly than that of not falling short.

This is much more general (11:85) than what is valued according to measure and weight. It stresses the fair evaluation of everything which belongs to others, whether this evaluation is in weight, measure, price or otherwise. It also includes material as well as moral evaluations. It may be said to further encompass actions and personal qualities. The Arabic term used here includes both the material and the abstract.

When people suffer maltreatment in respect of what rightfully belongs to them, this gives rise to bitterness, grudges and despair. Such feelings can only ruin society and destroy social links as they adversely affect consciences and hearts. They leave no room for anything good in life.

(11:85) They must not willingly seek to spread corruption because it rebounds on them. Instead, their hearts should awaken to something far better and far more rewarding than their stained earnings. (11:86) What is with God is far better and lasts much longer. At the outset, Shuayb called on his people to worship God alone. He reminds them of this here, when he mentions their lasting reward that they will receive from God if they respond to his call, and follow his advice in their business dealings. After all, his advice is part of that faith.

Having called on them to believe in God alone, he leaves them to Him, declaring that he cannot influence their destiny, and is not their guardian. He is not responsible for preventing them from error and is not answerable for their erroneous practices, should they choose to indulge in them. His task is to convey his message to them, which he has done. (11:86) This expression awakens the addressees to the gravity of the matter and to their heavy responsibility. It puts them face to face with what awaits them in the end, when they will

have no guardian or intermediary.

The people of Midian were hardened in their corrupt practices. Their reply was sarcastic. Every word of it smacked of sarcasm. Yet it also indicated their ignorance and mulish obstinacy. (11:87) They did not realize, nor wanted to realize, that prayers are required by faith, as a manifestation of true submission to God. Faith cannot be established without the recognition of God's oneness and the renunciation of everything else they or their forefathers worshipped. Likewise, it cannot be established unless God's legislation in matters of trade and finance, as well as in all spheres of life, are implemented. All these are a complete whole, and faith cannot be separated from prayers or legislation which caters for all aspects of human life.

The people of Midian, who had such an ill-conceived idea of the connection between faith and worship, and between the two and business transactions lived a long time ago. But rather than denounce their attitude at length we should remind ourselves that people today stick to certain concepts which are not much different from those of Shuayb's people. The world of jahiliyyah which we see around us today is not much better or more intelligent than the earlier one. The sort of ascription of Godhead to other beings alongside God, which was practiced by Shuayb's people, is still practiced today by most of mankind, including those who claim to be Jews, Christians, or Muslims. All try to establish a barrier separating faith and worship on the one hand and law and business transactions on the other. They claim that faith and worship belong to God and should be conducted according to His instructions, while the law and business do not concern Him. These should be conducted according to the bidding of some other authority. This is indeed the essence of attributing partners to God.

The people of Midian were sarcastic when they addressed their Prophet Shuayb, just as certain people today resort to sarcasm when they speak of those who advocate submission to God alone in all affairs. They said to Shuayb. (11:87) They obviously meant the opposite. To them, wisdom and right meant that they should follow in their fathers" footsteps and worship the same gods they worshipped. It also meant that they should separate worship from business. The same ideas are advocated by present-day intellectuals who do not hide their sarcasm when they speak of the advocates of Islam and describe them as reactionary.

Shuayb, fully confident of the truth of his message, and aware of his people's ignorance and short-sightedness, does not let their sarcasm affect him. On the contrary, he seeks to inform them politely that he takes his stand on clear evidence from his Lord, which he

feels in his innermost heart. He explains to them that he is fully confident of the truth of what he advocates because his knowledge far exceeds theirs. When he calls on them to stick to honest dealings, the effects of such honesty also apply to him since he is a businessman. He is after no personal gain which he seeks to realize for himself. He does not intend to do behind their backs what he has forbidden them so that he enjoys a market free from competition. His call is one of reform which includes himself. The path he enjoins them to follow will not cause them any losses, as they mistakenly think.

He said: Think, my people! If I take my stand on a clear evidence from my Lord and He has provided me with goodly sustenance which He alone can give? I have no desire to do, in opposition to you, what I ask you not to do. All that I desire is to set things to rights in so far as it lies within my power. My success depends on God alone. In Him have I placed my trust, and to Him I always turn." (11:88)

Shuayb addresses them in a friendly and appealing way, reminding them of his close links with them. (Verse 88) I am after no personal gain that I may realize by so doing. (11:88)

It is, then, the general reform of society that Shuayb is after. It is a reform that brings benefit to every individual and every community. Some may think that to adhere to moral values and implement the divine law may make them lose some chances that may be open to them, or lose some gain that they would otherwise achieve. But implementing the divine law can only make them lose evil gains and wicked opportunities. It compensates them with goodly gains and lawful provisions. It also establishes a society that is characterized by the co-operation of its individuals. It is a society that is free from grudges, treachery and selfish quarrels.

He alone can grant me success, as He knows my intentions and the sincerity of my efforts. (11:88) From Him alone I seek help to overcome the difficulties that may beset me and to Him alone I submit my work and efforts.

Shuayb then tries another way of reminding them of the truth. He reminds them of the doom that befell the peoples of Noah, Hud, Salih and Lot. This may open their hardened hearts in a way which rational, cool and well-argued reminders may not. (11:89)

He tells them that they must not let their opposition to him harden their attitude of blind rejection. He says to them plainly that he fears that they may bring upon themselves a doom that is not unlike that which befell earlier communities. He reminds them especially of the people of Lot who lived close by and who had recently

been destroyed.

When he has raised this prospect before them he then opens the doors to forgiveness and repentance. He uses the kindest and gentlest terms in order to assure them of God's mercy and compassion. (11:90)

Thus Shuayb tries all methods of admonition and remonstration in the hope that his people's hearts will open up and respond to the truth. They, however, are so hardened in their erring ways and in their misconceptions of values and motives that their response remains negative. We have seen an example of their response in their mocking at Shuayb and his prayer.

(11:91) The people of Midian made it clear to Shuayb that they were fed up with him and with his message. They did not want to know anything about the truth he was presenting and did not care for anything which differed with their attitude to life or with their practices. Thus, in their view, only physical strength mattered. Plain truth was of no real significance, regardless of the strength of its argument, if it was not supported by physical power. What restrained them from doing so was the fact that they reckoned with the power of Shuayb's clan and family who were supposed to come to his defense. They did not reckon with the power of God who would not leave His messenger to the mercy of His enemies. They had no respect for him as a noble person, nor for his own strength. They only had to consider what his clan might do if anything happened to him.

When people are devoid of proper faith, sound values and noble ideals, they care nothing for anything beyond their immediate interests or their material well-being. To them, any good cause or apparent truth has no sanctity whatsoever. They do not hesitate to assault the advocates of God's cause if these have no apparent power to protect them.

Shuayb was angry with his people for their arrogance towards God. He made it clear that he did not derive his power from his clan or family. He confronted them with their misjudgment of the true powers which can influence things in the universe, and pointed out to them that their insolence would not benefit them with God, aware as He always is of people's actions. Shuayb said his last word and parted ways with his people on the basis that there was no common ground of faith between them. He warned them against the suffering that befell all people who adopted their attitude and then left them to their destiny.

(11:92) Any group of people, strong and powerful as they may be, are, after all, human, subject to God's power. Hence, they are weak. How can you then give such a group of human beings more

importance than you give to God? How can you fear them more than you fear Him? You have turned your backs on Him. This is an image of physical rejection that heightens the enormity of their error. They turn their backs on God who has created them and who has given them all the goods they enjoy in this life. Their attitude is one of ingratitude and insolence as much as it is one of rejection of faith.

The Arabic expression used here gives an image of complete and perfect knowledge, as well as complete and overall power. Angry at his people's impudence towards God, Shuayb takes the proper attitude of a true believer. He does not find any gratification or reassurance in the fact that his own family and clan enjoyed such respect and power that afforded him protection from possible assault. This is evidence of true faith.

Shuayb's anger and his disavowal of any protection given him by anyone other than God prompt him to challenge his people and then disassociate himself from them totally. (11:93) He challenges them to do what they can, to go along their way to the end. He will work according to his method and program. Time will tell who will suffer and who will prosper. The way he throws down his challenge and invites them to watch for the outcome tells of his absolute trust in God.

The curtains fall here to open up again when the issue is finally resolved. We see the people of Midian prostrate, lifeless in their homes, after having been overtaken by a dreadful cry, similar to that which overwhelmed the Thamud, Salih's people. There is great similarity between what happened to both peoples. In both cases, their houses were no longer inhabited, as if they never lived there: (11:94-95) Another black page of history was turned after God's word came to pass against those who rejected His warnings.

The Companions of Midian

Chapter 22: The 103rd Chapter Revealed

and the companions of Midian.
And Moses was denied, but I granted indulgence
to the ones who are ungrateful.
Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval! (22:44)

The Companions of Midian

Chapter 9: The 113th Chapter Revealed

Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—
the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud,
and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian,

and that which are cities overthrown?
Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents. So it had
not been God who did wrong to them,
rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Book 28

Laleh Bakhtiar

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Book 28

Quranic Stories of Other Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent

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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob* (known as Israel), *Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran.* For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity

within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3 Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (as-salam alaykum) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In

effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in ka). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: antum where the verb ends in masculine: kum) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muham-

mad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

12. All the signs in the text are in chronological order.

Laleh Bakhtiar, PhD
Chicago 2017

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Job

Remember Our Servant Job

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Our servant Job*
when he cried out to his Lord:
Truly, Satan afflicted me with fatigue and punishment! (38:41)
*It is said: Stomp with **your** foot.*
This is a place of washing that is cool
and from which to drink. (38:42)
And We bestowed on him, his people,
and the like of them along with them as a mercy from Us,
a reminder for those imbued with intuition. (38:43)
And take in thy hand a bundle of rushes
*and strike with it and fail not **your** oath.*
Truly, We found him one who remains steadfast.
How excellent a servant.
Truly, he was penitent. (38:44)

Commentary°

The story of Job and his steadfastness in face of severe tests is well known, and often cited as an example of patience in adversity. The part that sounds correct in the story is that Job was God's good servant who always turned to Him in humility and submission. God tested him and he remained patient. It seems that the test he endured entailed the loss of his wealth, family and health. Nevertheless, he maintained his bond with God, trusting to Him, and was satisfied with what God had given him.

He had a few well-wishers who remained faithful to him, including his wife, Rahmah, but Satan tried to convince these that if God had loved Job, He would not have subjected him to such a-severe situation. When they told him this, it was harder for him than the test itself. His wife spoke to him repeating some such whispers, and Job was very upset. He swore that should God restore his health, he would beat her, specifying the number of times he would hit her, which is said to be one hundred.

At this point Job complained to God about the trouble Satan's schemes and whispers were causing him. (38:41) When he had proved his sincerity beyond any doubt, and when he had rejected all Satan's attempts to weaken him, complaining that these were hard for him, God bestowed His grace on him, ending his test, and restoring his health. He ordered him to hit the ground with his leg, and a cool spring would gush forth. He was to wash himself with its water

and drink from it. This was enough for him to recover his health. (38:42)

The Quranic statement (38:43) means that when his health was restored, he regained his family that had almost been lost to him. He also gave him more as additional favors. This serves as a reminder to those who have insight and understanding.

What is important in this story related in this chapter is that they show how God bestows favors and grace on His servants. Although He subjects them to tests they remain patient in adversity, bearing their hardship with assured resignation, knowing that whatever God decides is ultimately good.

God also bestowed His grace on Job and his wife with regard to the oath he had made about beating her. She had looked after him during his days of hardship and was also patient during their adversity. Therefore, God ordered Job to take in his hand a bunch of dried sticks, in the number he had stated in his oath, and hit her with the bunch once only. In this way, he would fulfill his oath: Take in your hand a bunch of grass and strike with it, and you will not then break your oath. (38: 44) Such care and blessings were in return for what God knew of Job's patience in adversity, his being a model of obedience, always turning to Him for support: We found him patient in adversity. How excellent a servant of Ours; he would always turn to Us. (38:44)

God Gave Recompense to Job

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob.
Each of them We guided. And Noah We guided before and among
his offspring are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph
and Moses and Aaron. And, thus, We gave recompense to the ones
who are doers of good. (6:84)

The Prayer of Job

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And Job, when he cried out to his Lord:*
*Truly, harm afflicted me and **You** are*
One Who is Most Merciful of the ones who are merciful. (21:83)
So We responded to him.
Then, We removed his harm.
And We gave him back his people
and the like of others with them as a mercy from Us
and as a reminder of ones who worship. (21:84)

Commentary°

[These signs] also provide us with the example of Job, the Prophet, being tested with hardship. (21:83-21:84) Job's story is one of the finest that centers on a test. Quranic texts mentioning Job only speak in general terms, giving few details. In this particular instance, the [signs] mention Job's supplication and God's response, because the overall atmosphere of the [signs] are one of grace bestowed from on high on His Prophets and the care He takes of them when He tests them. This applies in all test situations, including rejection by their peoples, as with Abraham, Lot and Noah; power and wealth as with David and Solomon; or hardship with Job.

Job's prayer, as mentioned here, does not go beyond describing his condition and emphasizing God's attributes. (21:83) He does not appeal for his condition to be changed, because he wants to remain patient in adversity. Nor does he suggest anything to his Lord. His is an attitude of perfect humility before Him. Thus, he is God's model servant: neither panicking in a situation of adversity nor expressing frustration at the hardship he endures. Indeed, his is considered a test of the highest severity. He is reluctant even to pray to God to lift his hardship. Therefore, he leaves the matter entirely to God, knowing that He knows his situation and does not need his prayer.

At the moment Job addressed his Lord with such confidence and humility, his prayer was answered and God's grace was bestowed on him in abundance. His test was over. (21:84) His personal affliction was removed, and his health was restored. This indicates complete recovery, leaving no trace of illness. The affliction that concerned his family was also lifted.

All this was as "an act of grace from Ourselves," because every blessing is an act of God's grace. It was also "a reminder to all who worship Us." It reminds them of God and the tests He may put us through, and of His grace that will not fail to follow the hardship. The test to which Job was put provides an example for all humanity, and his patient endurance sets a model for all to follow.

The reference to those "who worship Us" within the context of hard tests is especially significant. Such worshippers may be subjected to tests and hardship. To endure with patience is a requirement of faith and worship. The whole matter is very serious. Faith is a trust that is given only to those who are able to shoulder its responsibility and endure its hardship. It is not mere words, carelessly uttered by anyone.

Samuel

The Prophet and the Ark of the Covenant

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Have you not considered*
the Council of the Children of Jacob after Moses
when they said to a Prophet of theirs:
Raise up a king for us,
and we will fight in the way of God.
He said: Perhaps if fighting was prescribed for you,
you would not fight. They said:
Why should we not fight in the way of God
when we were driven out of our abodes with our children.
Then, when fighting was prescribed for them,
they turned away, but for a few of them.
And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust. (2:246)
And their Prophet said to them:
Truly, God raised up for you Saul, a king.
They said: How would it be for him to have dominion over us
when we have better right to dominion than he,
as he is not given plenty of wealth?
He said: Truly, God favored him over you, and
increased him greatly in the knowledge and the physique.
And God gives His dominion to whom He wills.
And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. (2:247)
And their Prophet)Samuel) *said to them: Truly, a sign of his*
dominion is that there would approach you
the Ark of the Covenant.
In it is tranquility from your Lord,
and abiding wisdom of what the people of Moses left,
and the people of Aaron. And the angels will carry it.
Truly, in that is a sign for you
if you had been ones who believe. (2:248)

Commentary°

The way the Quran portrays this episode is highly inspiring and particularly significant for all Muslim generations, let alone the first Muslim community. The total sum of what had taken place on this occasion is that, despite all the weaknesses shown by the Children of Jacob, leading to one group's desertion after another, the steadfastness of even a small group of believers achieved very great results for the whole community. They were able to turn the tables on their enemies, shaking off their long humiliation by their enemies to

achieve victory and establish the kingdom of David and Solomon. That was the beginning of the Children of Jacob's golden age. All this was the result of the new impetus given to faith after it remained long forgotten, and the steadfastness of a small group facing the large army led by Goliath.

A number of significant facts are highlighted here. The first is that public enthusiasm can be dangerously deceptive. Therefore, those in the position of leadership must put it to the test before going into a decisive battle. A group of wise and respected elders of the Children of Jacob requested their Prophet to choose for them a king who could lead them in their struggle for God's cause. They wanted to fight those enemies who had ravaged their kingdom and looted their property, including what was left by their Prophets, Moses and Aaron, and their household.

Trying to gauge their determination, their Prophet suggested that, once a battle loomed large, they might not be up to the task. Here their enthusiasm reached its highest point, and they expressed their attitude, feeling that they had every reason to fight. Such an attitude remains a human weakness often encountered in communities whose strength of faith remains suspect.

Their Prophet had to explain that the king was chosen by God, which should have been enough reason for his people to accept him, because God is powerful and generous and would only choose what would be in their best interest. Moreover, Saul was endowed with knowledge and physical strength, providing him with a greater quality of leadership and ability. This should have been enough to convince them to accept Saul as king over them; but, it seems, nothing short of a miracle would persuade them. (2:248)

In the post-Moses era, the Children of Jacob, during the reign of Joshua, were driven out of Palestine and most of their sacred heritage was pillaged and looted. This included a casket that was said to contain many relics of Moses and Aaron. More significantly, it also contained a copy of the tablets given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. The reappearance of that casket, carried by angels, would be, their Prophet said, a sign from God and material proof of Saul's kingship. Once they saw it they would be reassured and, if they were true believers, would accept him as their leader.

The narration suggests that the miracle did take place and, completely reassured, the Children of Jacob went on to confront their enemy.

Despite the lack of narrative details, we can gather that Saul had organized his fighting force of willing men and had gone ahead to do battle, and that as soon as they were on their way, he put their loyalty to the test. (2:249)

This example shows that good intentions, by themselves, are not sufficient unless they are tested in practice. It also demonstrates the strength of a leader who is not swayed by the fall of most of his troops at the first hurdle, but who forges ahead with the rest of them. Saul's forces were to encounter more trials of loyalty and strength. (2:249)

Their numbers had dwindled, and they were aware that they were outnumbered by Goliath's forces. Certainly, they had the advantage of faith in their cause and trust in their leader, but the harsh reality of the situation told them they were the weaker side, and that their faith would be put to the test. Would that invisible force of faith triumph? How strong was their faith in God, and would they be able to harness that force in their favor and prevail?

At that decisive moment, a small group of true believers stood up to express their faith. To the believer's mind, that is the way it should be: believers are always numerically less than their enemies, because they need to sacrifice more and work harder to earn God's grace and pleasure. But they triumph because they draw their strength from God Almighty and their faith in Him. The believers are aware that their victory comes from God as a reward for their patience and perseverance.

The leadership qualities of Saul are now coming to light. He was leading an army of a vanquished nation who had experienced defeat many times in its history, and was about to meet a formidable enemy, and had therefore to test the will of his troops. He had to be sure of their ability to overcome their desires and endure hardship and deprivation. Above all, he had to test their loyalty and obedience, and their ability to shoulder responsibility. He put them to the test at the river, having established that they were getting very thirsty, to find out who would obey him and who would not.

He allowed them a single scoop with the hand to quench their thirst, but most of them drank their fill and were left behind because they had failed the test. It was better for the rest of the fighting force as weaklings would have been a liability on the battlefield. Military prowess is not determined by size or numbers, but is measured by the will and moral strength and faith of the troops.

David

Remember Our Servant David

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Have patience with what they say,*
and remember Our servant David,
the possessor of potency.
Truly, he was penitent. (38:17)
Truly, We caused the mountains to be subservient
to glorify with him in the evening
and the rising of the sun. (38:18)
And the birds were ones who are assembled,
all penitent to Him. (38:19)
And We strengthened his dominion and gave him wisdom
and decisiveness in argument. (38:20)
Approached ***you*** *the tiding of the disputants*
when they climbed over the wall of a sanctuary? (38:21)
When they entered in on David, he was terrified of them.
They said: Fear not. Two disputants were insolent,
one of us against the other.
So give judgment duly between us and transgress not
and guide us to the right path. (38:22)
Truly, this is my brother. He has ninety-nine ewe,
while I have one ewe. And he said:
Place it in my charge and he triumphed
over me in argument. (38:23)
David said: Certainly, he did wrong to ***you***
in asking for ***your*** *ewe in addition to his ewes.*
And, truly, many partners in business are insolent,
one to another, but those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality, and they are few.
And David thought that We tried him
and he asked for forgiveness of his Lord
and fell down as one who bows down penitent. (38:24)
So We forgave him that. And, truly,
for him is nearness with Us and goodness of destination. (38:25)
O David! Truly, We made ***you*** *a viceregent on the earth*
so give judgment duly among humanity
and follow not your desire
for it will cause ***you*** *to go astray from the way of God.*
Truly, those who go astray from the way of God,
for them there is a severe punishment
because they forgot the Day of Reckoning. (38:26)

Commentary°

David is referred to here (38:17) as a strong person who turned to God. The chapter earlier mentioned (38:12-38:13) the peoples of Noah, the Aad, Thamud, Pharaoh, Lot's people and the community that lived in the wooded dale near Midian. All of these were tyrannical, and it was such tyranny that gave them the impression of power. David, on the other hand, was a man of strength, but he always turned to God, repenting of his sins, glorifying God and worshipping Him. He did so when he was truly powerful, with a kingdom to rule.

In Chapter 2, The Cow (see below), we have an account of David in his youth, when he was a soldier in Saul's army. At the time, which was long after Moses, the Children of Jacob asked one of their Prophets to assign one of them as king and they promised that they would fight for God's cause under his leadership. God appointed Saul as their king and he marshaled them to face Goliath's mighty army. It was David who killed Goliath. From that day, his standing was enhanced, such that, in turn, he became king. Yet having a throne did not lead him astray. He continued to turn to God in repentance, glorifying and worshipping Him.

Apart from prophethood and a kingdom, God also blessed David with an alert heart and a melodious voice, which he used to good effect as he sang his psalms and hymns. He would be so absorbed in his devotion that barriers between him and the universe would disappear and the mountains would echo his glorification, while birds gathered around him, all glorifying the Lord Creator. (38:18-38:19)

Thus, his kingdom was strong and well established. (38:20) He administered his government with wisdom and clear, decisive vision. The phrase 'decisiveness in judgment' means that his views were clear, not subject to hesitation. When this is coupled with wisdom, it makes for perfect government within the human world. However, this did not spare David from being subjected to tests and trials. Nevertheless, God continued to take care of him and guided his footsteps:

These verses (38:21-38:24) tell of a test to which David was subjected. David used to devote some of his time to conducting the affairs of his kingdom and to judge in people's disputes. The rest of his time he devoted to his worship, preferring seclusion when he sang his psalms. When he went into the sanctuary, no one was allowed in.

One day, David was surprised when he saw two people climbing over the wall into the sanctuary. He was alarmed. No good believer or trustworthy person would enter in this way. Therefore, they immediately tried to reassure him, saying that they were in dispute and

wanted him to judge between them in fairness, showing them the way to justice. One of them immediately started putting his case forward, saying that the other man, his brother, had 99 ewes while he only had one. Yet he insisted on taking charge of his single ewe, placing it with his 99.

As stated by one of the disputants, the case is one of gross injustice that cannot be condoned. Hence, David immediately started to give his judgment without speaking to the other man or asking him to give his side of the story. Instead, he told the first man that the other had been unfair in his demands, and that many people behave in this way, except those who are good believers and do righteous deeds. These, however, are few in number. . . .

At this point David realized that this was a test. (38:24) His good nature surfaced again, because he was a man always ready to accept what is right. God's response was to accept his repentance. (38:25)

The Quranic comments given after the story explain the nature of the test and specify the line God wants His servant to whom He assigned judgment between people to take. (38:26) .

DAVID WAS PENITENT

And We bestowed Solomon on David. How excellent a servant.
Truly, he was penitent. (38:30)
When they were presented before him in the evening
—steeds standing with one foot slightly raised— (38:31)
he said: Truly, I cherished and loved the good
instead of remembering my Lord
when the sun secluded itself behind the partition of the night. (38:32)
Return them to me.
Then, he took wiping over their legs and their necks. (38:33)
And, certainly, We tried Solomon.
We cast a lifeless body on his seat.
Again, he was penitent. (38:34)
He said: My Lord! Forgive me and bestow on me
a dominion such will not be fit and proper for another after me.
*Truly, **You** are The Giver.* (38:35)
So We caused the wind to be subservient to him.
It runs at his command, a gentle wind, wherever it lit. (38:36)
And We made subservient the satans
and every builder and diver (38:37)
and others, ones who are chained in bonds. (38:38)
*This is Our gift. Then, have **you** shown grace*
*or have **you** held back without reckoning?* (38:39)
Truly, for him is nearness with Us,
and goodness of destination. (38:40)

Commentary°

[These signs] are a reference to the road taken by all God's Messengers. It groups them together. Everyone of them took it: everyone suffered, was tested and remained patient in adversity; each at his own step in the lofty ladder of prophethood. The life of each one of them was a series of tests, each bearing much pain. Even when things were pleasant and comfortable, this represented a different form of test so as to ensure that they remained patient when life was easy in the same way as they were patient in adversity. Both situations require endurance. When we contemplate the lives of all God's messengers, as told to us in the Quran, we realize that patience was the most prominent element. In essence, their lives were a long series of trials and tests.

The lives of God's messengers were in fact an open book for all humanity to read, with every page speaking about trials, afflictions and patience. The records show how the human soul triumphs over pain and necessity. How it rises above all that to which the present world attaches value, and how it discards desires and temptations, so as to achieve full dedication to God, and in so doing passes the test He has set. It shows the meaning of choosing Him over everything else. (30:4-30:5, 30:8). Indeed they said much more. God directs the Prophet to bear their statements with patience, and tells him that in his mind and heart he should live with a different type of people: the select few, God's Messengers with whom he has a strong affinity and close relationship. Indeed, he used to refer to them as though they were his immediate relatives.

People may be speechless when they hear that the mountains, inanimate entities, should join David in his constant glorification of God as he chants his songs of praise. Not only that but the birds also flock to him, listen and join in with the chorus to his hymns. Their surprise results from the fact that it runs counter to everything they have been used to. They only know that human beings, birds and mountains belong to totally separate realms.

Yet, why should anyone be surprised? All these creatures, different as their races, shapes, forms and characteristics are, share in one fundamental fact: they turn to the Lord who created the whole universe with all its animate and inanimate objects. When man's relation with his Lord attains sublime purity, barriers between different elements are removed. The whole matter is simple: God gave His servant David this unique characteristic, and caused the mountains to join him in extolling His glory morning and evening, and gathered the birds around him to echo his praises. This was simply an additional gift by virtue of God's grace.

It seems that at this stage the two men disappeared. In fact, they were two angels who had come to test David, the prophet God had placed in a position of authority to judge between people in fairness, making sure who is right before passing judgment. They had put the case to him in a very sentimental way, one that invited immediate sympathy. However, a judge must not allow sentiment to take charge. He must not be hasty. Above all, he must not rely on the statement of one party, without allowing the other party to present his case and submit his evidence. Some aspects of the case, if not all of it, may then be seen in a different light. In other words, appearances can often be deceptive or incomplete.

It is then a case of David being given the position of vicegerent on earth, one whereby he is required to judge between people in all fairness. He is told not to follow vain desires, which means in the case of a prophet, not to be hasty in one's first reaction. For this can easily lead to going astray from God's path. Rather, he must make sure of all the facts before passing judgment. The concluding sentence in the verse gives a general rule that applies to all cases of going astray from God's path. It exposes the person concerned to severe punishment on the Day of Reckoning.

One aspect of the care God took of His servant David is that He drew his attention at the first hurdle, and put him back on the right track at the first rash move, warning him of the ultimate result, when he had not even made one step towards it. Such is God's favor that He bestows on His chosen servants. Since they are human, they may slip when they travel an uneven patch of the road, but God takes them by the hand putting them back on course and teaching them how to repent. Then He forgives them and bestows even greater favors on them.

David Given Knowledge

Chapter 27: The 48th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Certainly, We gave David and Solomon knowledge;*
and they said: All Praise belongs to God
Who gave us advantage over many of His servants,
ones who believe. (27:15)

To David We Gave the Psalms

Chapter 17: The 50th Chapter Revealed

And your Lord is greater in knowledge of whoever
are in the heavens and in and on the earth.
And, certainly, We gave advantage
to some of the Prophets over others.
And to David We gave Psalms. (17:55)

The Offspring of David Guided

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob.
Each of them We guided.
And Noah We guided before
and among his offspring are David and Solomon
and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron.
And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)

David Given Grace

Chapter 34: The 57th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave David grace from Us.*
O mountains! Echo psalms of praise with him and the birds.
And We softened iron for him, (34:10)
saying that: Work on full coats of mail
and calculate the links.
And do as one in accord with morality.
Truly, I am Seeing of what you do. (34:11)

*****

They worked for him whatever of sanctuaries he wills
—images and basin-like cisterns like water-troughs
and cooking pots—ones firmly fixed.
People of David! Act with thankfulness.
But few of My servants are grateful. (34:13)

Commentary°

David was the type of servant described at the end of the first part of the [signs] (34:10-34:11). The chapter follows this reference by recounting some of his history, preambled by details of the grace God bestowed on him. (34:10) Reports suggest that David had an unusually beautiful voice, and he used to sing his Psalms, which are praises of God mentioned in the Jewish Scripture, but God knows which of them were truly David's.

This (34:10) is another aspect of the grace God bestowed on David. Within the context wherein it occurs, this seems to be a miracle going beyond what is familiar to us. The chapter is not speaking here of heating iron until it becomes soft and molding it into the required shape. Rather, it appears that the iron was softened in a different way from what normally occurs, yet God knows best. Although guiding man to the softening of iron by heating is in itself an aspect of God's grace, our assumption here rests on the fact that

the overall atmosphere is one of miracles and unfamiliar phenomena.

Reports suggest that prior to David's time, armor was plated, (34:11) each coat being made up of one plate or sheet, which was very heavy for soldiers making them stiff and rigid. God instructed David in how to make armor from fine links that could be easily molded so as to move in accordance with the body. David was also ordered to make these links narrow so that they could give complete protection against spears, preventing them from penetrating through. This is the reference in the verse to measuring the links with care. All this was taught to David through divine inspiration.

(34:11) This does not apply to their making coats of mail. Instead it is clear that they must be on their guard in all that they do because God sees all and rewards everyone in accordance with what they deserve. Nothing escapes Him.

All this grace was given to David. Solomon was also given the ability to perform extraordinary feats, as a manifestation of God's grace. (34:12-34:13).

We can say that God placed the wind at Solomon's command (34:12) making it travel forward to a specific place [which according to Chapter 21, The Prophets, is Palestine] for a month, and then making its return journey over a period of a month. Certain objectives were achieved by these two journeys. These were known to Solomon and he accomplished them by God's command. We prefer not to say any more on this point so as not to indulge in unsubstantiated legends.

The general context of [this sign 34:12] again suggests that this was also a miracle, like the softening of iron for David. This might have taken place in the form of a volcanic fountain pouring forth brass that had been molten underground. Likewise, God might have instructed Solomon on how to get brass to become fluid and mold it into different shapes. Regardless of how all this took place, it was nonetheless an act of God's abundant grace.

The [signs] conclude with an address to David's household. (34:13) All this was given you by God's grace, through David and Solomon. You must not take false pride in it, but instead give proper thanks. Good action is an important form of thanksgiving.

However, few of My servants are truly thankful. (34:13) This comment also serves as a directive. It tells us on the one hand that the grace and favors God bestows on His servants are so great that few of them are able to express due thanks for them, and on the other that people often neglect their thanksgiving duty. In fact, however much people try to express their gratitude, they cannot give due

thanks for what God bestows on them. What is their status, then, if they slacken and overlook this duty?

David and his family were full of gratitude to God for all His blessings and used such favors for good purpose. The people of Sheba, however, are to be contrasted with such role models. In Chapter 27, The Ants, we have a report of what took place between their queen and Solomon. Here, the story gives an account of what happened to them after Solomon, which suggests that the events included here date back to a period after the queen's exchanges with Solomon. What makes this more likely is that the story here speaks of Sheba's people becoming ungrateful for God's blessings, which were then withdrawn and the people scattered. Under the queen mentioned in Chapter 27, they enjoyed a plentiful period and were very powerful. The first report received by Solomon about them was from a hoopoe who told him: "I found there a woman ruling over them; and she has been given of all good things, and hers is a magnificent throne. I found her and her people prostrating themselves to the sun instead of God; and Satan has made their deeds seem goodly to them, thus turning them away from the path [of God!, so that they cannot find the right way." (27:23-27:24)

This was subsequently followed by the queen's submission to God, as she embraced the divine faith. The story here, then, is certainly of a subsequent period. It tells of what happened to them after they turned away from God and refused to thank Him for His favors.

The Quranic description shows that David (peace be upon him) attained such a sublime standard of devotion and transparency in his praises that barriers between him and other creatures disappeared. Thus the truth between them became interrelated as they all praise God. Hence the mountains and the birds echoed his praises of God. When all of them had direct links with God, whatever separates species and creatures was removed. They felt that their bond with God overcame all barriers between them. Hence, they echoed one another in praising God, attaining an extraordinary level of transparency that can only be attained through God's grace.

When David raised his voice singing God's praises and glorifying Him, the mountains and the birds echoed him. The universe returned their songs as these were presented to God, the One. This is a remarkably splendid point in time which cannot be appreciated except by one who so experiences it, and even then only momentarily.

David and Solomon

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And mention David and Solomon,*
when they give judgment about cultivation
when a herd of the sheep of his folk strayed.
And to their critical judgment
We had been ones who bear witness. (21:78)
So We caused Solomon to understand it.
And We gave each of them critical judgment and knowledge.
And We caused to become subservient to David,
the mountains and the birds to glorify God.
And We had been ones who do such things. (21:79)
We taught him the art of making garments of chain mail
for you to fortify you from your violence
Will you not then be ones who are thankful? (21:80)

Commentary°

The story of the field over which David and Solomon gave judgment is detailed in some reports as stating that two men came to David. One of them had a field, or a vineyard according to some reports, while the other had a flock of sheep. David ruled that the owner of the field should take the sheep in compensation for his wasted crops.

The sheep's owner then passed by Solomon and told him of David's judgment.

Solomon went to his father and said: Prophet of God, you should have judged differently.

David asked: How should I judge?

Solomon replied: Give the sheep to the field's owner to benefit by them and give the field to the sheep's owner to tend until it is returned to its original state. Then each man returns to the other his property. Thus, the field's owner will get his field and the sheep's owner his sheep.

David confirmed that that was the right judgment, and he ordered it to be carried out.

This is a higher level of justice, one which was given by God's inspiration.

Both David and Solomon were given wisdom and knowledge. (21:79) There was nothing wrong with David's judgment, but that of Solomon's went a step further because it was inspired.

The chapter moves on to show what was given specifically to each of these Prophets. (Verses 79-80)

Both David and Solomon judged according to their own discre-

tion, but God was observing their judgment. He inspired Solomon to give the verdict that was fairer. David's judgment aimed to compensate the field's owner for the damage done to him, which establishes justice. But Solomon's judgment added to justice a constructive dimension. Thus, justice became a motive to initiate constructive effort.

David was famous for his Psalms, which were hymns that he chanted in his melodious voice. They were echoed by his surroundings, including the mountains and birds. When a human being feels his bond with God alive in his heart, he feels that the entire universe responds to him. All impediments and barriers separating different kinds of creatures are thus removed, so that they join together in one great, universal entity. In such moments of clarity, man's soul is united with all about it. It is no longer distinct from its surroundings. Indeed it is one with all that is around it.

As we read these verses we can imagine David chanting his Psalms, oblivious to his own separate entity, letting his soul move freely in the universe, looking at God's animate and inanimate creation. He feels that they echo his chanting and in this way respond to him. The entire universe thus becomes an orchestra singing a marvelous tune of God's praise and glorification. The seven heavens extol His limitless glory, as does the earth, and all who dwell in them. Indeed every single thing extols His glory and praise, but you cannot understand their praises. (17:44) The one who understands such praises is a person who sheds all barriers and separations. He is one who turns to God.

There is nothing difficult for God (21:79) when He wills to have it done or put in place, regardless of whether it is familiar or not to mankind.

This (21:80) was how God taught him to make shields using interconnected rings. Shields were previously made of long plates. Small, interconnected rings can make a shield that is easier to use and more flexible. It seems that it was David who invented this, as God instructed him to do. God reminds people of His favor in teaching David this art so as to protect them in wartime. The verse ends with a question that encourages them to do the right thing: Will you, then, give thanks?

David Killed Goliath

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *So they put them to flight*
with he permission of God.
And David killed Goliath.

And God gave him the dominion and wisdom,
and taught him of what He wills.
And if not for God driving humanity back
—some by some others—
the earth would have, certainly, gone to ruin,
except God is Possessor of Grace to the worlds. (2:251)

Commentary°

The [signs] confirm that, despite their material disadvantage, the small, devoted, faithful band of believers prevailed and overran their formidable enemy. (2:250-2:251)

Their prayers are deeply sincere and poignant. The Arabic words depict patience as an endless shower poured down upon the believers by God Almighty, filling their hearts with reassurance and tranquility and providing them with the power and energy to face their superior enemy. They plead for strength to stand firm and to triumph over their adversary. It was clearly a confrontation between truth and falsehood in which God's intervention was indispensable to ensure a decisive victory for His allies.

At the time of these events, (2:251) David was a young man and Goliath a powerful king and a fearful commander, but God wished to demonstrate to the Children of Jacob that they should not judge matters at face value, and should look deeper into the reality of things. Their side of the bargain was to keep their pact with God and prepare themselves for battle, leaving the rest to God who knows the essence of all things and how they come about. The outcome would be decided by God, in accordance with His will and wisdom. It was God's will that a youth such as David should slay a powerful giant-of-a-man such as Goliath as proof that physical power by itself is not the decisive factor. The other divine objective, not obvious at the time, was that David was destined to inherit the kingdom of Saul, and that David would be succeeded by his son, Solomon, who reigned over what became the golden era in the whole history of the Children of Jacob, a period of great religious revival which came after their return from the wilderness.

Ungrateful Cursed by the Tongue of David

Chapter 5: The 112th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Those who were ungrateful were cursed*
among the Children of Jacob by the tongue of David
and that of Jesus son of Mary.
That was because they would rebel
and they had been exceeding the limits. (5:78)

Commentary°

When we remember that it was Jesus and David who cursed the Children of Jacob, we realize that theirs is a long history of ingratitude, disobedience and rejection of the truth. Prophets who were sent to guide and save them were the ones who eventually condemned them so that they might not be guided to the truth. God answered their prayers and destined the Israelites to a perpetual curse.

The unbelievers among the Children of Jacob were the ones who distorted their revealed Scriptures and refused to abide by the rulings of the divine code, as we are told in several Quranic chapters. They violated their covenant with God in which they pledged themselves to support and follow every Messenger He sent. (5:78)

Solomon

God's Blessings on Solomon

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We tried Solomon.*
We cast a lifeless body on his seat.
Again, he was penitent. (38:34)

Solomon Inherits from David

Chapter 27: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Certainly We gave David and Solomon*
knowledge and they said:
All Praise belongs to God Who has given us advantage
over many of His believing servants.
And Solomon inherited from David and he said:
O humanity! We were taught the utterance of the birds
and everything was given to us.
Truly, this is clearly grace. (27:16)
And there was assembled before Solomon
his armies of jinn and humankind and birds
and they are marching in rank (27:17)
until when they approached the Valley of the Ants.
One ant said: O ants! Enter your dwellings
so that Solomon and his armies not crush you
while they are not aware. (27:18)
So Solomon smiled as one who laughs at its saying and he said:
My Lord! Arouse me that I give thanks for Thy divine blessing
with which Thou wert gracious to me
and ones who are my parents
and that I do as one in accord with morality.
May Thou be well-pleased and cause me to enter by Thy Mercy
among Thy servants, ones in accord with morality. (27:19)
And he reviewed the birds and said:
Why see I not the hoopoe bird?
Had it been among the ones who are absent? (27:20)
I will, certainly, punish him with a severe punishment
or deal a death blow to it
unless it brings me a clear authority! (27:21)

Commentary°

Solomon's story is full of movement and action, rich in feeling and scenery. Highlighting certain images and separating them with

suitable gaps are two more aspects of the unique method of the Quran. (27:15)

The sign gives us an account of some of the favors God granted Solomon, particularly his knowledge of the speech of birds and other creatures. This is in addition to what is mentioned in other chapters, such as his ability to judge in intricate disputes, and the fact that the winds were made subject to his command, by God's grace.

The story begins with the reference to knowledge: For sure, We granted knowledge to David and Solomon. (27:15) Before the sign concludes we are told of their thanksgiving to God for this favor. They stress the great value and benefit of knowledge, and declare their praise of God for it. Thus, the value of knowledge is enhanced, and it becomes clear that people with knowledge are favored highly.

We are not told here of the type or speciality of the knowledge given to these two prophets because the emphasis is on knowledge in its entirety. This gives us the further connotation that all knowledge is a gift from God, and that it behooves every person of knowledge to know the source of such knowledge. This makes all those endowed with knowledge turn to God, praising Him, and motivates them to use their knowledge in ways that please the great Giver. Thus, knowledge, which is an aspect of God's favor, does not turn people away from God. Any knowledge that does so is deviant, moving away from its source and missing its goal. Nor does it bring happiness to the one who possesses it. Instead, it brings only misery, fear, worry and destruction.

The story then progresses concentrating on Solomon only. (27:16) David was given kingship alongside prophethood and knowledge, but it is knowledge, rather than kingship, that is mentioned in this context because being a king is too trivial by comparison.

It is clear that the inheritance intended here is that of knowledge, because it is the main blessing which deserves mention. This is confirmed by Solomon's declaration to his people. (Verse 16) He highlights the fact that he has been taught the language of birds, and mentions other favors in a general way, but he attributes both to the same source, which is not David, his father. Indeed, none of this did he inherit from his father

Removing the Barriers of Nature: "O people! We have been taught the speech of birds, and have been given of all good things. (27:16) Thus Solomon announces to all people that these are aspects of God's favors granted to him. He seeks no special position as a result. Indeed, he describes such favors as they truly are: This is indeed a manifest favor [from God]. (27:16) It is a favor that makes its source known to all. No one can teach the language of birds to man

other than God, and no one can give anyone a measure of all good things except God.

Birds, animals and insects have their own means of communication, which are in fact their languages. God, the Creator of all these says: There is not an animal that walks on earth and no bird that flies on its wings but are communities like your own. (6:38)

They cannot form communities unless they have ties and bonds which they maintain, and some means of communication with which to understand each other. This is clearly observed in many species of bird, animal and insect. Biologists who are interested in certain species try hard to understand a little of their languages, but they can only rely on guesswork which does not approach any degree of certainty. What God granted to Solomon was something special, a miracle that goes beyond the laws of nature familiar to man. The knowledge he acquired was not through any attempt he had made to understand these species; it was a gift from God.

This is only one part of the miracle God granted to Solomon, His servant. The other part was that a number of the jinn and birds were placed under his command, serving him like human servants would. Moreover, the birds thus placed under him were given special faculties far greater than ordinary birds of the same species. This is clearly apparent in the story of the hoopoe who was able to understand the situation at the Queen of Sheba's court as clearly as a most intelligent and religious person. This is again a miraculous aspect.

It is a fact that the law God has set for His creation allows birds a measure of understanding that may vary, but this measure remains well below what man understands. That birds have their own form is merely part of the overall balance maintained in the universe. It is subject to the general law of creation.

Another fact is that a hoopoe living today is exactly the same as other hoopoes that have lived on earth for a very long time. Its genes are such that they make it, practically, a clone of the first hoopoe. Whatever adaptations the hoopoe has gone through does not enable it to move on to a higher species. This is clearly part of the system and balance God has set for His creation.

The two facts mentioned above cannot preclude the working of a miracle whenever God, the Creator of all species and laws governing them wants it. The miracle itself may be a part of the overall law of creation, which we do not know in full. If it is, then this part occurs at the time appointed for it, which is known only to God. As it occurs, it transcends the natural laws familiar to man, but it thus complements the divine laws of creation and balance. This explains how Solomon's hoopoe came into existence, and perhaps all the birds that

were placed under Solomon's command at that time.

(27:17) This is a big procession in which are marshaled all troops, jinn, human and bird. Naturally, humans are well known to us, but the jinn are creatures about whom we know nothing more than what God has said in the Quran. They were created from flames, and can see us while we cannot see them. (7:27) [The reference in this verse is to Iblis, or Satan, who belongs to the jinn.]

They are able to prompt people and tempt them to take evil and sinful actions. We do not know how this takes place. We also know that a group of them believed in God's Messenger. He did not meet or see them, but God informed him of what happened: Say: 'It has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened [to the Quran]', and said: 'We have listened to a wonderful discourse that guides to what is right, and so we have come to believe in it. We shall never associate any partners with our Lord. (72:1-72:2)

We also know that God made some of them serve Solomon, making for him whatever he wished of sanctuaries, statues, and large cauldrons for cooking. They also dived into the sea for him, and did his bidding. Some were in his procession side by side with humans and birds.

We say that God placed under Solomon's command only a section of the jinn, birds, and humans. Thus it is clear that not all people on earth were his subjects, because his kingdom stretched over an area that includes today's Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, up to the Euphrates. Similarly, not all the jinn or birds were under his command; rather it was a section of each type.

In support of this view about the jinn we cite the fact that Iblis, or Satan, and his offspring belong to the jinn as the Quran states: (18:50) God also says about Iblis: Who whispers in the hearts of humanity, from among jinn and humanity (114:5-114:6)

Thus Iblis and his offspring who all belonged to the jinn continued to whisper in people's hearts tempting them to sin during Solomon's reign. Had they been placed under his command, they would not have been able to do so since he was a prophet advocating what is right. Therefore, it is clear that only a section of them were loyal to Solomon.

So, this great procession was ready before Solomon: and they were all lined in orderly ranks, so that there would be no chance of disorder. They are described as 'troops' in the verse to indicate the orderly nature of the procession.

At length, when they came to a valley of ants, one ant said: Go into your dwellings, ants, lest Solomon and his troops inadvertently crush you. He smiled joyously at her words, and said: My Lord! Di-

rect my whole being so that I will always be grateful for Your grace which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do righteous deeds which will please You; and include me, by Your grace, among Your righteous servants. (27:18-27:19)

So the procession moved forward in an orderly manner, until they reached a valley where ants were in plenty. In fact the sign describes the place as a valley of ants. At this point, an ant supervisor made an announcement to all other ants in the vicinity. It should be remembered that, like bees, ants live in complex social colonies in which different ants have different functions and duties that are organized according to an elaborate system that we might find too difficult to emulate, despite our superior intelligence. So, the supervisor ant announced in the manner of communication used by ants that they should hasten back to their dwellings, so that Solomon and his troops would not crush them unawares.

Solomon understood what she said and was pleased. His pleasure was two-fold: he smiled at her words like an adult smiles to a child who tries to evade him, fearing that the adult wants to punish him when he has no such intention. Plus he was gratified that God has given him this gift which opened up for him worlds that are normally closed to mankind. He was also joyful at the fact that ants should have such understanding, with the ability to give orders and carry them out.

When Solomon gathered what the ant said, he smiled joyously at her words.' Yet he soon realized what had just happened. He realized that it was all a great gift God had granted him, lifting the barriers that separate different types of creation. He therefore turned to God in acknowledgement of His favors. (27:19) It is a direct address to his Lord, one that expresses the feeling that He is so close to him. He wants his whole being: organs, feelings and thoughts; heart, mind and tongue; words, actions and directions; talents, abilities and energies to be brought together to offer thanks for all the favors bestowed on him and his parents. Solomon's prayer indicates how profound his appreciation of God's grace was. He felt that God's blessings overwhelmed his whole being as also his parents'. Hence, he wanted to give due thanks with his whole being. (27:19)

To do good deeds is also a blessing from God to which He directs those who are genuinely grateful for His gifts. Solomon, a truly grateful servant of God who prays for His help so that he would wholeheartedly express his gratitude, also prays to Him to guide him to do what will earn His pleasure.

Solomon knows that to be included among God's righteous servants is an aspect of God's mercy. When it is bestowed on a servant

of God, it guides him to do righteous deeds, and thus he is included in this best group of God's servants. We note that Solomon, a prophet at whose disposal God placed large sections of jinn, birds and people, does not take anything for granted. He fears lest his deeds or thanksgiving might not be up to the standard expected of him. This is a case of refined sensitivity that enhances Solomon's aspiration to gain God's pleasure and receive His mercy. It is expressed at the moment God's grace is brought into view, as when the ant's warning to other ants focuses attention on God's grace that made Solomon understand her speech.

We see here two miracles, not one. The first is Solomon listening to the ant and understanding her warning to her community. The second is the ant's awareness that the approaching people were Solomon and his troops. We know that the first pertains to what God taught Solomon, a man and a prophet. Comparatively speaking, this is more probable than the second miracle that is clear in the ant's words. An ant may recognize that the approaching procession consists of gigantic creatures who could easily crush tiny ones like ants if they step on them. Prompted by the survival instinct God has given them, ants may flee such a danger. But for an ant to recognize Solomon and his troops is miraculous indeed.

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

Makkah: *But it was not long in coming.*
Then, it said: I comprehended
what ***you*** *have not comprehended of it.*
And I drew near ***you*** *from Sheba with certain tidings.* (27:22)
Truly, I found a woman controlling them.
And she was given everything
and for her is a sublime throne. (27:23)
I found her and her folk prostrating herself to the sun
—instead of God—and Satan
made to appear pleasing to them their actions
and barred them from the way
so they are not truly guided. (27:24)
So they prostrate themselves not to God
Who brings out that which is hidden in the heavens and the earth
and knows what you conceal and what you speak openly. (27:25)
God, there is no god but He,
the Lord of the Sublime Throne. (27:26)
Solomon said: We will look on if ***you*** *had been sincere*
or thou art of the ones who lie. (27:27)
Go thou with this letter of mine and cast it to them.

Again, turn away from them and look on what they return. (27:28)
She said: O Council!
Truly, a generous letter was cast down to me. (27:29)
Truly, it is from Solomon and, truly, it is in the Name of God,
The Merciful, The Compassionate. (27:30)
Rise not up against me, but approach me
as ones who submit to God. (27:31)
She said: O Council! Render me an opinion in my affair.
I had not been one who resolves unless you bear witness. (27:32)
They said: We are imbued with strength and vigorous might,
*but the command is for **you**.*
*So look on what **you** will command.* (27:33)
She said: Truly, when kings entered a town,
they made corruption in it
and made the most mighty of its people humiliated in spirit.
Thus, this is what they accomplish. (27:34)
But, truly, I am one who will send to them a present
and will be one who looks
with what returns the ones who are sent. (27:35)
So when they drew near Solomon,
he said: Are you furnishing me relief with wealth?
What God gave me is better than what He gave you.
Nay! It is you who should be glad with your present! (27:36)
Return thou to them and We, truly, will approach them with armies
against which they will not be capable
and we will drive them out from there as ones who are disgraced
and they, humble-spirited. (27:37)
He said: O Council! Which of you will bring me her throne
before they approach me as ones who submit to God? (27:38)
*A demon from among the jinn said: I will bring it to **you***
*before **you** will stand up from **your** station.*
And, truly, I am strong, trustworthy. (27:38)
Said he who has knowledge of the Book:
*I will bring it to **you** before thy glance goes back to **you**.*
And, then, when he saw that which is settled before him,
he said: This is from the grace of my Lord to try me
whether I give thanks or am ungrateful.
And whoever gave thanks, truly, he gives thanks for himself.
And whoever was ungrateful, then, truly,
my Lord is Rich, Generous. (27:39)
He said: Disguise her throne for her that we look on
whether she will be truly guided
or she will be of those who are not truly guided. (27:40)

So when she drew near, it was said: Is thy throne like this?
She said: It is as though it had been it.(27:41)
Solomon said: The knowledge was given us before her
and we had been ones who submit to the One God. (27:42)
She was barred from worshipping God
by what she had been worshipping other than God
for, truly, she had been of a folk, ones who are ungrateful. (27:43)
It was said to her: Enter the pavilion.
And when she saw it, she assumed it to be a pool
and she bared her legs.(27:44)

Commentary°

The story of the ants is a prelude to Solomon's story with the Queen of Sheba in which the hoopoe plays an important role. The story is told in six scenes with certain aspects deliberately left out, but which do not impair our understanding. Indeed, these gaps serve to enhance the artistic beauty of the story. Furthermore, some scenes carry a commentary, alerting us to their spiritual significance and enhancing the moral portrayed. These stylistic features combine in such a way as to ensure the perfect harmony of the verses.

Since the reference to Solomon began by mentioning the jinn, humans and birds, as well as highlighting the importance of knowledge, the story gives roles to all three aspects of creation, thus showing the value of knowledge. It is as if the opening verses deliberately identify the key actors in the story. This, then, is one of the Quran's finer artistic features in storytelling.

As told in the [sign], the story paints the personal and distinctive features of the main characters: Solomon, the queen, the hoopoe and the queen's courtiers. It portrays the different reactions from these characters in the various situations presented.

The first scene begins with the military parade, after the procession has passed the valley of the ants:

He inspected the birds. (27:20-27:21)

We see Solomon, a prophet and a king, marshalling his troops, and inspecting the birds only to discover the hoopoe's absence. We understand that this is a special hoopoe, with a specific position assigned to it in the procession. It was not just one of thousands or millions of hoopoes on the face of the earth. We note that Solomon was alert enough to miss a mere soldier in the great multitude composed of jinn, men and birds. His enquiry is of the type that befits a commander: it is flexible, looking at the different possibilities: Why is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Is he among the absentees? (27:20)

It soon becomes clear to all that the hoopoe is absent without

permission. The matter needed to be dealt with firmly so as to keep matters under control, particularly because its absence was no longer a secret. Hence, Solomon threatens the absent hoopoe: I will certainly punish him severely, or I will kill him. (27:21) But Solomon is not a tyrant; he is a prophet. He does not issue a final judgment on the hoopoe before listening to what it has to say in its defense. Therefore, we immediately see Solomon as a just ruler: Unless he brings me a clear warrant, to justify his absence.

The curtains are drawn here, or maybe the scene continues as the hoopoe arrives. He carries an important and surprising piece of news for Solomon, as also for us who are observing events as they unfold:

But the hoopoe did not take long in coming. He said: I have just learnt things that are unknown to you, and I come to you from Sheba with accurate information. I found there a woman ruling over them; and she has been given of all good things, and hers is a magnificent throne. I found her and her people prostrating themselves to the sun instead of God; and Satan has made their deeds seem goodly to them, thus turning them away from the path [of God], so that they cannot find the right way. That they should not prostrate themselves in worship of God who brings forth all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows what you conceal and what you reveal. God, other than whom there is no deity, the Lord of the [truly] magnificent Throne.' (27:22-27:26)

The hoopoe is fully aware of the king's firm and serious demeanor. Therefore, he begins his report with a surprise that overshadows the fault of his absence and ensures that the king will listen to him: 'I have just learnt things that are unknown to you." What king would not listen when one of his subjects tells him that he has learnt something that he could not know?

Now that the hoopoe has the king's attention, it proceeds to give the news he brought from Sheba, in Yemen. He mentions first that: I found there a woman ruling over them, and he further adds that she has been given of all good things, which tells that her kingdom was affluent, powerful and civilized. Furthermore, the queen's is a magnificent throne. (27:23) She sits on a magnificent couch that indicates the presence of skilled workers. The hoopoe adds that he found both the queen and her people prostrating themselves to the sun instead of God. (27: 24) He explains that these people had erred because Satan had deceived them, making their deeds seem fair to them. Thus, they are bereft of guidance, and as such they do not worship God Almighty who brings forth all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth. (27:25) What is hidden' refers to everything that is con-

cealed, including the rain from the sky and the plants of the earth. It also includes the secrets of the heavens and the earth. He also knows what you conceal and what you reveal. (27:25) This mirrors what is hidden in the heavens and earth as it refers to what is hidden within one's own soul.

Until this point the hoopoe remains in the position of someone who has broken the rules and is still awaiting the king's judgment. Hence, it concludes the news it brought with a reference to God Almighty, the Lord of all, and the Lord of the magnificent throne, to which no human throne can be compared. (27:26) This reference is meant as a reminder to the king so as to moderate his attitude as he remembers God's great power. It is, in short, a subtle appeal for compassion.

What we see here is a remarkable, intelligent hoopoe who has faith. He presents what he saw very skillfully, aware of its position, and relying on subtle expression. It understands that the woman is a queen and the people around her are her subjects, and it is fully aware that they prostrate themselves before the sun, instead of God. It also knows that such worship should be offered only to God who is the Lord of all the universe. This is not how hoopoes generally look at matters and understand them. Such understanding by a hoopoe is indeed miraculous.

Exchange with a Powerful Queen: Solomon does not judge the matter hastily. He is not too thrilled with the news brought by the hoopoe. He wants to be sure before taking any action. This is the appropriate course to follow by a fair prophet and a wise king:

Said [Solomon]: We shall see whether you have told the truth or you are a liar. Go with this my letter and deliver it to them; and then draw back from them, and see what answer they return. (27:27-27:28)

At this point the contents of the letter are not revealed. They are left until it is delivered when interest is at its highest.

The curtains are drawn here. When they are lifted again, we are in the presence of the Queen of Sheba, after the letter has been delivered to her. She is in consultation with her advisers:

[The Queen of Sheba] said: Know, my nobles, that a worthy letter has been delivered to me. It is from Solomon, and it reads, 'In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Beneficent: Do not exalt yourselves against me, but come to me in submission [to God].'(27: 29-27:31)

As she tells them of the letter we gather that most probably she did not know how the letter was delivered or by whom. She uses the passive voice in her report of its delivery. Had she known that it was a hoopoe who delivered it, as some commentaries on the Quran sug-

gest, she would surely have reported this as a remarkable and extraordinary event. Nevertheless, she describes the letter as "worthy', either because of its shape, appearance, the seal it bears or because of its contents which she reports to her advisers. (27:30-27:31) She did not worship God, but the whole region knew about Solomon and his status. Besides, the language of the letter was clear, decisive and to the point.

What the letter stated was very clear, simple and powerful. It began with the name of God, the Most Merciful, and made a single demand: that the queen and her people must not take a hostile or belligerent attitude towards its sender; rather, they should go to him declaring their submission to God, in whose name he addressed them.

Having reported on the letter and its contents, the queen requested advice, declaring that she would not make a decision without their consultation and consent: Nobles, counsel me in this my affair; no decision on any matter do I take unless you are present. (27: 32) Thus she appears to be a very wise queen. It is clear at the outset that she was greatly impressed by the letter, yet she also appears serious and decisive. She imparted this to her advisers by describing the letter as 'worthy'. It is clear that she wants neither opposition nor belligerency. She does not say this openly; instead, she prepares the way for it by the line she takes. She then requests their advice.

As is customary with courtiers, they declared their readiness to do whatever was demanded of them, but they left the final decision to the queen. (27:33)

Now we see the woman, rather than the queen, expressing her feelings. A woman instinctively hates war and the destruction it brings in its wake. Therefore, she decides to seek peace and conciliation rather than resistance and conflict. (27:34-27:35)

The queen is fully aware that when kings occupy a city or a country, they wreak havoc, destroying everything, so as to break all resistance. In particular, they target its chiefs, seeking to humiliate them as they are the ones who put up resistance. This is clearly the habit of all domineering kings. She is also aware that a gift wins hearts and emphasizes friendship. It may also remove the threat of war. Hence, her approach was certainly worth a try. If Solomon accepted the gift, then he was after something that belonged to this world. She would then know that normal worldly means would be effective. If he refused the gift, then it was all a question of faith that he would pursue with diligence, accepting no compromise.

This scene is concluded at this point. When the curtains are lifted again we see the queen's emissaries delivering her gift to Solomon who takes them to task for thinking that they could buy his peace

with money, seeking to divert him from calling on them to believe in God. He announced his final ultimatum, in clear and powerful terms.

(27: 36-27:37) His answer derides money, scorning its use in a situation that involves advocacy of the faith, where it can be of no use. (Verse 36) He has given me things that are far superior to wealth; namely, knowledge, prophethood and the service of the jinn and birds. No material thing, rich as it may be, holds any attraction for me: "Yet you rejoice with your own gift." (27:36) Such worldly luxuries may please the likes of you who have no bond with God and who do not receive His gifts.

He follows this with a new ultimatum, saying to the queen's envoy. (27:37) Such forces have never been placed under any person's command. The queen and her powerful army are no match for them. (27:37)

The curtains are drawn, and the envoys are dismissed. The [sign] does not add a further word about them. It is as if the whole matter is settled and needs no further comment.

Waiting for the Queen: We now see Solomon fully aware that his answer will settle the matter with the queen, whom he realized had no wish for conflict. Indeed, he felt that she was likely to respond to his call. The [sign], however, does not mention how her envoys returned, what they said to her, and how she made up her mind. There is a gap here, but we learn from what comes afterwards that she planned to go to Solomon, and that he was aware of her intention. Hence, he discusses with his commanders how to bring him her throne that she had left well guarded in her palace:

(27:38-27:40) What was Solomon's objective behind bringing her throne before she arrived and declared her submission to God? Most probably he wanted to show her some aspect of the superior power placed at his command. This was likely to win her heart and influence her to believe in God.

A jinn from among the jinn offered to bring the throne to him before he had finished the session he was attending. It is reported that he sat from morning till noon to judge in disputes that were put to him. Apparently, Solomon felt that this was too long a time to wait. Therefore, a person 'who was deeply versed in the Book' offered to bring it in the twinkling of an eye. The sign does not mention the name of that person, nor does it say which was the book known to him. We understand, however, that he was a believer who had a strong bond with God, and had some divine secret that allowed him to use something of the great power that transcends barriers and distances. This is something that at times occurs to some people with

very strong faith. No explanation is offered for it, because it goes beyond what is familiar to people. This, then, is all that we can say without delving into the realm of legend and superstition.

Some commentators on the Quran add certain details. Some say that the book mentioned in the verse is the Torah; others say that the person knew God's greatest name; and others still have offered yet more suggestions. None of these, however, gives us any explanation that carries any degree of certainty. Yet the matter is much simpler than all such explanations. Countless are the secrets we know nothing about in the universe around us, and numerous also are the powers that we do not use ourselves. Indeed, within the human soul there are many secrets and powers that we cannot fathom. When God wants to inform any of His servants of one of these secrets or powers that person will accomplish something of a miraculous nature that goes beyond what is familiar. It is all accomplished by God's will and design. No one other than a true servant of God will be able to accomplish such feats.

God Guided Solomon's Offspring

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob.*
Each of them We guided.
And Noah We guided before and among his offspring
are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph
and Moses and Aaron.
And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)

The Destruction of Saba

Chapter 34: The 57th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And to Solomon We subjected the wind.*
The first part of the day was a month's journey
and the evening course was a month's journey.
We caused a spring of molten brass to flow for him.
And We gave him of the jinn who work in advance of him
with the permission of his Lord.
Whoever of them swerved from Our command
We caused him to experience the punishment of the blaze. (34:12)

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Then, when We decreed death for Solomon,
nothing pointed out his death to the jinn,
but a moving creature of the earth that consumes his scepter.
So when he fell down, it became clear to the jinn

that if they had been knowing the unseen,
they would not have lingered in expectation
in the despised punishment. (34:14)
There had, certainly, been for Sheba a sign in their dwelling place.
Two gardens on the right and on the left.
Eat of the provision of your Lord and give thanks to Him:
A good land and a forgiving Lord. (34:15)
But they turned aside, so We sent against them
the overwhelming flood,
and We substituted for their two gardens,
two gardens yielding a sour harvest, and tamarisks,
and something of lote-trees here and there. (34:16)
That is how We gave recompense to them
because they were ungrateful.
And we recompense, but the ungrateful. (34:17)
And We made between them and between the towns
which We blessed, that which are manifest towns
and We ordained journeying in them.
Journey through them as ones who are safe night and day. (34:18)
But they said: Our Lord! Cause a distance between our journeys
and they did wrong to themselves.
So We made them as tales and We tore them to pieces,
a total tearing to pieces.
Truly, in that are signs for every enduring grateful one. (34:19)
And, certainly, established as true about them
was the opinion of Iblis and they followed him,
but a group of people among the ones who believe. (34:20)
There had not been for him any authority over them,
but that We know who believe in the world to come
from who is in uncertainty of it.
And thy Lord is Guardian over everything. (34:21)

Commentary°

We move to the scene in the story which shows Solomon's death while the Jinn continue to work hard as he had bid them, unaware of the fact of his death, until a worm had gnawed at his staff sufficiently for him to fall down. (34:14)

It is reported that in the position he was in at the moment of his death, he was leaning over his stick and that he remained in that position while the jinn continued performing the task he assigned them. Then a worm that eats wood came upon his stick. This type of worm gnaws persistently at wood ruining roofs, doors and buildings foundations. In parts of Upper Egypt, some villages do not use a single

piece of wood in their homes for fear of woodworm. When the woodworm had gnawed at Solomon's staff, it could no longer support him, and he fell down. Only then did the jinn realize that he was dead. (34:14)

Such, then, are the jinn whom some people worship. We see them here subservient to one of God's servants. They are totally unable to fathom something which is hidden from them, yet is very close: how then can they gratify people's appeals to learn the secrets of what is beyond the reach of perception!

The story of Sheba is also told in 34:15-34:21 with the following commentary: The story opens with a description of the great blessings they enjoyed and the provisions they were granted, as well as the requirement that they should demonstrate their gratitude as they could: There was a sign for the people of Sheba in their dwelling place: two gardens, one to the right and one to the left: Eat of what your Lord has provided for you, and give thanks to Him: a land most goodly and a Lord Much- Forgiving. (34:15)

Sheba is the name of a community living in southern Yemen, in a fertile land some of which remains so today. They were highly civilized and were able to make good use of their water resources, as they were blessed with much rainfall, occupying territory close to the sea in the south and east. They were thus able to build a natural dam between two mountains, erecting a great wall down the valley, with controlled openings. In this way they were able to retain water in great quantities which they used as they needed. This great dam was known as the Marib Dam.

The gardens to the right and left symbolize the splendid fertility of their land which gave them beauty and affluence. Therefore, they were signs reminding them of God who gives every good thing. They were commanded to make full use of what was granted to them and to thank the Giver. (34:15) They were also reminded of the nature of their blessings: the productive land and the forgiveness of their sins. (34:15) When such priceless blessings are given in plenty, why were they unwilling to give thanks? (34:16)

When they failed to show their gratitude to God and use what God favored them with in a goodly and beneficial way, He took away their source of affluence and let loose raging, stone-carrying torrents which destroyed their dam and its water flooded the whole area. With the dam no longer functioning, the land dried up. Instead of beautiful gardens they now had only a desert in which only a few wild trees were to grow, bearing no good fruit. The verse says that their gardens were "replaced ...with others yielding bitter fruit, tamarisks, and a few lote trees." (34:16) This was the best that their land could sub-

sequently produce and even then it was only in small quantities.

(34:17) Until then they had remained in their villages and homes. God stinted their provisions and replaced their riches with austerity, but He had not yet scattered them over a wider area. They had easy contacts with the cities blessed by God: Makkah and Jerusalem. To the north of Sheba, Yemen was well inhabited and its land routes to other areas were safe and comfortable. (34:18) It is reported that a traveler would leave one township in the morning and arrive at the next before dark. This meant that journey times were short, making travel easy, safe and comfortable.

Yet Sheba's people paid no heed to the first warning. Nor did the change in their circumstances make them turn to God and appeal to Him to give back their comfortable lives. On the contrary, their prayer betrayed stupidity and ignorance: "But they said: 'Our Lord! Make our journeys longer." They wanted long distance travel, which is undertaken only infrequently. In so doing, they demonstrated nothing but arrogance: They sinned against their souls." Their prayer was answered, but only as such a prayer should be answered. (34:19) They became like refugees scattered throughout Arabia. They also became the subject of discussions in others' gatherings. In other words, they were no longer a recognized community, but a tale people told. (34:19) We note that patience and steadfastness are mentioned alongside thanksgiving in times of plenty. The history of Sheba gives signs on both counts.

This is one way of understanding the last two verses. However, they may also be understood in a different way. As these places had power and dominance, the people of Sheba became poor, living like desert dwellers, and having to travel time after time to find pasture and water. They could not withstand the test that this entailed. Therefore, they prayed to God, and in this case their supplication would be rendered as: 'Our Lord! Lengthen the time between our journeys,' or make them less frequent, as travel has become too tiring for us. They did not couple this prayer with turning to God with repentance and seeking His forgiveness, so that He would grant them what they prayed for. Since they behaved arrogantly when they had God's blessings, and did not persevere when they faced adversity, God punished them by scattering them and so they disappeared, featuring only in people's tales. This makes the comment at the end of these verses fitting for their lack of gratitude for God's favor and lack of patience in adversity. (Verse 19) I feel this understanding of the verses to be also acceptable. God, however, knows His own purpose best.

As the story concludes, mention is made to the overall divine

planning and the rules God operates in life generally. It tells us what lessons we should draw from this and what lies behind it. (34:20-34:21)

The people of Sheba went the way that leads to a miserable end: Iblis felt that he could lead them astray, and they let him do so. Thus, except for a group of believers, they all followed him. This is what normally happens in all communities. It is rare that a community is totally bereft of believers who will not give in to Satan and his machinations. They thus prove that the truth remains, even in the worst of conditions, available to everyone who seeks it and wants to hold to it. Iblis never had an overpowering authority over them from which they could not be free. He can only approach them in order that they be tested, and everyone who wishes to stick to the truth could do so, while everyone else will go astray. Thus, in life, a type of person emerges who 'truly believe in the life to come', and thus his beliefs keep him on the right path. This type are distinct from the other 'who are in doubt' about the life to come. It is the latter who succumb to Iblis' temptations, heedless of the Day of Judgment. God certainly knows what happens before it actually takes place. However, He makes His reward dependent upon the thing actually taking place.

When we look at the story of Sheba's people from a broader angle, we see that its moral can apply to all communities at all times. The story can then be seen as demonstrating what happens when communities follow divine guidance or stray away from it. It also shows the reasons that make people take the direction they do. "Your Lord watches over all things." (34:21) Nothing is lost or overlooked.

Thus the second passage of the [sign] concludes, speaking of the life to come, just as did the first passage. It also emphasizes the limitless nature of God's knowledge and His awareness of all things. Both subjects are given much emphasis in this [sign].

The Winds Subjected to Solomon

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And to Solomon, the wind tempest*
runs by His command
toward the earth which We blessed.
We had been ones who know everything. (21:81)
And among the satans were some who dived for him and did acts other than that. And We were ones who guard over them. (21:82)

Commentary°

The case of Solomon was even greater. (21:81- 21:82) The Quranic text here states that winds, in their stormy conditions, were made subservient to Solomon, moving at his bidding to the blessed

land, which was most probably Palestine, given it was earlier described as such in Abraham's story. The question asked here though is how all this was done.

It is safer to explain this statement about the wind by saying that it was directed, by God's will, to the blessed land in a cycle lasting one month each way. How? As we have said, we cannot ask such a question about the operation of God's will, which is free and unrestrained. It is God's will that creates the laws of nature and sets them in operation. What we know of the laws operating in the universe is very little. There is nothing to preclude that other laws, about which we know nothing, are in operation, but their effects may surface only when God wills. (21:81) Unlike human knowledge, God's knowledge is complete and perfect.

The same applies to making the jinn subservient to Solomon such that they dive into the depths of the sea, or deep into the earth, to bring him some of its hidden riches or to perform other works. The word jinn includes in its meaning everything that is concealed, hidden or unknown. Quranic texts mention a type of creature unknown to us, called the Jinn. It was from among these that God assigned some to Solomon to dive in the sea and do his bidding. Furthermore, God kept watch over them so that they did not escape or rebel. It is He who holds sway over all His creatures, putting them to whatever purpose He chooses in any way He likes.

God tested David and Solomon with what pleases people. David was tested in connection with the administration of justice, while Solomon's test involved nobly bred, swift-footed steeds, as is detailed in Chapter 38. So we will leave that for now. Both David and Solomon persevered, sought God's forgiveness and passed their tests. They remained grateful to God for His favors

Sorcery Falsely Attributed to Solomon

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And they followed what the satans recount*
during the dominion of Solomon.
And Solomon was not ungrateful,
except the satans were ungrateful.
They teach humanity sorcery,
and what was caused to descend
to the two angels at Babylon—
Harut and Marut. But neither of these two
teach anyone unless they say:
We are only a test, so be not ungrateful.
And they learn from these two that by it they separate

and divide between a man and his spouse.
And they were not ones who injured anyone with it,
but by the permission of God.
And they learn what hurts them and profits them not.
And, certainly, they knew that whoever bought it,
for him in the world to come was not any apportionment.
And miserable was that for which they sold themselves.
Would that they had been knowing! (2:102)

COMMENTARY°

Would that be the end of their transgression? Would they, having rejected the revelations sent down to Muhammad, hold fast to the revelations given to their forefathers and show faith and loyalty to its laws and teachings? Definitely not. They cast God's revelations behind their backs and went in search of myths and superstitions. (2:102-2:103)

They abandoned divine revelations which had come to confirm their Books and gave credence to myths and legends from the time of Solomon, which falsely asserted that he practiced sorcery and witchcraft and owed all his extraordinary powers to them.

The Quran refutes this allegation completely and talks of sorcery and deliberate rejection of the divine faith, in the same vein. Thus, the Quran treats sorcery as disbelief, and attributes it to devils. (2:102) It further refutes the allegation that the two angels of Babylon, Harut and Marut, were sorcerers. It confirms that witchcraft. (2:102) The Quran makes the truth about these two angels clear. They were testing people's faith, for a purpose that has not been identified. Again associating sorcery, black magic and witchcraft with disbelief in God, the Quran exonerates the two angels, confirming that they had explained the nature of their work to the people and given them fair warning. (2:102)

At this point, the Quran establishes another fundamental principle of faith: nothing happens in this world without God's authority. (2:102) Cause and effect are only valid by the will of God. When you put your hand in the fire it is burnt, but the burning itself only occurs with God's leave; for it is He who gave fire the property to incinerate and gave human skin susceptibility to burn. This means that God is also capable at any moment of cancelling this property and rendering fire completely harmless, as was the case with the Prophet Abraham, when his people threw him into a blazing fire and he came out of it unscathed. (21:69)

The same is true for such practices as sorcery and witchcraft: they can only work with God's will, as must all conventional physical

and metaphysical phenomena of cause and effect.

The [sign] states clearly that what people learnt of practices that could bring discord between man and wife could only bring them harm. (2:102) Since this thing that they learnt is described as disbelief in God, this is reason enough to make it pure evil that can bring no profit whatsoever. When anyone makes such a deal, he realizes that he is assigning away every good share he could have in the life to come. That makes their deal a massive loss indeed. (2:102-2:103)

This condemnation applies to those who took to practicing sorcery and witchcraft at Babylon, and to those Israelites who gave credence to tales about Solomon and his kingdom and abandoned God's authentic revelations.

As to the identity of the two angels referred to here, Harut and Marut, and their location in Babylon, the story was well known in Jewish religious literature. The Jews of Madinah did not question the Quranic account of their story. Quranic accounts of this type, however, are often brief and general, since the aim is not to give detailed chronological or historic information, but rather to draw lessons and highlight the morals behind the events.

Black magic, sorcery and witchcraft still hold deep fascination for many people today, while many others are taken in by the seemingly extraordinary powers of their practitioners.

It is true that some individuals are seen to possess special powers or abilities not explained by scientific evidence. Science has not been able to go farther than giving a description of some of these phenomena such as telepathy, the supposed communication of thoughts or ideas other than by the known senses; and hypnosis, artificially produced sleep or the sleep-like state in which the subject acts only on external suggestion.

While recognizing these powers and acknowledging their existence and effects, science has not been able to offer any satisfactory explanations as to what they are or how they come about.

Elijah (Khidr, Elias)

Elijah Lived in Accord with Morality

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

And Zechariah and Yahya and Jesus and Elias.
All were of the ones who were in accord with morality. (6:85)

God's Blessings on Elijah

Chapter 37: The 56th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Peace be on Elijah!* (37:130)

Commentary°

A similar glimpse of the story of Elijah, a prophet mentioned in the Old Testament, is given here. Elijah was a Messenger to people in Syria who worshipped a statue called Baal. The ruins of the city of Baalbek in Lebanon retain traces of such worship:

Elijah too was one of Our Messengers. He called on his people to believe in God's Oneness, denouncing their practice of worshipping Baal in preference to God, the best of creators. Thus, he followed the same line as Abraham when he denounced his people's idolatrous worship. The same stance was taken by every Messenger when they encountered idol worship. The wrongdoers' response was to accuse Elijah of lying and to reject his message. God confirms here that they too will be brought before Him for punishment, except for those of them who believed in the message of the truth. This snippet ends in the same way as other historical accounts in this chapter by emphasizing the honor God grants to His messengers: this by giving them the greeting and blessing of peace, outlining the reward of people who do good and the great value of faith. This is the only occasion that an account of Elijah is given in the Quran.

Elisha (al-Yasa)

Elisha Among the Good

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember Ishmael, Elijah (Elisha). . . .*
And all are among the good. (38:48)

Jonah

Jonah's Example

Chapter 68: The 2nd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *If a divine blessing*
not followed him one after another,
from His Lord he would be cast forth
on the naked shore
while he was one who is condemned. (68:49)
But his Lord elected him and made him
among the ones in accord with morality. (68:50)

Commentary°

The gist of Jonah's experience is that God sent him to the people of a town said to be Nineveh, near Mosul in today's Iraq. When they were slow in responding to his call, he was terribly upset. He left them in anger, thinking that God would not leave him to bear all the opposition those people presented. God would be kind to him and send him to others who would be less stubborn. In his distress, he went towards the coast where he took a boat. When they were far out at sea, the boat became shaky and seemed about to sink. It thus became necessary to throw someone overboard so as to reduce the load. They drew lots to choose that person. Jonah was the one, and they threw him overboard. Subsequently, a great fish swallowed him. Finding himself in such terrible distress, in layers of darkness, inside the whale in the depths of the sea, Jonah appealed to God. (21:87) God bestowed His grace on him and the great fish threw him out, leaving him skinless on the shore. His skin had melted inside the great fish. God preserved his life by His will, which is unrestricted by any law that is familiar or unfamiliar to human beings.

Here, in this chapter, God says that had it not been for the grace He bestowed on him, Jonah would have been abandoned, disgraced by God because of his lack of patience. He had acted on his own initiative, without waiting for God's permission. He was though only spared by God's grace. God accepted Jonah's repentance just as he demonstrated what deserves acceptance. Hence, God chose him and made him one of His righteous servants.

God reminds the Prophet Muhammad of Jonah's experience in the whale so as to reassure him at a time he was facing stubborn rejection. This reminder comes after He has told him to leave the battle to Him, to conduct as He determines in the way He wishes. What the Prophet is required to do, is to remain patient in adversity and to

await Gods judgment as and when it comes.

The true hardship the advocates of the divine message face is that of remaining patient in adversity until God makes His judgment at the right time, as His wisdom dictates. Along the way they face many types of adversity such as accusations of lying, physical persecution, stubborn rejection, the apparent power of falsehood as it seems to be victorious, and the need to remain steadfast in the face of all this, reassured that God's promise will be fulfilled. They must not hesitate to travel along their charted way, no matter what hardship they have to face. This requires great effort, determination and patience, as well as support from God. As for the battle itself, God has determined its nature and willed to conduct it Himself. It is He who has decided to give the ungrateful time and to lead them step by step, for a purpose of His own. Thus did He promise His Messenger, and He fulfilled the promise in good time.

Jonah's People

Chapter 10: The 51st Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And had there been a town that believed*
and profited from its belief other than the folk of Jonah?
When they believed, We removed from them
the punishment of degradation in this present life
and gave them enjoyment for a while. (10:98)

Commentary°

Although the chapter is named after the Prophet Jonah, there is no more than a very brief reference to Jonah and his people as follows. (10:98) The case of Jonah's people is the only clear example of a community which saved themselves before being overwhelmed by God's punishment. They believed in God when there was still time for them to do so. Moreover, they provided the only instance among those receiving God's messages of an entire community accepting the faith after having first given a negative response. Hence, they were saved from the punishment their Prophet warned them against.

Jonah's Delivery from Distress

Chapter 37: The 56th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, truly, Jonah*
was of the ones who are sent (37:139)
when he fled, without his Lord's permission,
to the laden boat. (37:140)
He cast lots with them and he had been

of the ones who are refuted. (37:141)
Then, the great fish engulfed him
while he was one who is answerable. (37:142)
If he had not been of the ones who glorify, (37:143)
he would have lingered in expectation in its belly until the Day
they are raised up. (37:144)
Then, We cast him forth
on the naked shore while he was ill. (37:145)
We caused a vine of gourd to develop over him. (37:146)
We sent him to a community of a hundred thousand,
or they even exceed that. (37:147)
And they believed, so We gave them
enjoyment for a while. (37:148)

Commentary°

The Quran does not mention where Jonah's people lived, but it is understood that they were not far from the sea. Reports tell us that Jonah was frustrated by his people's continued denial of his message and the truth it made clear. He warned them against God's impending punishment, and then abandoned them in anger. His anger led him to the sea-shore, where he boarded a laden ship. When the ship was in the middle of the sea, it was hit by a raging storm. It was widely believed at that time that such a disaster signaled that among the passengers there must be someone who had incurred God's anger. For the ship to withstand the storm that person had to be thrown overboard. They, thus, drew lots and Jonah was the one who lost. Although they knew him to be a virtuous and God-fearing man, the drawing of his lot was confirmed. Therefore, they threw him into the sea, or he might have jumped himself. Nonetheless, he was swallowed by the whale, deserving of blame, because he had abandoned the assignment God had given him, leaving his people in anger before seeking God's permission. When he felt acute distress inside the whale's belly, he glorified God and prayed for His forgiveness, stating that he had wronged himself. He said in his prayer. (21:87) God answered his prayer, and the whale cast him out. (37:143-144) When he was cast out, he was both sick and naked.

Therefore God "caused a gourd tree to grow over him, its broad leaves covering him. It also protected him against flies, which are said not to come near this plant. This was part of the favor God bestowed on him. When he had recovered, God returned him to the people whom he had left in anger. In turn, they feared that his warnings would come true, and they believed, praying for God's forgiveness. God thus accepted them, sparing them the punishment He

inflicts on people who deny His message. (37:148) They numbered a hundred thousand or more, and all of them became believers.

The Trial of Jonah

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And Jonah, when he went as one who is enraged,*
and thought that We would never have power over him.
And, then, he cried out through the shadows that:
There is no god, but Thou! Glory be to Thee!
Truly, I had been of the ones who are unjust. (21:87)
So We responded to him. And We delivered him from the lament.
And, thus, We rescue the ones who believe. (21:88)

Commentary°

Jonah is here called Dhul Nun, which means 'man of the whale' because he was swallowed by the great fish and then thrown out. He was sent to a particular city, and he called on its people to believe in God, but they rejected both him and his message. By way of response to their stubbornness, he left in anger. He showed little inclination to persevere with them on account of their rejection. He thought that God would not restrict him to a particular place, given there were many cities and communities, and that he would thus be directed to go somewhere else.

There are in Jonah's story some significant points we need to reflect upon. First, Jonah did not initially show enough patience and willingness to endure the difficulties of delivering God's message. He quickly became fed up, abandoned his people and moved on, angry and frustrated. He felt his situation to be very tight. But God exposed him to a much tighter and harder distress as compared with the opposition of unbelievers. Had Jonah not turned to his Lord in repentance and admitted that he had wronged himself by leaving his position of duty, he would not have been relieved of his distress. It was God's care that saved him.

The advocates of a message must be ready to bear the burden involved in such advocacy, remain patient in the face of rejection and vicious opposition. When a person is certain of the truth of the message he advocates, he finds the opposition of people who accuse him of false inventions and deliberate lying difficult to handle. Yet to remain patient in the face of such adversity is only part of the duties of such advocacy. Those who are entrusted with delivering a message and advocate the truth must remain patient, face the difficulties and persevere with their advocacy. They must continue to

present their message to people and call on them to believe in it, time after time.

Such advocates cannot give in to despair. They cannot give up on people, believing that they will never respond to the truth, no matter how much opposition they face, and how often they are rejected and accused of falsehood. If their hundred attempts to touch people's hearts meet with failure, their next attempt may have a positive result. Indeed, such a result may come only after one thousand and one attempts. Hence, if they have already tried a thousand times and failed, they should try once more in the hope that, with God's grace, their next attempt will be more successful.

The way a message must follow in order to touch people's hearts is neither easy nor comfortable. Positive responses may not be forthcoming. A great heap of false beliefs, erring practices, customs, traditions and situations weigh heavily on people's hearts and minds. This heap must be removed, and hearts must be revived in every possible way. A touch on every sensitive receptor must be made to try to find the effective nerve. With determination and diligence the right touch will inevitably be made, and a complete transformation of the addressee is achieved. We are often surprised that a thousand attempts may be made with one particular person, but without success. Then a casual gesture, coming at the right time, touches the right cord, and the person concerned goes through a complete transformation without any difficulty.

It is easy for an advocate of the divine message to be angry when people turn away from him. To give up and quit is always easy. It may enable us to cool down. But of what service is that to the message itself? It is the message that is most important, not its advocate. If we are angry, we should remain patient. It is infinitely better for us not to lose heart and not to give up.

An advocate is merely a tool in God's hand, and God preserves His message better than us. We must discharge our duty however hard the opposition we may face. We then leave the matter to God, and He gives guidance to whomever He pleases. In the story of Jonah we thus have a good example to reflect upon. His return to his Lord and acknowledgement of his error provide a good lesson. Furthermore, in the grace God showed him, answering the prayer he addressed through the compounded darkness, gives us great hope. (21:88)

Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl, Ezra)

Remember Ezekiel

Chapter 38: The 38th Chapter Revealed

And remember Ishmael, Elisha,
and Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl, Ezra).
And all are among the good. (38:48)

Commentary°

God states that Ishmael, Elisha and Dhul-Kifl were truly good. He instructs His last Messenger to remember them and to contemplate their patience in adversity and the grace He bestowed on them. He too should remain patient in the face of denial and rejection. Steadfastness and patience is the proper course for all advocates of the divine message, particularly God's Messengers. God will not abandon such servants. Instead, He will reward them for their patience. What He has for them is certainly better than anything else. When compared with God's grace and care, the schemings and rejections of the ungrateful are of little significance.

Enoch (Idris) and Ezekiel (Dhul-Kifl): they all were men of constancy and patience. (38:85-38:86) Again with all three the quality of patience in adversity is highlighted. Ishmael showed his patience when he was required to submit himself for sacrifice, and he duly did so.

Ezekiel is unknown: we cannot determine when or where he lived. Perhaps he was one of the Prophets of the Children of Jacob, or among their most pious and God-conscious people. It is also said that before one of their Prophets died, he guaranteed that he would take care of the Children of Jacob, giving a warrant that he would spend the night in worship, fast during the day and not allow anger to take hold of him when he ruled in a dispute. He honored all his commitments. It is said that he was called Ezekiel because of this, since his name refers to such practices. But none of these details is supported by evidence. The Quranic text here is sufficient to credit him with being patient in adversity, a highly rewarding quality. (37:86)

Dhul Qarnayn

Dhul Qarnayn and Gog and Magog

Chapter 18: The 69th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And they will ask you about Dhul Qarnayn.*
Say: I will recount to you a remembrance of him. (18:83)
Truly, We established him firmly on the earth
and gave him a route to everything. (18:84)
So he pursued a route (18:85)
until when he reached the setting of the sun.
He found it beginning to set
in a spring of muddy water.
And he found near it a folk. We said:
O Alexander! Either thou wilt punish them
or thou wilt take them to thyself with goodness. (18:86)
He said: As for him who did wrong,
we will punish him.
Again, he will be returned to his Lord
Who will punish him
with a horrible punishment. (18:87)
But as for him who believed
and did as one in accord with morality,
he will have the fairer recompense.
And we will say to him of our command with ease. (18:88)
Again, he pursued a route (18:89)
until when he reached the rising place of the sun.
He found it coming up on a folk
for whom We make not any obstruction against it. (18:90)
Thus, We, surely, enclosed whatever was near him
through awareness. (18:91)
Again, he pursued a route (18:92)
until when he reached between two embankments.
He found behind them a folk
who would almost not understand any saying. (18:93)
They said: O Dhul Qarnayn! Truly, Gog and Magog are
ones who make corruption in and on the earth.
Will we assign to thee payment
if thou hast made an embankment
between us and between them? (18:94)
He said: What my Lord established firmly for me is better,
so assist me with strength. I will make a fortification
between you and between them. (18:95)

Give me ingots of iron,
until when he made level between the two cliffs.
He said: Blow, until when he made it a fire.
He said: Give me molten brass to pour out over it. (18:96)
So they were not able to scale it
nor were they able to dig through it. (18:97)
He said: This is a mercy from my Lord.
So when the promise of my Lord drew near,
He will made it powder.
And the promise of my Lord had been true. (18:98)
And that Day We will leave some of them
to surge like waves on others.
And the trumpet will be blown.
Then We will gather them together. (18:99)
We will present the depths of hell on that Day
in plain view to ones who are ungrateful, (18:100)
to those whose eyes had been screened from My Remembrance
and who had not been able to hear. (18:101)

Commentary°

Of the history of Dhul-Qarnayn, the Quran mentions three journeys, one to the west, one to the east and the third to a place described as an area 'between two mountains'. Let us now consider this Quranic account.

The story of Dhul-Qarnayn, as given in this chapter, begins with a brief introduction of the man himself. (18:84) God then has established his power on earth, giving him uncontested authority. He has also given him the means of government and victory, the facilities to build civilization, enjoy the blessings God has made available to humanity, and all that make human life on earth steady and prosperous.

So he followed a certain way. (18:85) Thus, he went along one way which was made easy for him, aiming westwards. (18:86-18:88) Reaching the setting of the sun means the place where a person feels that the sun sets beyond the horizon. This varies according to geographic location. In some places we may feel that the sun sets beyond a mountain, while in others we feel that it goes down into the water, as is the case when we look at the sea or ocean. In other places still, the sun seems to set in the sand, as when we are in a desert with no hills or mountains around.

It appears from the text that Dhul-Qarnayn went westwards until he reached a point on the Atlantic coast which people believed to be at the end of dry land. He saw the sun setting in the sea. It is even

more likely that this was at a river mouth, where there would be plenty of weeds and the area muddy. Little lakes form in such situations and may look like water springs. He saw the sun setting there, going down in a spring of murky water. But it is impossible for us to define the area, because the chapter does not give us any clue. We have no other reliable source. Therefore, every view other than this cannot be considered accurate because it has no reliable basis.

At this lake of turbid and murky waters, Dhul-Qarnayn found a community and God gave him a choice. (18:86) Now, how did God say this to Dhul-Qarnayn? Was it revelation, or a mere statement of the situation, resulting from the fact that God had given him power over those people, so that he could determine whatever he wished to do with them. In this case, it would be just as if it was said to him: Here they are at your command: you may choose to punish them or to follow a lenient course of action. Both are possible. There is nothing to stop us understanding the text in either way. What is important to realize is that Dhul-Qarnayn declared his policy in the areas that came under his rule and their population became subject to his authority. (18:87-18:88)

This is a declaration that those who transgress the bounds of justice will be subject to their own punishment in this life. Then they will return to their Lord who is certain to inflict on them severe punishment that has no parallel in what is known in human life. On the other hand, pious and true believers will receive kindly treatment, generous reward, honor and help in all their affairs.

These are the outlines of just and good government. A true believer should receive from rulers every sort of kindly treatment and generous reward, while transgressors who are unjust to their fellow human beings should be punished severely. When those who do well in the community, pursuing a fair line of action in all their pursuits, receive a good reward for their actions, and when the unjust and oppressors receive a fair punishment and humiliation, then the whole community is motivated to follow the line of goodness. But when matters go wrong, and the unjust, oppressor and corrupt people are the ones who enjoy favor with the ruler, while those who are good and fair are persecuted, then the ruler's power becomes no more than a tool of corruption and misery for the whole community. Nothing remains fair. The whole society sinks into chaos.

After Dhul-Qarnayn's return from his westward journey he took his way eastward. Again we realize that his authority was well established, and that all means were made available to him. (18:89-18:91)

What we said about the setting of the sun is also true of its rising

place. What is meant here is the point where it rises in the east as we look up beyond the horizon. Again the Quran does not define the place. It simply describes it and the situation of the people Dhul-Qarnayn found there. (18:90) This suggests that the land was open, unscreened from the sun by any hills or trees. Thus when the sun rose, the people were directly exposed to it. This description applies to deserts and vast plateaus. It does not specify a particular location. All that we say is that it is likely that this place was in the far east, where the sun rose over its open, flat land. It might have also been on the east coast of Africa.

Another probability is that the description:'for whom We had provided no covering against it, means that those people were always in the nude and did not employ clothing. Hence, they were not screened from the sun.

Since Dhul-Qarnayn had announced his policy of government, the chapter does not repeat it here. Nor is any further action mentioned because God is fully aware of his intention and behavior.

It is important, however, to reflect very briefly here on an artistic touch in the image provided. The scene portrayed for us is open and clear: a blazing sun which is in no way screened from the people.

Similarly, Dhul-Qarnayn's conscience and intentions are open, known, fully to God Almighty. This provides harmony between the natural scene and human conscience in the inimitable style of the Quran.

Then he followed yet another way and [marched on] till, when he reached a place between the two mountain-barriers he found beneath them a people who could scarcely understand a word. (18:92-18:98)

Now we come to the third of Dhul-Qarnayn's journeys which took him to a place between the two mountain-barriers.' We cannot make any definite suggestion as to the exact location of this place, nor do we have any information about the nature of these barriers. All that we can understand from the text is that he reached a place lying in between two natural or man-made barriers, separated by a gap or low passage. Down there he found some backward people, whom the Quran describes as could scarcely understand a word.'

These people realized that Dhul-Qarnayn was both powerful and able. They also discovered that he was pious and God-conscious. Therefore, they offered him payment in return for erecting a barrier to stop Gog and Magog, who frequently attacked them from beyond the mountain barriers and used the passage in between, from wreaking havoc in their land. These people had exhausted all the means available to them, yet still they could not repel those evil forces.

Hence they were prepared to pay for a solution to their problem utilizing Dhul-Qarnayn's power.

Following the policy declared by that pious ruler, which was based on resisting all evil and corruption on earth, he declined to take their money, and offered instead to erect the barrier without charge. He judged that the easiest way to do so was to close the passage between the two mountain-barriers. However, he asked the backward people to help him by employing their physical strength. (18:95-18:96) They began to gather whatever blocks of iron were available. He put all these blocks in a heap to close the gap between the two barriers, so that the two mountain-sides became like two crusts covering a heap of iron articles in between.

(18:96) They were to generate air to increase the fire which heated the iron. The molten copper thus filled the gaps between the iron blocks, making the new barrier impregnable.

This method has recently been used in strengthening iron by adding a percentage of copper to it, thereby reinforcing it. It is to this fact that God guided Dhul- Qarnayn, recording the fact in His book many centuries before it was discovered by human science.

Thus the two natural barriers joined together with the man-made one, and the gap through which Gog and Magog launched their attacks was completely sealed.

Dhul-Qarnayn looked at the great work which he accomplished, yet experienced neither pride nor conceit. Nor was he elated by this edifice which testified to both his power and knowledge. Rather, he remembered God and thanked Him, acknowledging that it was He who guided him to what work should be done, and that his own power was granted to him by God, and that future events would take place according to His will. He also declared his belief that all mountains, walls and barriers are certain to be leveled before the Day of Judgment so that the whole earth will be flat. (18:98)

Dhu'l-Qarnayn is not mentioned in the chapter for his being an angel, but rather because of his good deeds. When the people he found in between the two mountain passes offered him money to build a barrier to protect them against Gog and Magog, he declined because: *He said: This is a mercy from my Lord. So when the promise of my Lord drew near, He will made it powder. And the promise of my Lord had been true.* (18:98)

Thus ends this passage which relates part of the history of Dhul-Qarnayn, a good example of a pious ruler who is given power and secure position as well as other means and facilities. He goes with his armies east and west, but he does not tyrannize or show conceit. Nor does he consider his conquering of other people's lands a means

to exploit individuals, communities and countries in order to ensure a luxurious life for himself or his people. He does not treat the vanquished people as slaves, making them the means for his self-aggrandizement. On the contrary, he spreads justice, assists the weak and backward, ensures that no aggression is launched against them, and charges nothing for his services. He utilizes the power God granted him in building proper and secure communities where everyone gets what rightfully belongs to him. He then attributes every good work he does to the grace of God, claiming no part of it for himself. Even at the height of his power, he does not forget God's power and that to Him he certainly shall return.

Now who were Gog and Magog? Where are they now? What did they do and what will happen to them? Such questions are very difficult to answer with any degree of accuracy. Our knowledge of them is limited to what is mentioned specifically in the Quran and in authentic ahadith. The Quran includes here a quotation of what Dhul-Qarnayn says. (18:98) This statement does not specify a time. God's promise to destroy the rampart may already have occurred when the Tatars swept across huge areas, destroying whole kingdoms.

Another mention of them is found in Chapter 21, The Prophets, where it is stated: When Gog and Magog are let loose and swarm down from every corner, when the true promise draws close [to its fulfillment], staring in horror shall be the eyes of the unbelievers. (21:96-21:97) Again this statement does not specify a time for the promised appearance of Gog and Magog. That God's promise has come near to fulfillment, in the sense that the Last Hour or the Day of Judgment is soon to come, is an accomplished fact ever since the time of the Prophet. (54:1) In God's reckoning, time has a totally different perspective from that of human reckoning. The time gap between the moment when the Hour becomes near and its actual occurrence may stretch to millions of years or centuries. Thus human beings may see this as a very long period of time, while, by God's standards, it may signify nothing more than a blink of an eye.

The chapter follows the reference by Dhul-Qarnayn to God's true promise with a scene from the Day of Judgment: On that day We shall leave them to surge like waves dashing against one another. The trumpet will be blown, and We shall gather them all together. And We shall, on that day, present hell, all spread out, for the unbelievers, who have turned a blind eye to My admonition and a deaf ear to My warning. (18:99-18:101)

This is a scene showing the movement of huge masses of people of all colors, races and geographical areas, belonging to all generations and times, after they have been resurrected and brought back

to life. They move across in a chaotic way, unaware of what is around them. They push each other like waves in the sea and mix like the surf raised by the waves. Then suddenly a trumpet is blown and they are gathered according to a specific order. (18:99)

We see also the ungrateful who turned away from remembrance of God as though their eyes were covered and their ears deaf. Now we see them with hell brought before them and they cannot turn away from it as they used to turn away from God's guidance. On that day, the option of turning away is not within their power. The cover over their eyes has been drawn, and they now see clearly the consequence of their deliberate turning away. This is a fair recompense.

The chapter provides symmetry between their turning away and their vision of hell as it is brought before them. The two actions are shown in contrast both in scene and movement.

This contrast is followed by a comment full of derision. (18:102) Do these ungrateful think that they can choose from among God's creatures that fully submit to Him some who could support them against God? Can these give them help or grant them protection against God's might? If such thoughts are entertained by them, then let them experience the results of such self-delusion. (18:102) This is an evil abode already prepared to receive them. There is no need for waiting. It is all ready to receive its unbelieving dwellers.

Sufi Commentator (underlines words refer to the actual Quranic verses preceded by or followed by commentary): They will ask you about Dhul Qarnayn. They say he was from the Eastern Roman Empire and lived not long ago. In terms of practice, Dhul Qarnayn refers to the heart which has two horns, two wings, the East and the West. Say: I will recount to you a remembrance of him. Truly We established him firmly on the earth and gave him a route to everything. We gave him strength in the land and power over the body. The heart had power over the body. This story differs from the bove story of Moses for here the heart is the king whose power reaches everywhere. God gave the heart power and it was capable of earning any wealth it wanted in the macrocosm or the microcosm and to walk wherever it wanted. It was given perfection in every way in order to reach its goals. And (it) pursued a route that responded to the body until when (it) reached the setting of the sun. This is where the spirit sets. He found it beginning to set in a spring of muddy water. That is, like the state of the body when it is digesting food. And (it) found near it a folk, that is, the forces of the self, the body, the senses, the spiritual forces and the inspirational forces.

We said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn, O heart, you could either chastise

them through spiritual exercises and killing them practically or adopt a way of kindness towards them and adopt a middle way and give each their share of what they need. It said: As for him who does wrong, by indulging in excess and not following the rules and following their lust, desires, anger, illusions and allusions, we will punish them with spiritual exercises and after that he will be returned to his Lord at the time of death, Who will punish him with a horrible punishment. He will cast them into the fire of nature where they will be tormented. This is more difficult to bear than the punishment on the Day of Resurrection. They will be annihilated.

But as for him who has believed, through cognizance and practical and theoretical wisdom, who admonish the senses to attain the positive traits, an exalted state, and one who has acted in accord with morality, through submission he will have the fairest recompense of the paradise of the attributes and manifestation of His lights. There will be light from their faces and flowing of rivers of knowledge by which you will recognize the believer. They will face the light when it separates from the profusion of knowledge, and we will speak to him of our command with ease.

After that (it) pursued a route until it reached the path that leads to God by renouncing any material attachment, seeking higher ground, the rising place of the sun. That is, where the spirit rises. (It) found it coming up on a folk who are two wise ones: theoretical and practical wisdom and spiritual strength, for whom We had not made any obstruction against it because they are light and because they understand fully the spiritual meaning as described earlier. Thus We surely comprehended of whatever was near him through awareness.

They had acquired the perfections of the exalted attributes. No one but Us knows about this because God is Omnipresent in both universes at the same time. No one in the universe can have such perfect knowledge except God and because of what is known as the Throne of God. Then (it pursued a route until when (it) reached between two embankments, meaning the two universes and that is his state and original station walking between the East and the West. This is a journey that sits it in its rightful position in exaltation. (It) found behind them a folk of human beings, physical forces and outer senses, who would almost not understand any saying because the physical forces and the outer senses do not know words and cannot speak. They said with the tongue of the present, O Dhu-l Qarnayn, Gog that is, claims, suspicion, idiosity, supersensitiveness,"and Magog imagination and superstition, are ones who make corruption in and on the earth of the body. They entice the body to indulge in their desires and to seek pleasures that are against what is orderly in

the universe and encourages them to do deeds that bring imbalances and hinder the laws of attaining the positive traits like wisdom. They cause corruption in the body and desires, lust and innovation which are against justice and which lead to the corruption of the seeds of the next generation.

They were denigrated so they said to the heart: Will we assign to thee payment, that is, some of our strength if you make an embankment between us and them? so that we may overcome desires by setting up a barrier between our hearts and them that will manifest as practical wisdom. (It) said: What my Lord has established firmly for me is better. That is, what God gave me of the meanings which result from practical experience for me is better along with the knowledge of the macrocosm and the microcosm and the ability to travel with ease from the East to the West, to attain positive traits and follow God's commands which God created you to do, so assist me with strength and I will make a fortification between you and between them. That dam is practical wisdom and the Shariah.

(It) said: Give me ingots of iron, from the practical images and do what you are ordered to do with firmness and certitude, until when he made level between the two cliffs, by balancing and by measuring the correct needs of both sides. Then (it) said to the animal forces, Blow life into the microcosm so its meaning becomes more significant and blow on the varying psychological manifestations including good qualities, blow until when he had made it a fire, that is, knowledge as part of universal knowledge while practical knowledge is particular knowledge of what to do.

(It) said: Give me molten copper to pour out over it, that is, the intention and sense of purpose which must exist between knowledge and actions. Knowledge without intentions and actions without purpose are not rewarded. With that molten lead, the spirit of knowledge will become one—not divided—and with it the spirit of knowledge and the body of actions will become one and united by molten lead. This is similar to the animal soul standing between the human self and the body. There was a barrier there, a veil, a foundation, a structure based on deeds and this was knowledge, conduct and the lead of intention and purpose. Then the self became the self at peace and recognized its original nature (*fitrat* Allah) and felt comfort and peace, understanding its intended state and believed.

So they were not able to scale it nor were they able to dig through it because it was exalted and because it contained all kinds of knowledge and proof which could neither be rejected nor overcome. The body and the senses are too ignorant of the truth to overcome it and to pierce through it. They took control of all the

capabilities. This barrier is the Divine Law, the Shariah. He said: The Divine Law is a mercy from my Lord to servants which brings them peacefulness, tranquility and maintains them. So when the promise of my Lord drew near, that is when death comes, He will make it powder the body into to the earth because it does not work when it is dead, without the soul or spirit and the promise of my Lord has been true.

Luqman

Luqman Given Wisdom

Chapter 31: The 57th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Luqman wisdom that:*
Give thanks to God. And whoever gives thanks,
gives thanks only for himself. And whoever was ungrateful
— then, truly, God is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise. (31:12)
And when Luqman said to his son as he admonishes him:
O my son! Ascribe not partners with God.
Truly, association with God is, certainly,
a tremendous injustice. (31:13)
And We charged the human being
about ones who are his parents.
His mother carried him in feebleness on feebleness
and his weaning is in two years.
Give thanks to Me and to ones who are thy parents.
And to Me is the Homecoming. (31:14)
But if they both struggled with thee
that thou hast ascribed partners
with Me of what for thee is no knowledge,
then, obey them not.
And keep their company in the present
as one who is honorable
but follow the way of him who was penitent to Me.
Again, to Me will be your return
and I will tell you of what you had been doing. (31:15)
O my son! Truly, even if it be
the weight of a grain of a mustard seed
and though it be in a rock
or in the heavens or in or on the earth
God will bring it. Truly, God is Subtle, Aware. (31:16)
O my son! Perform the formal prayer
and command that which was moral
and prohibit that which was immoral
and have patience with whatever lights on you.
Truly that is the constancy of affairs.(31:17)
And turn not thy cheek away from humanity
nor walk through the earth exultantly.
Truly, God loves not any proud boaster. (31:18)
And be moderate in thy walking and lower thy voice.
Truly the most horrible of voices is, certainly,
the voice of the donkey. (31:19)

Commentary°

What is, then, the nature of this wisdom and what is its distinctive feature? It is summed up in a word. (31:12) This is true wisdom in action. The second step shows Luqman as he gives counsel to his son. It is the advice of a sage to his young son, which means that it is free of fault. No one can describe such advice as insincere or dishonest: how could they when it is from father to son? This advice states the major issue of faith that was referred to in the first presentation, as well as the issue of the hereafter, but it employs new influences here. (31:13)

Here we see relations with one's parents in a way that overflows with tenderness and compassion. (31:14) The [sign] makes clear the first rule concerning faith, which makes its bond the primary one in human life, taking precedence over that of blood and kinship. Strong and appealing as the latter bond is, it is lower on the scale than the bond of faith. (31:15) It adds here the truth of the life to come. (31:15) This is then followed with a very strong psychological factor demonstrating the extent, accuracy and comprehensiveness of God's knowledge. This is done in such a way that makes us shudder as we contemplate it against the background of the great universe. (31:16)

Luqman continues his admonition to his son, outlining the duties imposed by faith, including the all-important duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and what follows from both of remaining patient in adversity, as difficulties are bound to be encountered by the advocates of faith. (31:17) This should be coupled with commitment to good manners. No advocate of faith should ever be arrogant, as such action is bound to spoil his advocacy efforts. (31:18-31:19) Not only does the chapter dismiss such proud, haughty and arrogant behavior, it looks upon it with contempt. This provides a marked psychological effect.

Zechariah

Zechariah Prays for a Child

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *A remembrance of the mercy*
of thy Lord to His servant Zechariah (19:2)
when he cried out to his Lord, secretively crying out. (19:3)
He said: My Lord! Truly, I—my bones became feeble
and my head became studded with grayness of hair
and I be not disappointed
in my supplication to Thee, O my Lord. (19:4)
And, truly, I feared for my defenders after me.
And my woman had been a barren woman.
So bestow on me from that which proceeds
from Thy Presence a protector. (19:5)
He will inherit from me and inherit from the family of Jacob.
And make him, my Lord, pleasing. (19:6)
O Zechariah! Truly, We give thee the good tidings of a boy.
His name will be Yahya and We assigned it not
as a namesake for anyone before. (19:7)
He said: My Lord! How will I have a boy
while my woman had been a barren woman
and, surely, I reached an advanced old age? (19:8)
He said: It is about to be! Thy Lord said:
It is insignificant for Me and, surely, I created thee before
when thou wast nothing. (19:9)
Zechariah said: My Lord! Assign for me a sign.
He said: Thy sign is that thou wilt not speak to humanity
for three nights, although being without fault. (19:10)
So he went forth to his folk from the sanctuary.
Then, he revealed to them:
Glorify in the early morning dawn and evening. (19:11)

Commentary°

The signs 19:2-19:11 immediately begins the story of Zechariah and John (Yahya), in which compassion provides both the central idea and the overall atmosphere. Therefore, grace is mentioned at the outset. (19:2) The story begins with a scene of earnest supplication by Zechariah in total secrecy. (19:3-19:6) He is alone, addressing his appeal to God, away from watching eyes and listening ears. He wants to lay his troubled heart open before his Lord, recounting his worries. He addresses Him as if he were speaking to someone who is very close, without even using the Arabic address article. Needless to say,

his Lord hears and sees, without the need to be addressed or called upon. But a person troubled by worries finds comfort in vocalizing his concern. Most Gracious as He is, God knows this to be part of human nature. Hence, He likes that His servants pray to Him, making a clean breast of all that worries them. (40:60) When they do, they find relief from their heavy burden. They are reassured because they have assigned such burdens to the One who is more able and powerful. They feel that they are in contact with the Most Merciful who will not disappoint anyone who appeals to Him and relies on Him.

Zechariah complains to his Lord that his bones have become feeble, and when bones are feeble, the whole body is weak. After all, the bones are the stiffest part of the body. They form the skeleton that the muscles flesh up. He also complains that his head glistens with grey hair. The Quranic expression here shows the grayness of hair like a fire being ignited, and the man's head covered with this fire, so as to leave no black hair. Both feeble bones and grey hair signify old age and the weakness associated with it. It is this weakness that is the subject matter of Zechariah's complaint as he presents his case, and his hopes, to his Lord.

He then makes a clear acknowledgement. (19:4) He is used to having his prayers answered. He was not disappointed when he prayed to Him in his time of strength and vigor. Now in his old age and weakness, the need for his prayers to be answered is even more pressing.

Having presented his case, expressed his fears and hopes, he makes his request. The point is that he fears that those who will succeed him might not be up to looking after his heritage properly. Being one of the major prophets of the Children of Jacob, Zechariah's heritage involved serving God's cause as well as looking after the people of his household. One of those was Mary whose upbringing was entrusted to him. She served in the sanctuary that he managed. Again his property, which he managed properly and spent on only good purposes, was among his concerns. His worry was that those who succeeded him might not follow the course he had charted, perhaps because he knew them not to be up to that task. (19:5)

What added to his worries was the fact that he was childless. (19:5) This was his concern. As for his hope, he requested that God grant him a successor who would properly manage and look after the heritage of Jacob's household, i.e. his ancestors. (19:5-19:6) Zechariah, a God-conscious prophet, does not forget to specify what he hopes this successor would be like. (19:6) He should not be arrogant, tyrannical, or greedy. He should be one who is content with what God gives him. Such contentedness should furthermore spread

a sense of ease and happiness all round.

The moment of truth comes: the prayer is answered, bringing with it God's grace and acceptance. It is the Lord Himself that calls out to His servant from His sublime presence. (19:7)

This is but an example of God's grace as it is given in abundance to His servant whose secret supplication was passionate, and which clearly expressed his fears and hopes. Zechariah's prayer was motivated by fear that his heirs would not be able to look after the heritage of the true faith properly. He feared that they would not fulfill the trust in a way that earns God's pleasure. Hence, God bestowed on him what corresponded to his good intention.

Zechariah, who was deeply involved in his supplication, passionately expressing his desire and urging his case, was suddenly alerted by this speedy answer to his prayer. The reality stares him in the face: he is well advanced in years, his bones feeble, his hair completely grey, and his wife barren, having given him no child when he was in his prime. How is he to have a child of his own? He wants to be reassured and to know the means by which God will give him this son. (19:8)

He is facing the reality, as well as God's promise. He certainly trusts that God's promise will be fulfilled. He only wants reassurance and to know how, considering his circumstances, the fulfillment will take place. That would give him much needed reassurance. It is a perfectly normal condition in a situation like that faced by the noble and God-fearing prophet, Zechariah. Needless to say, he was only a human being who cannot ignore the reality. Hence, he would love to know how God will reverse it.

The answer to all his enquiries is straightforward. It is all perfectly easy for God to accomplish. God reminds him of something that he knows well, namely his own bringing into existence. This is something to be considered by every living creature. It applies to everything in this universe. (19:9)

Zechariah's eagerness to be reassured motivates him to ask for a sign indicating the realization of the happy news he was given. The sign God gave him was most fitting to the general atmosphere of his prayer and how it was answered. This sign gives him a further way to thank, glorify and praise God for giving him a son in his old age. He was to isolate himself from all worldly concerns for three days and live in direct contact with God. His speech would be normal when he glorified God, but he would not be able to utter a word of normal human speech. Yet he would remain in sound health, no illness affecting him. (19:10)

This was exactly what took place. (19:11) He wanted them to

live in the same mental condition he was in, to feel God's grace at its most abounding, and to give thanks for the grace He had bestowed on Zechariah, and on them.

Zechariah Lived in Accord with Morality

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

And Zechariah and Yahya and Jesus and Elias. All were of the ones who were in accord with morality. (6:85)

And Mention Zechariah

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And mention Zechariah*
when he cried out to his Lord:
My Lord! Forsake me not unassisted
and Thou art Best of the ones who inherit. (21:89)
So We responded to him and We bestowed Yahya on him.
And We made things right for his spouse and for him.
Truly, they had been competing with one another in good deeds
and they would call to Us with yearning and reverence.
And they had been ones who are humbled before Us. (21:90)

Commentary°

Along the same lines of its brief accounts of different prophets, the chapter gives a quick reference to Zechariah and his son, John, highlighting how God responded to Zechariah and answered his prayers. (21:89-21:90)

The story here it is given very briefly to fit with the rest of the chapter. It begins with Zechariah's prayer. Zachariah was in charge of the temple where the Children of Jacob offered their worship, before the birth of Jesus. However, Zechariah does not forget that the ultimate custodian of faith and property is God Himself. He only needs a successor who will attend well to the faith and to his family. People are the medium to fulfill God's will on earth.

The answer to this prayer was swift and direct at the same time. (21:90) The chapter overlooks all details to give us the ultimate result of God's response to Zechariah's prayer. Therefore, God gave an immediate response to that prayer. They yearned to earn God's pleasure and were in awe of incurring His displeasure. Their hearts were alive, always hopeful.

It was Zechariah's and his wife's good characteristics that deserved that God should bless them with a goodly son, John. Thus, the whole family was blessed, fully deserving of God's grace.

The Glad Tidings of Zechariah on Being Granted a Son.

Chapter 3: The 89th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *So her Lord received her*
with the very best acceptance.
And her bringing forth caused the very best to develop in her.
And Zechariah took charge of her.
Whenever Zechariah entered upon her in her sanctuary,
he found her with provision.
He said: O Mary! From where is this for thee (f)?
She said: This is from God.
Truly, God provides to whom He wills without reckoning. (3:37)
There Zechariah called to his Lord.
He said: My Lord!
Bestow on me good offspring from Thy Presence.
Truly, Thou art hearing the supplication. (3:38)
Then, the angels proclaimed to him while he was
one who stands to invoke blessings in the sanctuary
that God gives thee good tidings of Yahya
—one who establishes the Word of God as true
—a chief and concealer of secrets and a Prophet
among the ones in accord with morality. (3:39)
He said: My Lord! How is it I will have a boy while,
surely, I reached old age and my woman is a barren woman.
He said: Thus, God accomplishes what He wills. (3:40)
He said: My Lord! Assign a sign for me.
He said: Thy sign is that thou wilt not speak to humanity
for three days but by gesture and remember thy Lord frequently,
and glorify in the evening and early morning. (3:41)

Commentary°

He made Zechariah, the chief of-tie Jewish temple, the custody of which was entrusted to Aaron's priestly descendants, Mary's guardian. (3:37)

Mary was a blessed child, enjoying a state of Abundance. God ensured that she would always have an Abundance of everything. (3:37)

At that point, Zechariah prayed to his Lord. (3:38-3:41)

Zechariah, an old man without progeny, experienced a renewal of that yearning to have a child of his own. This is a natural desire which cannot be suppressed even by those who dedicate themselves to divine service and preoccupy themselves with worship. God has

made this desire a part of human nature so that life can continue and progress.

Here we find Zechariah, a man overtaken by old age, and his barren wife who had not had children even in her youth. As Zechariah brings up Mary, a goodly child provided with abundance from God, his deep natural desire to have offspring of his own begins to stir inside him. He turns to his Lord with a passionate prayer to give him out of His grace goodly offspring. (3:38) And what does this passionate prayer achieve? God answers his prayer in a way which is not restricted to age or what is familiar to people. It is an answer determined by God's absolute will. (3:39)

This is the sincere prayer of a man of pure heart who has placed his hopes in the One Who hears all prayers and Who is able to answer them when He chooses. The angels bid Zechariah rejoice at the news of the birth of a son whose name, John (Yahya), is known even before he is born. His qualities are also well known: he is to be a man of nobility and distinction, utterly chaste, able to control his desires and a firm believer who will confirm the word of God. Moreover, he will be a Prophet and a righteous man.

The way his prayer was answered surprised even Zechariah. After all, Zechariah was a man like us. He wanted to know from his Lord how this could happen when it was something supernatural by the standards of human beings. (3:40)

Zechariah was so overwhelmed by the news that he prayed to his Lord to give him a sign which would reassure him. God directs him at this point to that which gives him the perfect reassurance. He gives him a totally unfamiliar experience. The sign was that Zechariah's tongue was to be tied for three days when he tried to address people, but would remain untied when he addressed his Lord and glorified Him. (3:41)

The Quranic account stops here. We know that this is what actually took place.

Zechariah had an experience that was unfamiliar in his own life and in the lives of other beings. His tongue was unable to utter a word of ordinary speech while it uttered the praises and glorification of God. What law controls such a phenomenon? It is the law of God's absolute will. There can be no other explanation of this strange event. Similarly, there is no other explanation of the birth of John when his father had been overtaken by old age and his mother was barren.

John (Yahya)

Zechariah and John

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *O Yahya! Take the Book with strength.*
And We gave him critical judgment while a lad. (19:12)
and Our continuous mercy from that which proceeds
from Our Presence and purity and he had been devout (19:13)
and pious to ones who are his parents
and be not haughty nor rebellious. (19:14)
And peace be on him the day on which he was given birth
and the day he dies and the day he is raised up, living. (19:15)

Commentary°

John (Yahya): A Prophet in His Own Right

The chapter now leaves Zechariah in complete silence dealing with other people and his glorification and praise of God. As that scene closes, the chapter reveals a new one in which we see John, the child given to Zechariah, as fully grown. It is his Lord who calls out to him from on high. (19:12) This follows the Quranic method of highlighting only the most important events, portraying images that are full of life and vigor.

Before we have even a single word about John himself, his account commences with an address from on high. It portrays an awesome scene giving us a good idea of John's position. It also shows us how God responded to Zachariah's prayers when he requested an heir who would fulfill the trust that he himself had been fulfilling, as it related both to faith and kin. Thus the first scene in which John is involved is the one where he is elected to bear the highest responsibility. (19:12) The book referred to here is the Torah, given to Moses. All the Israelite prophets were charged with its preservation and implementation. They were also given the task of educating people in the Torah, so that they would know what was lawful to them and what was unlawful. John inherited his father Zechariah. He is here told to rise to the task and fulfill his trust with all his resolve and strength. He must never weaken or slacken. He should never abdicate his responsibilities.

The chapter tells us what John was given to equip him for the great tasks he was assigned. (19:12-13) These were indeed the qualifications that suited him for his task. They provided great help in the fulfillment of his duties. Now let us look closer at these qualifications.

God granted him wisdom in his youth, which made him unique

in his personality, as he was unique in his birth and name. Wisdom is normally acquired as one grows in years, but in John's case, God granted him this in his early years.

God also granted him compassion as a special gift implanted in his very nature. He did not have to train or persuade himself to be compassionate. Such compassion is necessary for a Prophet who takes care of people's hearts and souls, trying always to set them on the course of goodness with ease.

John was further granted purity and cleanliness of heart and practice. Thus, he was able to counter the effects of other people's hard natures and wickedness and so help them grow in purity.

The other quality that served John well was his righteousness. He keenly sensed his close tie with God, and knew that He was not only watching him but with him in all situations, public or private. That completes the qualities that John was given to qualify him for his task. They were given to him when he was still in his youth, so that he could inherit his father, who had appealed to God to give him an heir.

Thus the account of John is brought to its conclusion with two verses. (19:14-15) As we see in this short passage, the line he followed throughout his life was clearly laid out. No further details of the story of Zechariah requesting a son, nor of that son John could have provided anything extra in as much as the lessons we can draw are concerned. Hence it is brought to a close.

If we leave aside for a moment the creation of the human being in his present form and in the way God tells us of how He created him, the birth of Jesus, son of Mary, should be considered the most remarkable event of human history. It is an event that has no parallel.

John Lived in Accord with Morality

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

And Zechariah and Yahya and Jesus and Elias.
All were of the ones who were in accord with morality. (6:85)

John Bestowed on Zechariah

Chapter 21: The 73rd Chapter Revealed

So We responded to him and We bestowed Yahya on him.
And We made things right for his wife and for him.
Truly they had been competing with one another
in good works and they would call to Us with yearning
and reverence and they had been
ones who are humbled before Us. (21:90)

Jesus

Jesus son of Mary

Chapter 19: The 44th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Jesus said: Truly, I am a servant of God.*
He gave me the Book and He made me a Prophet. (19:30)
And He made me one who is blessed
wherever I had been and He bequeathed to me the formal prayer
and the purifying alms as long as I continue living, (19:31)
and He makes me pious toward one who is my mother
and He makes me not haughty nor disappointed. (19:32)
And peace be on me the day I was given birth and the day I die
and the day I am raised up, living. (19:33)
That is Jesus son of Mary, a saying of The Truth.
They contest what is in it. (19:34)
It had not been for God that He takes to Himself a son.
Glory be to Him! When He decreed a command,
He not but says to it: Be! Then, it is! (19:35)
And, truly, God is my Lord and your Lord,
so worship Him. This is a straight path. (19:36)

Commentary°

It was God's will, then, to give them this example of the creation of Jesus, son of Mary, to remind people of His free-will and unrestrained power which cannot be subject to the laws He sets in operation. Jesus' birth has not been repeated in history, because it is only proper that God's law should come into operation and be seen with all its effects. This single event remains for all time indisputable evidence that God's will is always free, unshackled by any factor whatsoever. (19:21)

Jesus declared his status: a servant of God. He is not God's son, as some sects claim; nor was he divine as claimed by others, nor one of a Trinity constituting one God while being three, as claimed by others. He declares that God has made him a prophet, which means that he was neither God's son nor partner. God has blessed him and enjoined him to keep his prayers and be charitable throughout his life.

He is also enjoined to be very kind towards his mother and to show humility to his people. This means that he has a limited life duration, he dies and will be resurrected. God has bestowed on him peace, security and reassurance on the day of his birth, the day of his death and the day of his resurrection. The statement is very clear here

in respect of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It admits no argument or different interpretation.

The Quran does not add anything beyond painting this scene. It does not tell us how the people reacted to this miraculous event. Nor does it inform us what happened to Mary and her remarkable son after that. It does not mention anything about the time when he became a Prophet. (19:30) The theme here is the birth of Jesus. Hence, when the chapter has given its account of his birth, culminating in that miraculous scene, with Jesus talking to Mary's family, the scene is drawn to a close. This is followed by an emphatic statement of the truth concerning Jesus.

Such was, in the words of truth, Jesus the son of Mary, about whose nature they still dispute. It is not conceivable that God should beget a son. Limitless is He in His glory! When He wills a thing to be, He only says to it, Be,' and it is. God is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him alone. That is a straight path. (19:34-19:36)

Jesus concludes his words by declaring the truth that God is his Lord and the Lord of all humanity. Therefore, they must worship Him alone, assigning to Him no partners. (19:36) With this statement made by Jesus himself, and with this account of his birth there is no room left for legend or myth in the whole affair. This is the full import of his statement and the way it is phrased.

The chapter then derides people for turning away from all th pointers to the right guidance in this present life. On that day their will be the sharpest of hearing and seeing: "How well they will hea and see on the day they will appear before Us. Truly the wrongdoers are today in evident error." (19:38) Their situation is amazing: they do not hear or see when hearing and seeing are the means to discern guidance and follow it in order to escape doom. Yet they hear and see extremely well when these faculties are used to stress their humiliation. They will be made to hear what they dislike and see what they are wont to avoid.

That is a day when distress will be at its most acute, when distress will be a quality of the day itself. They need to be warned, because such distress is of no use to anyone. (19:39) It is as though the day is directly linked to their unbelief and heedlessness.

Jesus Lived in Accord with Morality

Chapter 6: The 55th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And Zechariah and Yahya and Jesus and Elias. All were of the ones who were in accord with morality.* (6:85)

Jesus a Sign of God

Chapter 43: The 63rd Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And when the son of Mary*
was cited as an example,
that is when thy folk cry aloud (43:57)
and said: Are our gods better or is he?
They cited him to thee not but to be argumentative.
Nay! They are a contentious folk. (43:58)
He was but a servant to whom We were gracious,
and We made him an example
to the Children of Jacob. (43:59)
And if We will, We would have assigned angels
to succeed among you on the earth. (43:60)
And, truly, he is with the knowledge of the Hour,
so contest not about it and follow Me.
This is a straight path. (43:61)
And let not Satan bar you.
Truly, he is a clear enemy to you. (43:62)
And when Jesus drew near
with the clear portents, he said:
Truly, I drew near you with wisdom
and in order to make manifest to you
some of that about which you are at variance in it.
So be God-conscious and obey me. (43:63)
Truly, God He is my Lord
and your Lord so worship Him.
This is a straight path. (43:64)

Commentary°

Whenever the son of Mary is cited as an example, your people raise an outcry, saying: 'Who is better: our deities or him? They cite him only to challenge you. They are contentious people. He was but a servant of Ours whom We had favored and made an example to the Children of Jacob. Had it been Our will, We could have made you angels, succeeding one another on earth. He is a portent of the Last Hour. Have no doubt about it, but follow Me: this is a straight path. Let not Satan debar you; for he is your sworn enemy. (43:57-43:65)

The signs speak about Jesus, stating the truth about him and what he preached, and how his people differed about him, both before and after his time: When Jesus came with clear signs. (43:63-43:65)

Thus, Jesus came to his people with clear signs, whether miracles God granted him or teachings that lead along the right way. (43:64) He never said that he was God, nor that he was God's son.

He never made any reference to any relationship between him and God other than that of his being God's servant. Furthermore, he stated that his message demarcated a straight path without bend or error. Yet those who came after him disputed much, splitting into factions like those who preceded him. In this they were wrongdoers, relying on no sure information. (43:65)

Jesus' message was addressed to the Jews. They were awaiting his coming to save them from their humiliating bondage to the Romans. Yet when he came, they denied and opposed him. Indeed, they even plotted to get him crucified. Jesus found them divided into numerous sects, the most important of which were as follows:

1. The Sadducees, named after Zadok, whose family retained custody of the Temple since the time of David and Solomon. According to their law, he must have been a descendant of Aaron, Moses' brother. For, custody of the Temple belonged to Aaron's descendants. Holding such an office, they were very strict on detailed worship rituals, denouncing any deviation. Nevertheless, in personal matters, they were lax, enjoying life's pleasures. They denied the Day of Resurrection.

2. The Pharisees. They were in dispute with the Sadducees, objecting to their strict observation of worship rituals while denying the Day of Resurrection. Their most common characteristic was their disregard of worldly pleasures, even though some of them took pride in their knowledge. Jesus denounced such an attitude.

3. The Samaritans. They were a mixture of Jews and Assyrians. They believed only in the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Old Testament. They denied the later books accepted by other Jews as part of their scripture.

4. The Essenes, or Essenians. These were influenced by some philosophical doctrines, living in isolation of other Jewish sects. Theirs was an ascetic, strictly organized sect.

In addition, there were numerous other sects that gave rise to much confusion in Jewish beliefs and traditions. The Jews at the time tolerated humiliation under the Romans, and awaited their deliverance at the hands of the Messiah. When the Messiah, Jesus Christ, came to them declaring that: 'God is my Lord and your Lord: so worship Him alone, and preaching a law of tolerance and spiritualism, he was opposed by the professional clerics who gave paramount importance to rituals. He is reported to have said about them: They make loads that are hard to carry and lay them on the shoulders of the people. However, they are not willing to lift a finger to move them. They do everything to attract people's attention. They make their headbands large and the tassels on their shawls long. They love

the place of honor at dinners and the front seats in synagogues. They love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have people call them Rabbi. (Matthew 23:4-7) He is also quoted as addressing them thus: You, blind guides! You strain gnats out of your wine, but you swallow camels. How horrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You clean the outsides of cups and dishes. But inside they are full of greed and uncontrolled desires. You blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cups and dishes so that the outside may also be clean. How horrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You are like whitewashed graves that look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead people's bones and every kind of impurity. (Matthew 23:24-27)

When we read today these words of Jesus and similar texts, we realize how applicable they are to professional clerics of all religions. They are all of the same type.

Jesus' term on earth came to its end and he went to his Lord. Later, his followers split into groups and factions: some made him a deity; some made him the son of God; others make God a trinity of three one of whom is Jesus. The pure concept of God's oneness preached by Jesus has, thus, been lost, as also his call on people to worship God alone, pure in their submission to Him. (23:65) Then the pagan Arabs disputed with the Prophet concerning Jesus, basing their argument on what these different factions fabricated and weaved of legends about him.

When the signs refer to wrongdoers, it includes those factions that disputed about Jesus together with the pagan Arabs who argued with the Prophet on the basis of what those factions perpetrated. It draws a long, spectacular scene showing what happens to them on the Day of Judgement and adds an image of what happens to the God-fearing who receive His favors in heaven:

What are they waiting for other than the Last Hour, which will come upon them all of a sudden and take them unawares? On that Day, friends will become enemies to one another, except for the God-conscious. However, what comes over and above desire satisfaction is that it is all pleasant to the eye, adding beauty to gratification. (43:71) Yet there is more to this blessed enjoyment: there is something greater and far more honorable. They are honored by an address from on high. (43:71-43:73)

Mary, a Sign of God

Chapter 23: The 74th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign,*

and We gave them refuge on a hillside, a stopping place,
and a spring of water. (23:50)

Commentary°

There are a number of different reports about the hill described here as a 'lofty place' and its exact location. (23:49-23:50) Was it in Egypt, Damascus or Jerusalem? These were the places where Mary went with her son during his childhood and youth, as mentioned in Christian Scriptures. But knowing the exact location is not of vital importance. It is more important to know that God gave them both a goodly abode where fine plants grew and clear water was plentiful. Thus, they felt that God took care of them both.

At this point in its quick references to earlier Messengers the chapter makes its address to the followers of all Messengers, as though they were all gathered together. Thus, the separating gulfs of time and place are shown to be meaningless when compared to the true bond of faith that unites them all.

Jesus Given Clear Signs and Confirmed with the Hallowed Spirit

Chapter 2: The 87th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: ... *And We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear portents*
and confirmed him with the hallowed Spirit ... (2:253)

Jesus the Messiah Announced to Mary

Chapter 3: The 89th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Mention when the angels said: O Mary! Truly God*
gives you (f) good tidings of a Word from Him.
His name is Messiah—Jesus son of Mary—
well-esteemed in the present and the world to come
and of the ones who are brought near.
And he will speak to humanity from the cradle
and in manhood and be among
the ones in accord with morality. (3:46)
She said: My Lord! How is it I will be with child
when no mortal touches me?
He said: Thus, God creates whatever He wills.
When He decreed a command, then, He only says to it:
Be! Then, it is! (3:47)
And He teaches him the Book and wisdom
and the Torah and the Gospel (3:48)
to be a Messenger to the Children of Jacob saying that:
Surely I drew near you with a sign from your Lord

that I will create for you out of clay a likeness of a bird.
Then, I breathe into it and it will become a bird
with the permission of God.
And I cure one who is blind from birth and the leper
and give life to dead mortals with the permission of God.
And I tell you what you eat
and what you store up in your houses.
Truly, in that is a sign for you
if you had been ones who believe. (3:49)
And I come with that which establishes as true
what was before me of the Torah, and permit you
some of what was forbidden to you.
And I drew near you with a sign from your Lord.
So be God-conscious of God and obey Me. (3:50)
Truly, God is my Lord and
your Lord so worship Him.
This is a straight path. (3:51)
And when Jesus became conscious
of their ingratitude, he said:
Who are my helpers for God?
The disciples said: We will be helpers for God.
We believed in God and bear thee witness
that we are ones who submit to God. (3:52)
*Our Lord! We believed in what **You** had caused to descend.*
And we followed the Messenger so write us down
with the ones who bear witness. (3:53)
And they planned and God planned.
And God is Best of the ones who plan. (3:54)

Promise of Rescue to Jesus and the Christians Invited to the Spiritual Contest

Madinah: *Mention when God said: O Jesus!*
*I will be One Who Gathers **you** and One Who Elevates **you***
*to Myself and One Who Purifies **you***
from those who were ungrateful,
*and One Who Makes those who followed **you***
above those who were ungrateful
until the Day of Resurrection.
Again, you will return to Me.
Then, I will give judgment between you
about what you had been at variance in it. (3:55)
So as for those who were ungrateful,
then, I will punish them with a severe punishment

in the present and the world to come.
And for them there is no one who helps. (3:56)
And to those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
We will pay them their account with full compensation.
And God loves not the ones who are unjust. (3:57)
These We recount to you are of the signs
and the wise remembrance. (3:58)
Truly the parable of Jesus with God is like the parable of Adam.
He created him from earth dust.
Again, He said to him: Be! Then, he is! (3:59)

Commentary°

The central theme of Chapter 3 revolves around the issue of the Oneness of God, i.e. *tawhid*. The story of Jesus and the other accounts related to it reinforce this concept as they refute and completely exclude the idea of offspring or partners as far as God is concerned. The chapter rejects these notions as false and naïve, and presents the birth and life of Mary and Jesus in such a manner that leaves no room for doubting his full humanity or that he was one of God's Messengers; whatever applies to them applies to him. It explains the supernatural phenomena that accompanied the birth and life of Jesus in simple, clear and reassuring terms. The whole issue is presented as a natural and normal one that should raise no confusion or suspicion. It simply says: The case of Jesus in the sight of God is the same as the case of Adam. He created him of dust and then said to him, Be, and he was. (3:59) Believing hearts find certainty and peace in these words, and wonder how this evident concept could ever have been shrouded in doubt and confusion.

Jesus Not Crucified but Taken to Heaven

Chapter 4: The 92nd Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And for their saying: We have killed the Messiah*
Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God
and they killed him not,
nor they crucified him but a likeness was shown to them.
And truly those who were at variance in it
are in uncertainty about it.
They have no knowledge about it
but are pursuing an opinion.
And they for certain killed him not. (4:157)

The Quran Bears Witness to the Previous Books or Scriptures

Madinah: *O People of the Book!*
Go not beyond the limits in your way of life
and say not about God but The Truth:
That the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary,
was a Messenger of God and His Word
that He cast to Mary and a Spirit from Him.
So believe in God and His Messengers.
And say not: Three. To refrain yourselves from it is better for you.
There is only One God. Glory be to Him that He have a son!
To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in
and on the earth and God sufficed as a Trustee. (4:171)
The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God,
nor the angels, ones who are brought near to Him.
And whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant,
He will assemble them altogether to Himself.$:172)

Commentary°

This sign describes the claim that God has a son as overstepping the bounds of truth. It is nothing short of the type of excess which enabled the people who had received earlier revelations to make false claims about God and allege that He had a son. Far removed is such an idea from Him. They also allege that God is a trinity.

Infinite is God in His glory. He neither has nor needs any partner. Nor is anyone similar to Him in any way. The very fact that He is the Creator means that He is different from all creatures. It stands to reason that the Creator should be different from His creation, the owner different from his property. (4:171)

That the birth of Jesus without a father seems miraculous and preternatural to human beings is only because it is totally different from what is familiar. We must remember that what is familiar to us is certainly not all that is in the universe. Nor are the natural laws we know the only laws in the universe. We must remember that God creates natural laws and sets them into operation according to His will, which is unrestricted, free, absolute.

As regards Jesus Christ, God says the following, and what He says is always true. (4:171) He is, then, definitely and undoubtedly a Messenger from God. He is the same as the rest of God's Messengers, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad, and the other most honorable servants of God whom He selected to convey His message to humanity at various points in time.

Formerly, God breathed of His spirit into the clay from which

Adam was made, and thus Adam became a man. (38:71-2) In the context of the creation of Jesus and referring to Jesus's mother. .(21:91) The matter is, then, not without precedent. The spirit to which reference is made in all these statements is the same. None of the people who received revelations before Islam and who believed in Adam's creation and that God breathed into him of His spirit claim that Adam was a god, or one of the elements which constitute the Divine Being, as some people allege regarding Jesus. The two cases are similar: both have spirit breathed into them and both were created in the same fashion. Indeed, Adam was created without either a father or a mother, while Jesus was created having a mother. (3:59)

Jesus Given the Gospel

Chapter 57: The 94th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *Again, We sent Our Messengers*
following their footsteps.
And We sent following them Jesus son of Mary.
And We gave him the Gospel.
And We assigned in the hearts
of those who followed him,
tenderness and mercy.
But as for monasticism,
they made it up themselves.
We prescribed it not for them
but they were so looking
for the contentment of God.
Then, they gave it not the attention
giving its right attention
so We gave those who believed
among them their compensation.
And many of them are ones who disobey. (57:27)

Commentary°

At this point, Chapter 57 mentions a prominent characteristic of those who followed Jesus. (57:27) These are the natural fruits of his message that emphasizes spiritual purity. Indeed such compassion and mercy are clearly noticed among those who truly believe in Jesus' message and who properly follow him. Other verses in the Quran refer to these qualities.

The sign mentions another phenomenon that prevailed among the followers of Jesus. (57:27) The weightier explanation of this statement is that monastic asceticism, well known in Christian his-

tory, was a personal choice, an invention made by some of Jesus' followers who sought to win God's acceptance. Through it, they sought to steer themselves away from the burdens of this life and its many attractions. It was not something that God imposed on them in the first place. Yet when they made this choice, binding themselves to it, they were committed before God to observe its requirements such as purity, contentment, chastity, worship and piety; this so as to dedicate themselves to God's cause. However, such asceticism lost its grip on reality, and ended up as mere rituals devoid of spirituality. Many are those who make a show of it, without real substance. The fact is that only the very few are capable of rigorously fulfilling its requirements. (57:27) God does not value people by appearances and rituals; He assigns their value on the basis of their actions and intentions. He holds them to account on the basis of what they truly feel and how they actually conduct themselves. He alone knows the reality of what they harbour in their hearts.

Jesus Tells of the Advent of Muhammad

Chapter 61: The 109th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And when Jesus son of Mary said:*
O Children of Jacob!
I am the Messenger of God to you,
one who establishes as true
what was in advance of me in the Torah
and one who gives good tidings
of a Messenger to approach after me.
His name will be Ahmad.
But when he brought about the clear portents
to them, they said: This is clear sorcery! (61:6)

Commentary°

The chapter then mentions Jesus' message to establish that Jesus was sent to carry on Moses' earlier message, confirming what was revealed before him of the Torah. He was also given the task of paving the way for the final message, giving news of the Messenger who was to carry it, and serving as a link between the first and the last divine religions. (61:6) Therefore, his task was to carry the trust of the divine faith after Moses and then to give it to the Messenger whose coming he announced.

Thus we see how the divine faith moved from one stage to the next, with all the stages interrelated, moving in the same direction, stretching from heaven to the earth: a long chain moving from link to link. This is the proper image, one worthy of God's design and

constitution. It is basically the same approach, taking slightly different forms, according to what suits the needs, experience, knowledge and potential of humanity at each particular stage, until it reaches full maturity. Only then does the last stage arrive and the final form of divine faith be given: perfect, complete, addressing a mature mind that has benefited from all past experience. It opens the way so that the human mind works to its full potential within the method set for man and his abilities.

Jesus' Mission to the Children of Jacob Referred To

Madinah: *O those who believed! Be helpers of God*
as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples:
Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said:
We are the helpers for God.
Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob
and a section were ungrateful.
So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies.
And they became ones who are prominent. (61:14)

Commentary°

The helpers or disciples were Jesus Christ's pupils. It is said that they were twelve men who were close to him and who dedicated themselves to learning from him. They continued to spread his message and commandments after his term was over. This verse does not give us a detailed story: it simply outlines an attitude. Hence, we look at it in the context it is given and for the purpose it serves.

Place yourselves in this noble position to which He elevates you. (61:14) Is there a position that is higher and more noble than that of being a supporter of God and His cause? This bargain bestows an honor that is greater than heaven and its happiness. (61:14) They were chosen for this task and earned this honor. Jesus came to give the news of the last Prophet and the last religion. It is only fitting that Muhammad's followers should be chosen for this permanent task, just as Christ's disciples were chosen for it during their period of time. This is clearly apparent in the way the dialogue is presented in this verse.

But what was the result then? (61:14) The aim of this last address is to strengthen the resolve of the believers in the last religion, the heirs of the divine message. They are the ones charged with a great task, namely the implementation of God's system on earth. They are encouraged to come forward to support God's cause. Eventual victory is assured for believers who support God's cause.

Thus the [sign] concludes with a verse that fits the general context and drift of the chapter, yet has a special color and effect. It enriches an already rich variety of colors and effects.

The Messiah, son of Mary, is Not God

Chapter 5: The 112th Chapter Revealed

Certainly ungrateful are those who said:
Truly God is the Messiah, the son of Mary.
Say: Who then has a sway over God?
If He wanted to He would have caused to perish
the Messiah son of Mary and his mother
and whatever is in and on the earth altogether.
To God belongs the dominion f the heavens and the earth
and what is between the two.
He creates what He wills.
And God is Powerful over everything. (5:17)

Evidence from the Gospel

Madinah: *And We sent following in their footsteps,*
Jesus son of Mary, one who establishes as true
what was before him in the Torah.
And We gave him the Gospel in which is guidance and light,
and that which establishes as true
what was before him in the Torah
and a guidance and admonishment
for the ones who are God-conscious. (5:46)

Commentary°

It is also endorsed by the Gospel God revealed to Jesus, son of Mary, which contains: guidance and light, confirming what had already been revealed before it in the Torah and giving guidance and admonition to the God-fearing. (5:46) Let, then, the followers of the Gospel judge in accordance with what God has revealed therein.

Jesus Not the Son of God

Madinah: *And, certainly, were ungrateful those who said:*
Truly, God is He, the Messiah, son of Mary, but the Messiah said:
O Children of Jacob! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.
Truly, whoever ascribes partners with God, then, surely,
God forbade the Garden to him.
And his place of shelter will be the fire.
And for the ones who are unjust, there are no helpers. (5:72)
Certainly, ungrateful were those who said:

Truly, God is the third of three.
There is no god but One God.
And if they refrain not themselves from what they say,
there will afflict those who were ungrateful
among them a painful punishment. (5:73)
Will they not, then, turn to God for forgiveness
and ask for His forgiveness?
And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (5:74)
The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger.
Surely, Messengers passed away before him.
And his mother was a just person (f).
They both had been eating food.
Look on how We make manifest the signs to them.
Again, look on how they are misled! (5:75)
Say: Worship you other than God what controls
neither hurt nor profit for you?
And God, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (5:76)
Say: O People of the Book!
Go not beyond limits in your way of life
but with The Truth and follow not the desires of the folk who,
Surely, went astray before.
And they caused many to go astray.
And they themselves went astray from the right way. (5:77)

Commentary°

The Christ himself said: Children of Jacob, worship God, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever associates partners with God, God shall forbid him entrance into Paradise and his abode will be the Fire. Wrongdoers will have no helpers. (5:72) We see how Jesus Christ himself has warned them, but they paid no heed. After he departed from them, they followed the deviant path he warned them against, because it is certain to forbid them entrance into Paradise and make them suffer in the fire of Hell. They forgot what Christ told them: Children of Jacob, worship God, my Lord and your Lord. He declared to them that he and they stood in the same position of servitude to God, the One God who has no partners.

The Quran makes a final judgement on all their blasphemous claims. (5:73) It states the truth which constitutes the basis of every faith preached by every one of God's Messengers. It threatens them with the punishment prepared for those who make such blasphemous assertions and believe in them. The unbelievers are the ones who continue to make such assertions which God has ruled to be a clear denial of faith.

These stern warnings are followed by encouragement and persuasion. (5:74) The door to repentance and forgiveness is, thus, left open. God's forgiveness and mercy are certain to be forthcoming, if sought before it is too late.

Jesus Cursed the Ungrateful Among the Children of Jacob

Madinah: *Those who were ungrateful were cursed*
among the Children of Jacob by the tongue of David
and that of Jesus son of Mary.
That was because they would rebel
and they had been exceeding the limits. (5:78)

God Confirmed Jesus with the Hallowed Spirit

Madinah: *Mention when God said: O Jesus son of Mary!*
Remember My divine blessing on thee
*and on the one who is **your** mother,*
*when I confirmed **you**, Jesus, with the hallowed Spirit*
so that thou hast spoken to humanity from the cradle
and in manhood and when I taught thee the Book
and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel
and when thou hast created from clay
the likeness of a bird with My permission
and thou hast breathed into it
and it becomes a bird with My permission
and thou hast cured one blind from birth and the leper
with My permission and when thou hast brought out the dead
with My permission and when I limited the Children of Israel
*from **you** when **you** had drawn near them*
with the clear portents.
And those who were ungrateful among them said:
This is nothing but clear sorcery. (5:110)
Mention when I inspired the disciples:
Believe in Me and My Messenger.
They said: We believed and bear witness
that we are ones who submit to God. (5:111)
Mention when the disciples said:
O Jesus son of Mary!
Is thy Lord able to send down to us
a table spread with food from heaven?
Jesus said: Be God-conscious,
if you had been ones who believe. (5:112)
They said: We want that we eat of it so that our hearts be at rest

and we know that thou, surely, wast sincere to us and
that we be the ones who bear witness to that. (5:113)
Jesus son of Mary said: O God! Our Lord!
Cause to descend for us a table spread with food from heaven
that it will be a festival for the first of us
and the last of us and a sign from Thee. And provide us.
And Thou art Best of the ones who provide. (5:114)
God said:
Truly, I am One Who Sends Down to you.
But whoever is ungrateful after that among you,
then, I will punish him with a punishment
that I punish not anyone of the worlds. (5:115)

TEACHINGS OF JESUS CORRUPTED AFTER HIS DEPARTURE

Madinah: *And mention when God said: O Jesus son of Mary!*
Had ***you*** *said to humanity:*
Take me and my mother to yourselves other than God?
He would say: Glory be to You! It is not for me
that I say what there is no right for me to say.
If I had been saying it, then, surely, ***You*** *would have known it.*
You *have known what is in my sou*
and I know not what is in ***Your*** *Soul*
Truly, ***You, You*** *alone are Knower of the unseen.* (5:116)
I said not to them but what ***You*** *had commanded me of it:*
That you worship God, my Lord and your Lord.
And I had been witness over them
as long as I continued among them.
Then, when ***You*** *had gathered me to* ***Yourself,***
You *had been The Watcher over them.* ***You*** *are, truly,*
Witness over everything. (5:117)
If ***You*** *are to punish them, then, they are but Thy servants.*
And if Thou art to forgive them truly,
Thou, Thou alone art The Almighty, The Wise. (5:118)
God would say: This Day the ones who are sincere will profit
from their sincerity.
For them are Gardens beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.
God was well-pleased with them
and they are well-pleased with Him.
That is the winning the sublime triumph. (5:119)
To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth
and whatever is in and on them.

And He is Powerful over everything. (5:120)

Commentary°

The account given in these passages address Jesus, son of Mary, in front of all those who attributed to him divine status, worshipped him and weaved around him and his mother all sorts of exaggerated stories. The address reminds him of the grace God bestowed on him and on his mother, enumerating the miracles God gave him to help people to believe in his message. Yet some people denied his message most violently, while others were dazzled with the miracles he was given. On account of such miracles they elevated him to the status of a deity, when all miracles are given by God, who created him, gave him a message and supported him.

Here we have a full account of the various aspects of grace bestowed by God on Jesus and his mother, Mary. To start with, he was supported by the Holy Spirit in his infancy. Then, he was talking to people long before children normally start to talk, absolving his mother of all suspicion raised around her on account of his miraculous birth that had no parallel in history. He also talked to them later when as a grown man he was again supported by the Holy Spirit, Gabriel. He was also given knowledge of the Book and wisdom. He was born without knowledge of reading and writing, but God gave him that knowledge, as He imparted to him wisdom in order to deal with different situations in the best way. God also taught him the Torah which had been given to the Children of Israel and the Gospel which God gave him to confirm the Torah.

Furthermore, God gave Jesus several miraculous things that no human being could accomplish without God's support. Thus, he could fashion a bird shape of clay and breathe into it, and all at once it became a living bird. How did this happen? We do not know, because we still do not know how God creates life. Moreover, he adds quality to life: he cures a person born blind, by God's leave, when medicine does not know how to give eyesight to such a person. God, who gives human beings their faculty of seeing, is able to open a blind person's eyes to see the light. Jesus also cured the leper without using any medicine. Medication is merely a tool for accomplishing God's will of curing a patient, but the One who has willed to cure the patient is able to change the tools by which He accomplishes His purpose, or to achieve it without any tool. Again Jesus is able to restore life to the dead, by God's leave. The One who initiates life is able to restore it at any tune.

God further reminds Jesus of His favors when He extended His protection to him against the Israelites who, when he produced all

these miracles, denied him claiming that they were plain sorcery. On the one hand they did not wish to deny the miracles, witnessed by thousands of people, and yet they were too stubborn to submit to the message they imparted. God protected him and they were unable to kill or crucify him, as they were keen to do. God simply gathered him and elevated him to Himself. Another reminder to Jesus speaks of how God inspired the disciples to believe in Him and His Messenger, Jesus, and they do so, appealing to him to bear witness to their acceptance of the faith and total self-surrender to God. (5:111)

All these were favors God, out of His grace, gave to Jesus to serve as clear proof of his status and message. Many of his followers, however, used them erroneously, deviating from the truth and fabricating falsehood. Here Jesus is reminded of all these in the presence of the Supreme Company and in front of all mankind, including those people who exaggerated his status and attributed to him what was not his. When these favors are held in front of him, those who gave him a status far beyond his own humanity will see and hear, and, in consequence, they will be humiliated in the full sight of all humanity.

In addition to the favors bestowed on Jesus and his mother, the chapter relates some of the favors God granted to his followers, and the miracles with which God supported him, as seen by his disciples. (5:112-5:115)

Thus, God reminds Jesus, son of Mary, of His favors when h stands in front of his people on the Day of Judgement, with all creatures looking on: The disciples said: Jesus, son of Mary! Can your Lord send down to us a repast from heaven? (5:112) The disciples, the closest to Jesus of all his followers, were aware that he was a human being, born to Mary. They address him according to his status, which they knew very well. They knew that he was neither a son of God nor a deity, but a servant of God. They also knew that it was his Lord who accomplished all those miraculous events through him. He himself could not do any of them by his own initiative. Hence, when they requested a further miracle, they did not ask him to accomplish it himself, because they were aware that he could not do so. (5:112)

We note in Jesus's supplication how he makes his address with all the humility of a servant whose Lord has honored him. He first makes it clear that he recognizes Him, saying: God, our Lord! Then he states his appeal, requesting Him to give them a repast that would bring them joy and goodness, so as to be like a festival for everyone of them. He acknowledges that it would all be provided by God, the best of all providers. Jesus is thus shown to recognize his own status as a servant of God and to recognize God's status as Lord of all the

worlds. This is shown in front of all mankind, particularly his people on that great and eventful day.

God answers the prayer of his good servant, Jesus son of Mary, but with the seriousness that befits His majesty. They asked for a miracle, and He will give them the miracle they requested, on condition that He will severely punish anyone who continues to disbelieve after the miracle is granted. Indeed that punishment will surpass in severity any other punishment inflicted on any other of God's servants. (5:115)

This seriousness is important, so that requests for miracles are not made as idle talk. Moreover, those who ask for proof and continue to disbelieve after they have been given what they have asked for must not go unpunished. It has been God's law, applicable to all past communities, that those who continued to deny the messages preached by God's messengers after the miracles were given them were annihilated. In this instance, however, the statement may mean that they would be punished here in this life, or in the life to come.

The passage does not follow the account of the Repast after stating God's warning. It moves on to deal with the central issue of Godhead and Lordship, which permeates the whole passage. We go back now to that great scene which continues to be held up for all onlookers. We listen now to a straightforward questioning about the Divinity claimed for Jesus and his mother. The person now interrogated is none other than Jesus, facing those who worshipped him. They listen to him as he, surprised and amazed, disclaims before his Lord all knowledge of such a grievous sin they attach to him. He is, indeed, innocent and it is all fabrication:

And God will say: Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say to people, Worship me and my mother as deities beside God? [Jesus] answered: Limitless are You in Your glory! I could never have claimed what I have no right to [say]! Had I said this, You would certainly have known it. You know all that is within myself whereas I do not know what is in Yourself. Most certainly, it is You alone who fully knows all that lies beyond the reach of human perception. Nothing did I tell them beyond what You bade me [to say]: Worship God, who is my Lord and your Lord. I was witness to what they did as long as I lived in their midst. Then when You took me to Yourself, You have been watching over them. You are indeed a witness to all things. If You punish them, they are Your servants; and if You forgive them, You are indeed Almighty, Wise." (5:116-5:118)

Limitless is God in His glory! He knows very well what Jesus said to people. But this worrying interrogation on that fearful day is intended for people other than the one to whom it is addressed. Put-

ting it in this form adds to our abhorrence of the attitude of those who attributed Divinity to Jesus, God's noble and great servant. For anyone of God's servants to claim to be God, knowing that he is no more than a servant of God, is indeed a horrible offense that no normal human being could perpetrate. Is it conceivable, then, that one of God's messengers who were granted the strongest resolve should perpetrate it? Or is it even conceivable that this perpetrator should be Jesus son of Mary, when God gave him all those favors before and after he was chosen to bear His message? How does he feel when questioned about this claim of Godhead, when he is a good servant of God?

Therefore, his answer is tinged with awe and fear. He starts by glorifying God and follows this immediately with an absolute denial of any such thoughts or of any such claims: [Jesus] answered: Limitless are You in Your glory! I could never have claimed what I have no right to [say]! (5:116) In his own defense, he seeks God as witness to his innocence of such claims. He owns to his humble position of being only a servant to God who has all attributes of the Godhead. "Had I said this, You would certainly have known it. You know all that is within myself whereas I do not know what is in Yourself. Most certainly, it is You alone who fully knows all that lies beyond the reach of human perception." (5:116)

Now, after having made this long praise of God, he is able to state what he did and did not say, declaring that he said nothing to his community other than calling on them to worship God alone, and stating that, like them, he is no more than God's servant. "Nothing did I tell them beyond what You bade me [to say]: `Worship God, who is my Lord and your Lord." (5:117)

He then disclaims any responsibility for what they did after the end of his time on earth. Taken at face value, the Quranic text means that God gathered Jesus then elevated him to Himself. Some reports indicate that he is alive with God. In my view, there can be no contradiction between the two situations; for God may have determined that Jesus had completed his term of life on earth, and He may have taken him so that he be alive with Him. Martyrs die and finish their lives on earth, but they are alive with God. We do not know what form their life with God takes, nor do we know what form of life Jesus has; but he says here to his Lord that he does not know what they did or said after he was gathered from life on earth: "I was witness to what they did as long as I lived in their midst. Then when You took me to Yourself, You have been watching over them. You are indeed a witness to all things." (5:117)

He concludes with leaving the fate of his people absolutely to

God, stating at the same time that they are His servants and at His disposal. God is able to forgive them or to punish them. Whether He decides on one course or the other, that decision is based on His wisdom, which operates in the same measure whichever fate He determines for them. "If You punish them, they are Your servants; and if You forgive them, You are indeed Almighty, Wise." (5:118) This is all that Jesus, a model servant of God, says in this awesome position.

But where are those who invented such grave falsehood about Jesus in this whole scene? The passage does not mention them once. They may be feeling their ignominy and wish not to show themselves. We, therefore, leave them where the surah has left them. We will only look now at the final part in that remarkable scene:

God will say: This is the day when their truthfulness shall benefit all who have been truthful. Theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow, where they will abide forever. God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him. That is the supreme triumph. (5:119) The appropriate comment on the falsehood fabricated by liars against the noble Prophet Jesus, concerning the most serious issue of all, i.e. the issue of Godhead, is to state that truth will be of great benefit to its upholders on that awesome day. This is the day when their truthfulness shall benefit all who have been truthful.

This is God's word at the end of that interrogation beheld by all creatures. It is the final and decisive word. It is coupled with the reward that befits truthfulness and those who are truthful: Theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow, where they will abide forever. God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him. (5:119) Each of these phrases represents a grade above the previous one: the gardens with running waters, the everlasting abode there, the fact that God is pleased with them, and their pleasure with what they receive from Him. Hence the description, That is the supreme triumph. (5:119)

We have looked at this scene as it is portrayed in the unique style of the Quran and we have paid attention to the final word. We say that we have seen and paid attention because the Quranic method of portraying scenes and images does not leave it as merely a promise to be fulfilled or sentences and phrases to be read or heard. The Quran makes of it something to excite feelings and something to behold as if it were taking place now. However, if it is, as far as we human beings are concerned, a future event to be witnessed on the Day of Judgment, it is, for God's perfect knowledge, a present reality. Time and the screen of the future apply to us, not to God.

At the end of this passage and in contrast to the greatest falsehood ever perpetrated by the followers of any messenger, i.e. the falsehood of Christ's Divine nature, which he himself denounces and leaves all decision about which to God alone, a statement of truth is made. It provides the final note in the surah, declaring that dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that they contain belongs to God, the Lord of the universe who has full control over all things. Nothing limits His power: To God belongs all sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and all they contain. He has the power over all things. (5:120)

The Messiah is Not the Son of God

Chapter 9: The 113th Chapter Revealed

And the Jews said: Uzayr is the son of God
and the Christians said:
The Messiah is the son of God.
That is the saying with their mouths.
They conform to the sayings of those who were ungrateful before.
May God take the offensive. How they are mislead! (9:30)
They have taken to themselves their learned Jewish scholars
and their monks as lords other than God
and the Messiah son of Mary.
And they were only commanded to worship the One God.
There is no god but He!
Glory be to H
from the partners they ascribe with Him. (9:31)

The Companions of the Cave

Chapter 18: The 69th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *We relate this tiding to **you** with The Truth.*
Truly, they were male spiritual warriors
who believed in their Lord
and We increased them in guidance. (18:13)
And We invigorated their hearts when they stood up and said:
Our Lord is Lord of the heavens and the earth.
We will never call to any god other than He.
Certainly, we would have said an outrageous thing. (18:14)
These, our folk, took to themselves gods other than Him.
Why bring they not a clear portent of authority with them?
And who does greater wrong
than he who devised a lie against God? (18:15)
And when you withdrew from them and from what
they worship but God, then, take shelter in the cave.
Your Lord will unfold for you from His mercy
and will furnish you with a gentle issue in your affair. (18:16)
Thou wouldst have seen the sun when it came up.
It inclines from their cave towards the right
and when it began to set, it passed them towards the left
while they were in a fissure. That is of the signs of God.
He whom God guides, he is one who is truly guided.
And he whom He causes to go astray,
you will never find for him a protector
or one who will show him the way. (18:17)

Commentary°

This sums up the whole story showing its main lines and features. We learn from it that the people of the cave were youths, whose number is not mentioned, and that they went to the cave to isolate themselves from their community because they believed in God. We also learn that they were made to sleep in the cave for a number of years, which is not stated here, before they were aroused from their long slumber. We are told of two groups arguing about them, so they were awakened to make clear which of the two groups calculated their stay in the cave better. We are clearly told that, strange as their history is, it is not particularly marvellous among the miracles and signs given by God. Indeed there are numerous things that are much more marvellous and miraculous in the universe than the story of the cave people. Those youths are referred to in the chapter as 'the people

of the cave and the inscription'. A cave is a natural chamber in a mountain or under rocky ground, while the inscription refers, most probably, to the record of their names which was, perhaps, the one hung at the entrance of the cave, where they were eventually found.

The Companions of the Cave

Makkah: *Thou would assume them to be awake*
while they are ones who are sleeping.
We turn them around and around towards the right
and towards the left and their dog,
one who stretches out its paws at the threshold.
And if you were to peruse them,
you would have turned from them, running away,
and would, certainly, be filled with alarm of them. (18:18)
And, thus, it was that We raised them up
that they might demand of one another.
Said one who speaks among them:
How long lingered you in expectation?
They said: We lingered in expectation a day or a part of a day.
They said: Your Lord is greater in knowledge
of how long you lingered in expectation.
So raise up one of you and with this, your money,
send him to the city and let him look on which is the purest food.
Then, let him bring you provision from there.
And let him be courteous and cause not anyone to realize. (18:19)
Truly, if you become manifest to them,
they will stone you, or they will cause you to return to their creed
and you would not ever prosper. (18:20)
And, thus, We made their case known
that they know that the promise of God is true
and that, as for the Hour, there is no doubt about it.
Mention when they contend with one another about their affair.
They said: Build over them a structure.
Their Lord is greater in knowledge about them.
Those who prevailed over their affair said:
We, certainly, will take to ourselves over them
a place of prostration. (18:21)
They will say: They were three, the fourth of them being their dog.
And they will say: They were five,
the sixth of them being their dog,
guessing at the unseen. And they will say:
They were seven, the eighth of them being their dog.
Say: My Lord is greater in knowledge of their amount.

No one knows them but a few,
so altercate not about them but with a manifest argumentation
and ask not for advice about them of anyone of them. (18:22)

COMMENTARY°

With all that has been said and told, we have still not been informed of the duration of the sleepers' stay in their cave. Now we are told for certain: (18:25-18:26)

This is the truth of the length of their stay in the cave, given to us by the One who knows all secrets in the heavens and the earth. Well indeed He sees and hears. Perfect is His knowledge. His statement puts an end to the matter, leaving no room for dispute.

A final comment is added about the whole story in which we see faith in God's Oneness clearly apparent in all its details: (18:26)

The Companions of the Town

Messengers Before Referred to and How They Were Denied

Chapter 36: The 41st Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And propound a parable for them:*
The Companions of the Town
when ones who were sent drew near them. (36:13)
When We sent to them two, they denied them both,
so We replenished them with the third.
And they said: Truly, We are ones who are sent to you. (36:14)
They said: You are nothing but mortals
like ourselves and The Merciful caused not to descend anything.
You are but lying! (36:15)
They said: Our Lord knows
that we are ones who are sent to you. (36:16)
On us is only the delivering of the clear message. (36:17)
They said: Truly, we augered ill of you.
If you refrain not yourselves, we will, certainly, stone you.
Certainly, a painful punishment will afflict you from us. (36:18)
They said: Ones who auger ill will be with you!
Is it because you were reminded?
Nay! You are a folk, ones who are excessive. (36:19)
A man drew near from the farther part of the city,
coming eagerly. He said: O my folk!
Follow the ones who are sent! (36:20)
Follow whoever asks not of you any compensation
and they are ones who are truly guided. (36:21)
What is it for me that I worship not Him
Who originated me and to Whom you will be returned? (36:22)
Will I take gods to myself other than He
when, if The Merciful wants any harm for me,
their intercession will not avail me at all
nor will they save me. (36:23)
Truly, I would, then, be clearly going astray.(36:24)
Truly, I believed in your Lord so hear me! (36:25)
It was said: Enter the Garden.
He said: O would that my folk know (36:26)
that my Lord forgave me
and made me one who is honored! (36:27)
After him We caused not to descend on his folk
an army from heaven, nor had We been

ones who need to cause to descend again.(36:28)
It would be but one Cry and that is
when they were ones who are silent and still. (36:29)

Commentary°

A Historical Case

Having presented the issues of revelation and resurrection in the form of a factual statement, the chapter now presents them again in narrative form so as to touch hearts with a story about the fate of those who persist in denying the truth: (36:13-36:19)

The Quran does not mention which township this was or who were its people. Different reports suggest different towns and cities, but there is no real benefit in trying to establish its identity. The fact that the Quran neither identifies it nor mentions its location does not detract from the import of the story. It is a city to which God sent two messengers, just as He sent Moses and his brother Aaron to Pharaoh and his nobles. The people of the city rejected their message, accusing them of lying. God supported His two messengers with a third, confirming that they were truly His messengers. All three of them again presented their message, saying to the people: (36:14)

At this point, the people of the city aired the same objections that were given to God's messengers throughout history: (36:15) This oft-repeated objection to the fact that God sends human messengers to human communities betrays a naive understanding and ignorance of the nature of the messenger's role. People expected that both the personality and the life of the messenger should entail some deep secret which could feed their imaginations. In other words, they expected the unusual in such a way as attracted legend. Was he not a messenger sent from the heavens to the earth? How come, then, that he is just a simple ordinary person with no puzzling secrets surrounding him? He is no different from anyone else, no different from the multitude to be found everywhere.

Such thinking is certainly naive. Secrets and enigmas are not essential qualities for prophethood and divine messages; not in this childish way of thinking. There is indeed a great secret involved, but it is epitomized in the plain fact that an ordinary person is given the ability to receive revelations from on high once God has chosen him for that task.

The divine message is a code of living for a human community. The messenger's life represents a practical example of how this code is implemented. It is given as a model for people to follow. Since they are human, the messenger showing them this example must be human like them so that he sets the sort of example they can emu-

late.

Therefore, the Prophet's life was held open before his followers. The Quran records the main features of his life in their minute detail, so as to make it clear and available for future generations. These details include aspects of his home and personal life, and even, at times, his thoughts and feelings. In this way, even future generations would recognize the man behind the Prophet's personality.

Yet it was this simple and clear fact that invited people's objections. In this chapter, those who lived in the city said to their three messengers: (36:15) which meant that they were not truly messengers from God. They also said: (36:16) of what you claim. They further added: (36:15) when you claim to be messengers from God.

Certain that they said nothing but the truth, and knowing the remit of the mission assigned to them, the messengers replied: (36:16-36:17) It is sufficient that God knows. The task assigned to God's messengers is to deliver their message, and they did just that. People are then free to choose what they wish for themselves, and what burden their choices represent. Once the messengers have delivered their message, the matter is left to God to determine.

However, those who persist in denying the truth do not take matters in such a simple and easy way. They cannot tolerate the advocates of faith's presence. They resort to rough tactics in rejecting sound argument. The point is that falsehood is impatient, aggressive: . (36:18) We view your call with gloom, expecting it to bring evi' upon us. Unless you stop, we will no longer tolerate you: 'we wil surely stone you and inflict on you a painful suffering.' Thus falsehood declares its intentions, threatening those advocating divine guidance and resorting to heavy handed tactics in answering the quiet word of truth.

However, the task assigned to God's messengers requires them to proceed along their way: (36:19) Forebodings of evil as a result of a message being delivered or a face being encountered is nothing but ignorant superstition. The messengers tell them so, and make clear to them that their share of good or evil comes from within themselves. In other words it relates to their actions and intentions. It is up to them to increase their share of goodness or evil. What God wills for people comes from within themselves and from their own choices and actions. This is the truth based on a firm foundation. To associate bad omens with faces, places or words is superstitious nonsense.

The Messengers also said to them: (36:19) Would you stone us and torture us only because we remind you of the truth? Is this how you reward reminders? (36:19) You certainly exceed the limits of judgment if you reward a mere reminder with threats and punish-

ment, and requite advocacy of the truth with stoning and torture.

Welcome Support

Such was the response of hearts that would not open to God's message. It is such people that were mentioned at the outset of the chapter. The other type, who follow the reminder and fear God despite their inability to see Him, also have here a behavioral example to emulate: (36:20-36:25)

This is the response of sound human nature to the straightforward message of the truth: it reflects sincerity, simplicity, warmth and correct understanding. It shows us a man giving a positive response to the message, once he has recognized the elements of truth and sound logic in it. He points out these elements to his people as he addresses them. When he felt the truth of faith in his heart, he could not stay quiet or sit at home caring nothing while the truth was being rebuffed and falsehood upheld all around him. Instead he actively advocated the truth among his people, among those who were threatening the messengers with severe punishment. He travelled from the furthest end of the city to fulfil his duty, to call on his people to espouse the truth and to stop their opposition to it and aggression against God's messengers.

It is apparent that the man did not command a position of honor, power or influence among his people. He was an ordinary person motivated by faith to travel from one end of the city to the other to make his stand clear. (36:20-36:21) Anyone who advocates such a message, seeking no gain or reward, must be honest and sincere. What else could motivate him to undertake such trouble, enduring such opposition, unless he was required to do so by God? Why would he bear such a burden, confronting people with a faith that is unfamiliar to them, exposing himself in the process to threats, ridicule and persecution when he stood to make no gain nor earn any benefit?

Follow whoever asks not of you any compensation and they are ones who are truly guided. (36: 21) That they are guided aright is obvious: they advocate belief in the One God, following a clear system, and a faith that is free of ambiguity and superstition. Their way is clearly straight.

The man then speaks about himself, outlining the reasons that motivated him to believe, and appealing to sound human nature: (36:22-36:24) The question is posed by sound human nature which feels the presence of its Creator and the source of its existence: *What is it for me that I worship not Him Who originated me and to Whom you will be returned?* Why would I deviate from this natural way

which is the first to present itself to human nature? Needless to say, we are by nature attracted to our Creator and only deviates from Him under the pressure of some outside element. To turn to the Creator is the right and appropriate course, requiring no alien element or a pull from outside.

The man also feels by nature that a created being must in the end return to its Creator, in the same natural law that brings everything horning to its originator: *To Whom you will be returned* He wonders why he should not worship his Creator when he is bound to return to Him, as will we all. It is He who creates, and it is He who should he worshipped.

The man then looks at the opposite way, which is contrary to sound nature, only to find that it is nothing but manifest error: (36:23) Can anyone be in greater error than the one who abandons the way of sound nature which requires that a created being worship its Creator? Why would anyone choose to worship someone or something else unnecessarily? Indeed, the one who turns his back on the Creator, resorting instead to weak deities that cannot protect him, has gone far into error: *Truly, I would, then, be clearly going astray.* (36:24)

Now that the man has stated his case, speaking for sound human nature that is aware of the truth, he declares his own final decisio confronting his people who had threatened God's Messengers. T voice of sound nature in his heart was clearer and stronger than an threat: *Truly, I believed in your Lord so hear me!* (36:25) He wants them to witness his stand on the side of truth, implying that they too should follow his suit and declare themselves believers.

Killing an Innocent Man

The drift of the story suggests that the ungrateful then killed the man. The chapter, however, does not mention this clearly. Instead, it lets the curtain drop to cover this city, its people and their preoccupations. When the curtain rises again we see the martyr who spoke out clearly and loudly for the truth, confronting those in power. We see him in the next world and see the honor granted him by God, as fits a brave believer who does not hesitate to stand up for the truth: (36:26-36:27)

Thus this present life is connected to the life to come: Death is merely a transfer from this transitory world to the one that is everlasting. It is but a step that takes a believer from the narrowness of the earth to the expanse of heavens, from the tyranny of falsehood to the security of the truth, and from the darkness of ignorance to the light of certainty. When a person sees what God has in store for him

in heaven, he good-naturedly remembers his people, wishing that they could see the happiness and honor God has granted him so that they would know and accept the truth.

Such is the reward of faith. As for tyranny, it is too weak to require that God should send angels to destroy it: (36:28-36:29) The chapter does not speak in detail about how these people were destroyed. They are too insignificant to deserve such mention. They needed no more than one blast and no further trace of life was to be seen from them.

CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK BOOK 29

LALEH BA[illegible]IAR

CRITICAL T[illegible]NKING
AND THE
CHRONOLOGICAL QURAN
IN THE
LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

FROM BIRTH TO THE REVELATION

BOOK 29

(CA. 52-12 BH/CE 570-610)

INTRODUCTION BY
MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Book 29

Life of Prophet Muhammad
From Birth to the Revelation

Book
29

(ca. 52-12 BH/CE 570-610)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam. (USA)

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Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to Revelation

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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in the series. *The Year 1* to *The Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections (*ruku*) when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. The remaining books are: *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud*; *Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job*; *Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr* and *Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus* are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates and *Book 29: The Life of the Prophet from Birth to the Revelation. Book 30: Teacher's Manual*, has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq with notes by Ibn Hisham and Waqidi.

PREVIEW

Book 29 begins with the history of Arabia before the birth of the Muhammad in order to understand the political, economic and social setting of the revelation in which the Quran was revealed. It continues through the entire life of Muhammad until the age of forty when the revelation began.

Life of Prophet Muhammad From Birth to the Revelation

1. Overview of Arabia in the 6th Century CE

Arabia

Arabia is a peninsula located next to the African continent. It is bounded on the southwest by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, on the south by the Arabian Sea, and on the northeast by the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf. The total area is about 1,000,000 square miles. It is linked to Africa by the Sinai Peninsula and the Red Sea

Central Arabia, the land in which the Quran is revealed, consists of Najd (the high ground), Hijaz, between Najd and Tihamah, and Tihamah, on the eastern shores of the Red Sea and the border of the highlands. The peninsula contains what amounts to an ocean of soft sand. In the south there is a wilderness and desert which narrows in the center of the peninsula, forming a narrow passage which penetrates into the wilderness in the north. Between these two great wildernesses, which occupy almost two-thirds of the peninsula, is a relatively extensive sandy region which moves towards the Najd area. These oceans of sand are not quiet wildernesses but, rather, resemble stormy oceans. Currents of very calm streams cause such turmoil and chaos that the very life of every living creature is threatened.

The area of the Hijaz (literally, "the barrier") stretches from Aqaba to a point about 200 miles south of Makkah and includes Madinah (the City) which in the sixth century is called Yathrib. The Hijaz is the home of the descendants of Ishmael, the son of the Prophet Abraham and his wife Hagar, as well as that of Bedouin tribes, Jewish, Christian and idol worshippers.[1]

Traditional sources claim Makkah is founded by Hagar. Abraham takes her as his second wife with the permission of his first wife, Sarah, who, at that time, is unable to have children. Hagar becomes pregnant with Ishmael, whose name means 'God shall hear'. Sarah then tells Abraham that he will have to take her to another land. The Prophet Abraham travels forty camel days south of Canaan with Hagar to Makkah where he has been told by Gabriel that he is to rebuild the place of the House originally built by Adam.

Political System

Ishmael marries a woman from the Jurhum tribe. This tribe had originally come from Yemen. They assume the position of authority in Makkah, but, over time, they begin to practice injustices towards the people. The people eventually rid themselves of the Jurhumites who return to Yemen. Before they leave Makkah, however, they bury the Za-

mzam well and treasures of offerings that pilgrims had left in the Kabah. Leadership passes to the Khuzaah tribe. Pilgrims continue to visit Makkah at least once in a lifetime for the greater pilgrimage and any time during the year for the shorter pilgrimage according to God's commands to Prophet Abraham and Ishmael.

When the Jurhum had ruled over Makkah, the Khuzaah had migrated to Yemen. Once the Jurhumites are expelled, the Khuzaah tribe then returns to Makkah and assumes the authority there. They dig wells for water not being concerned to find Zamzam.

FOREIGN POLICY

Makkah is an area of interest and concern to two great powers—Christian Byzantine and the Zoroastrian Persian empire, and of one lesser power, that of Abyssinia, because of the economic and trade opportunities Makkah offers.

The Christian Byzantines want luxury items from the East that move through Persia. The Zoroastrian Persian empire wants to continue its economic prosperity because of its central position as the crossroads of overland routes from China and India, and of sea routes from India and Sri Lanka (Ceylon) by way of the Persian Gulf. Products from the East move from Persia to Makkah and then to Byzantium and Europe. In this way, Makkah is also a crossroads. Both the Byzantines and the Persians try to control it and engage in many battles in their attempts to do so. Makkah is the crossroads for trade through western Arabia to Syria and the Red Sea.

Internally, within the Arabian peninsula, the pilgrimage is one of its largest sources of revenues. People come from all over the Arabian peninsula for the annual pilgrimage to the now house of idols which had formerly been the House of God and the People when Prophet Abraham and Prophet Ishmael had been commanded to rebuild it. As a religious center of idol-worship with great economic and spiritual potential, the Kabah becomes the envy of other religious leaders in the peninsula. They set out to destroy it.

ECONOMIC CENTER

Makkah then becomes the financial and commercial capital of Arabia. The leaders are from the Quraysh tribe. The secret of their prestige is the military power they can exert against their opponents. This military power develops through the tribal confederacies among whom there exists treaties of mutual defense.

The other rulers are willing to join with them because of the

Quraysh's financial and business enterprises sending caravans to Yemen and Syria. In doing this, they often hire nomads from the various confederacies. They also pay the tribes for safe conduct through their territory and for water and other supplies. Intermarriage among them is not uncommon.

Religion

Control of Passions (hilm)

The Quraysh are the leaders of their community not only because of their business sense, but because underlying this is the practice of *hilm,* patient self-control, restraint, or their control of passion. This response to situations and people, however, comes from a perspective of the world that puts their tribe and blood relations as the highest authority. This belief results from their worshipping of idols and not the one God as taught by Abraham, Ishmael, and their followers.

In other words, the Quraysh leaders, for the most part, are people who practice the customs of their most immediate ancestors, and these customs include the worship of idols. A type of society develops which holds the tribe and blood-relations as the ultimate authority. Good and evil, positive and negative, become relative and can be summed up by "my fellow tribesman (or countryman), right or wrong" or "good because it is good for my tribe." The leaders of this society (or nation) are arrogant towards others because they are not "of their caliber." These are all signs of people who worship idols.

While Western historians have spoken highly of the pre-Quranic Arab nomads' sense of morality, what they fail to notice is that the morality they practice is one of the last remnants of Prophet Abraham's message, the direction and orientation of which they change so that it better suits their desire to worship idols.

Pre-Quranic Arabs, then, have a morality and very detailed rules of conduct by which they live and through which they judge any action—personal or tribal—as right or wrong. Their right and wrong, good and bad, however, lacks any kind of consistent theoretical basis, so that their rule of conduct becomes "X is good because the tribe with the most power says it is." Their maxim is, "Be loyal to your fellow-tribesmen, right or wrong."

As we shall see, the Quran refers to this code of conduct as one that leads to the worship of other than the One God.

Also, society is divided into classes and races. Depending upon their physical abilities, women are treated as property to be passed from per-

son to person. Female children are often buried alive because they are considered a disgrace. That is, a man who has female children will constantly have to defend them and seek retribution for any harm caused to them as a result of tribal wars. In addition to this, there is the understanding that, since females cannot protect the honor of the tribe as males can, the fewer the better. If a few manage to survive, those who come from "noble families" are given in marriage to settle tribal rivalries. Those who come from families who can only "afford to worship gods made out of dates," because they are so poor, are taught to sing and dance and are given as prizes to clever poets.

IDOL WORSHIP

The descendants of Ishmael increase in number, requiring people to move to outlying regions away from the Makkah valley. When they leave, they take stones from the Kabah area with them. These stones become idols or gods and goddesses for them and they begin to perform rites in honor of them. At the last stage, they move away from monotheism towards idolatry. Pilgrims, then, bring their idols with them to Makkah and set them up around the Kabah.

The idolaters make claims for their idols. They say that the idols will mediate for them. The approach to God, which is direct in monotheism, becomes more and more distant because it is separated by things that are supposed to intercede between the believer and God. This increasing of distance between the believer and God gradually causes the people to forget about the Day of Judgment and that they will be held accountable for their deeds on earth. They think that as long as they believe in and pray to their stone gods, they will be saved. People forget that they themselves made the stones or wood into gods. They forget to worship the God Who created them and the stones and the wood.

Over the centuries many of the tactics Prophet Abraham uses are either forgotten or so transformed that they no longer serve the worship of the One God. Monotheistic ethics suffers the same fate. As ethics serves as the common denominator in relations between God and people and between the individual and other individuals, it is important for the believer to understand how the direction of ethics is transformed from serving as the basis of the relationship to the One God to serving as the basis for the worship of self and/or multiple gods.

The people to whom the Prophets in the Arabian peninsula spoke are mainly nomadic tribes, people whose life is based on stock-breeding. They move their herds and flocks between one area to another in search

of water, from areas that in the summertime are waterless, sandy wastelands to areas in the wintertime that have vegetation for the animals.

As farming is not possible in Makkah due to the soil conditions, it becomes a commercial center. Some nomads move to the city and become sedentary while others continue their previous lifestyle. After Prophet Abraham and Prophet Ishmael rebuild the Kabah, the House of God and the People, Abraham returns to his wife, Sarah. Hagar is left with her baby, Ishmael. She exchanges Zamzam water for food from the caravans that would pass through Makkah beginning to make Makkah a commercial center. Once the Kabah is rebuilt, Makkah becomes a religious center, as well.

Hubal

In addition, about 400 years before the birth of Muhammad, this place of worship of the One God is transformed into a house for the worship of idols. This is recorded to have happened when one of the Khuzaah leaders, who is a descendant of the king of the Hijaz (northwestern section of Arabia including the cities of Makkah and Madinah), visits Syria, which is then also a center of idol-worship. He asks the Syrians to give him one of their gods and they give him a god named Hubal. He returns to Makkah and places the idol "on the roof of the [Kabah]. This idol was one of the chief idols of the ruling Quraysh. The idol was made of red agate and shaped like a human, but with the right hand broken off and replaced with a golden hand. When the idol was moved inside the [Kabah], it had seven arrows in front of it which were used for divination."[2]

The people to whom Abraham and Ishmael had delivered the message of the belief and worship of the One God to attain salvation again turn to idolatry.

History

> They say that the beginning of stone worship among the sons of Ishmael is when Makkah becomes too small for them and they want more room in the country. Everyone who leaves the town takes with him a stone from the sacred area to do honor to it. Wherever they settle they set it up and walk round it as they go round the Kabah. This leads them to worship whatever stones that please them and those which make an impression on them.
>
> Thus as generations pass they forget their primitive faith and adopt another religion in place of that of Abraham and Ishmael. They worship idols and adopt the same errors as the peoples before them. Yet

they retain and hold fast practices going back to the time of Abraham, such as honoring the Kabah and going round it, the great and little pilgrimage and the standing on Arafat and Muzalifa, sacrificing the victims, and the pilgrim cry at the great and little pilgrimage, while introducing elements which have no place in the religion of Abraham. Thus, Kinana and Quraysh use the pilgrim cry: At **Your** service, O God, at **Your** service (*bayk Allahumma labayk*)! At **Your** service, **You** without an associate. **You** own him and what he owns. They acknowledge His unity in their cry and then include their idols with God, putting the ownership of them in God's hand.

BAHIRA, SAIBA, WASILA AND HAMI

They also worship female idols:

HISTORY

The Bahira is the she-camel of a mother-camel known as Saiba: the Saiba is the she-camel that gives birth to ten female camels without an intervening male colt. She is set free, is never ridden, her hair is not shorn, and only a guest is allowed to drink her milk. If she gives birth to a she-camel after that, its ear is split and it is allowed to go its way with its mother, not ridden, hair unshorn, and only a guest may drink her milk as in the case of her mother. Such is the Bahira, the she-camel of the Saiba.

The Wasila is a ewe which has ten twin ewes in successive births without a male lamb intervening. She is made a Wasila. They use the expression *wasalat*. Any ewes which she gives birth to after that belong to the males, except that if one of them dies, all share in eating it, both males and females.

The Hami is a stallion who is the sire of ten successive fillies without an intervening colt. His back is taboo and he is not ridden; his hair is not shorn and he is left to run among the camels to mount them. Beyond that no use is made of him.[3]

The idolatry that is the prevalent religion among the pre-Quranic Arab nomads has penetrated their lives in various ways. The Kabah becomes the house of their idols. Every tribe has an idol there. It is recorded to have had 360 idols. The inside walls are decorated with drawings of the Virgin Mary, Jesus, angels, and the story of Abraham. Lat, Manat, and Uzza, which the Quraysh consider to be the daughters of the gods, are given special shrines.

Al-Lat was a carved white rock, enclosed within a building covered with curtains, and with attendants serving it. Surrounding the building

was a courtyard that the tribe of Thaqif living in Taif, as well as tribes in the surrounding area, venerated. They were considered exceptionally honored among Arab tribes, not however surpassing the Quraysh, for having it in their hometown. Needless to say, the Quraysh had the greater honor of having the Kabah, built by Abraham, in their city. It is thought that the name al-Lat was considered as being the feminine form of God's Arabic name, God (Allah).

Al-Uzza was a tree around which a building was built and with curtains raised. It was at Nakhlah, between Makkah and Taif. The Quraysh in particular used to venerate al-Uzza. After the Battle of Uhud, the Quraysh leader stood boasting: We have al-Uzza, but you have no Uzza, but the Messenger instructed his Companions to reply by saying: God is our protecting Master, but you have no master to protect you. It is thought that the name al-Uzza was the feminine form of God's name, al-Aziz, meaning the Almighty.

Manat was stationed at a place called al-Mushallal in Qadid, between Makkah and Madinah. The tribes of Khuzaah, al-Aws and al-Khazraj used to venerate it in their pre-Islamic days, and used to start their pilgrimage from there. The Quraysh also put the idol Hubal inside the Kabah.

Not only does every tribe have a special idol, but every family, in addition to worshipping the tribal god, worships a family god. These consist of everything from the stars to the moon to the sun to stone to wood to earth to dates and various statues. The Quraysh and the other Arabs attend to these idols in the Kabah and other centers. They hold ceremonies for them, circumambulate them, sacrifice for them. Every year, each tribe chooses a person, through great ceremony, to be the sacrifice of the gods. After they are sacrificed, they are buried near the place of sacrifice.

Just as they cover over the truth and the way of their natural disposition, just as they transform the House of God into the house of idol-worship, so they change the direction and orientation of the ethics and morality practiced by Prophet Abraham and the prophets who follow him, ethics which serve as a vital link to the belief in the One God.

In addition to the idol worshippers, there is another religious group that called itself the Hums. Ibn Ishaq says:

The Hums

History I do not know whether it is before or after the year of the elephant that Quraysh invent the idea of Hums and put it into practice.

They say: We are the sons of Abraham, the people of the holy territory, the guardians of the temple and the citizens of Makkah. No other Arabs have rights like ours or a position like ours. The Arabs recognize none as they recognize us, so do not attach the same importance to the outside country as you do to the sanctuary, for if you do the Arabs will despise your taboo and will say: They have given the same importance to the outside land as to the sacred territory. So they give up the halt at Arafa and the departure from it, while they recognize that these are institutions of the pilgrimage and the religion of Abraham.[3]

Disregard Staying Arafat

They consider that other Arabs should halt there and depart from the place. They say: We are the people of the sanctuary, so it is not fitting that we should go out from the sacred territory and honor other places as we, the Hums, honor that for the Hums are the people of the sanctuary. They then proceeded to deal in the same way with Arabs who were born within and without the sacred territory. Kinana and Khuzaah joined with them in this.[4]

They Introduce Innovations

The Hums go on to introduce innovations for which they have no warrant. They think it wrong that they should eat cheese made of sour milk or clarify butter while they are in a state of taboo. They do not enter tents of camel-hair or seek shelter from the sun except in leather tents while they are in this state. They go further and refuse to allow those outside the sacred area to bring food in with them when they come on the great or little pilgrimage. Nor could they circumambulate the house except in the garments of the Hums. If they have no such garments they have to go round naked. If any man or woman felt scruples when they have no hums garments, then they could go round in their ordinary clothes but they have to throw them away afterwards so that neither they nor anyone else can make use of them.[5]

These clothes are called "the cast-off" and are to be destroyed. They also have the option to circumabulate the Kabah naked:

> The men at least went naked while the women laid aside all their clothes except a shift wide open back or front.

In another report, it is said that:

> Outsiders circumambulate the Kabah naked, both men and women. The ibn Amir ibn Sasaa and Akk are among those who did

thus. When a woman went round naked she puts one hand behind her and the other in front.

They are called Hums because of the strictness of their religion.

If one of them before and at the beginning of the Quranic message is in a state of taboo if he happens to be one of the house dwellers, i.e. living in houses or villages, he digs a hole at the back of his house and goes in and out by it and not enter by the door. The Hums say: Do not respect anything profane and do not go outside the sacred area during the pilgrimage. They cut short the rites of the pilgrimage that have been since the time of Abraham and Ishmael.[6]

Ignorance (jahl) vs. Control of Passions (hilm)

To the pre-Quranic Arab idol-worshipper, any change in the status quo is seen as undesirable because it interferes with the existing social order even if it is to continue to use a social practice, but for a different reason or with a different intent by reframing it.

The ethics of the Prophets is the ethics of *hilm*—the moral reasonableness of a religiously cultured monotheist. Being such means controlling one's passions, being patient, because these are qualities that God manifests through divine ethics and qualities that God asks a believer to manifest towards others. The ethics of the pre-Quranic idol-worshipper, who is steeped in tribal solidarity, is also to control one's passions, but it is done because it is considered to be part of tribal honor and not because of the ethics of the One God.

In other words, the response is the same—to control one's passions—but the response or 'effect' comes from a different intention or cause or perception of the universe. The perception of the Prophets is the One God; the perception of the idol-worshipper is tribal honor or national pride without considering God.

The Quran refers to Prophets Abraham, Isaac, and Jethro as being *halim*, forbearing, the noun form of *hilm*, meaning they are patient in adversity. *Hilm* means "the act of reining one's soul and holding back one's nature from the violent emotion of anger."[7] Or, "the state of the soul remaining tranquil so that anger cannot move it easily and its being undisturbed on the occurrence of any calamity, the state of calm tranquility notwithstanding attack of anger; being slow in requiting the wrongdoer."[8]

The basis for *hilm* is the belief in the One God, the Creator of the universe. It is to counsel to the Golden Rule (*ihsan*) in relations to others

(i.e. following the Golden Rule) with an emphasis on justice and the preventing of wrongful violence while counseling the self to abstinence and the control of passions. It includes concepts like forbearance, patience, and liberating the self from being moved and stirred by the smallest provocation.

This is the direction and orientation of the true *halim*. The true *halim* develops confidence in reason because of the sense of *taqwa* or God-fearingness. Without reframing this quality, the moral reasonableness of a religiously cultured person may be that of a false belief known as zealotry.[9]

COMMENTARY°

> Zealotry [in the Quran] refers to that haughty spirit of a tribal man, the vehement insolence and pride so characteristic of the old pagan Arabs, the most stubborn resistance against all that showed the slightest signs of injuring their sense of honor and tending to destroy the traditional ways of life. It is to be remarked that this spirit of passionate resistance is here made to contrast sharply with the calmness of soul sent down from heaven upon the believers and their spiritual disposition to maintain control over themselves in critical situations, to conquer their own passions and to remain tranquil and forbearing in the name of religion.
>
> From the standpoint of Muhammad, the Age of Ignorance (*jahiliyyah*) is a bland, savage passion which characterizes those who 'do not know to distinguish between good and bad, who never ask pardon for the evil they have done, who are deaf to the good, dumb to the truth, and blind to heavenly guidance.'[9] In his view, it is this dark blind passion that has inspired endless blood-feuds, and causes countless miseries and disasters in the history of the pre-Quranic Arabs. It is the real fountainhead of all the barbarous practices of pagan days.[10]

Some pre-Quranic Arabs cultivate the *hilm* of Prophets Abraham and Ishmael for the right reason: in devotion to the One God. They become known, just as Prophet Abraham is known, as being a monotheist (*hanif*).

Other pre-Quranic Arabs cultivate the positive trait of *hilm* in order to use it as a means of power. It is what separates them from the ignorance of others. This then gives them a position of leadership because they can control their passions. However, they are controlling their passions in order to impress others and thereby use and exploit them.

618 Makkah: *And He is God in the heavens and in and on the earth. He knows your secret and what you openly publish*

and He knows whatever you earn. (6:3)

People in a state of *jahl* (not controlling their passions and/or exhibiting an unyielding spirit of rivalry and arrogance) leads them to practicing infidelity to the One God (*kufr*).

618 Makkah: *So he perused and saw him amidst hellfire.* (37:55)
*He said: By God, **you** were about to deal me destruction!* (37:56)

Commentary°

In this passage we see that the people of Lot, that is, the people of Sodom described as behaving in a characteristically ignorant way, "approaching" as they do "men with lust rather than women" which is an abominable sin according to the Quran message. Here it may suffice to note in this example too what is primarily understood under the word 'ignorance' is a man who goes to any extremes at the mercy of his own passions, and that not ignorance—while you can see—i.e. being fully aware of the fact that by acting in this way he is approaching an abominable sin. This example is of particular significance in our present context in that it shows clearly that ignorance . . . .implies the act of ignoring willfully the moral rule of forbearance (*hilm*).[11]

618 Makkah: *Surely, We know that what they say disheartens **you**.*
*Truly, they deny **you** not. Rather the ones who are unjust*
negate the signs of God. (6:33)
And certainly Messengers before you were denied
yet they endured patiently that they were denied
and they were afflicted with torment
until Our help approached them.
And no one who will change the Word of God.
And certainly there has drawn near to you
from tidings of the ones who were sent.(6:34)
*If their turning aside had been troublesome to **you**,*
*then, if **you** were able, be looking for a hole in the earth*
*or a ladder to heaven so that **you** would bring them some sign.*
If God willed, He would have gathered them to The Guidance.
*Be **you** not among the ones who are ignorant.* (6:35)

Commentary°

The commentary of al-Baidawi explains this last sentence by paraphrasing it in this way: Be you not one of the ignorant by desiring what is naturally impossible to obtain and by getting impatient in those situations to which it is patience that is most befitting, for that is a

characteristic act of those who are ignorant.

It may be remarked that this is a passage in which God consoles and admonishes at the same time the Prophet who utterly distressed and disappointed at the stubborn turning away of his folk, is beginning to take a gloomy view of the future. God reminds him that there were many Prophets before him who suffered from the same sort of adverse fortune, that they however endured it patiently putting absolute confidence in the Providence of God. And He ends by commanding Muhammad to follow their example and not to get impatient in vain. It will be evident, then, that ignorance in this passage also means a man whose mind tends to be easily thrown into agitation by the operations of anger, grief, desperation or any other emotion.[12]

Ignorance is characterized by the blind, savage passion of those who cover over the natural means to distinguish between positive and negative, who never seek forgiveness for the evil they do, who turn away from the positive in disgust, dumb to the truth, their hearts blind to divine guidance. This ignorance develops into an arrogant sense of honor which is prevalent among the pre-Quranic Arab nomad. It is to take pride in human power, to have an over supply of self-confidence, and sense of self-sufficiency developing into a refusal to bow down before God and an arrogance towards one's inferiors.

Just as Prophets before him have emphasized, Prophet Muhammad is to say: Believe in the One and Only God and be saved from the ignorant superstitions into which you have fallen. The idol-worshippers have covered over the truth of their original belief in the after-life because they have become so attached to the world and worldly things. The Quran spells this out:

619 Makkah: *Had you considered he who took to himself*
his own desire as his god
and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge,
sealed over his having the ability to hear
and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight?
Who, then, will guide him after God?
Will you not, then, recollect? (45:23)

MONOTHEISM

MONOTHEISM (TAWHID) VS. INGRATITUDE (KUFR)

The Quranic message is to replace love of this world with a sincerity that is derived from the awareness of the approach of the Day of Judg-

ment. With this message, guarding against evil (*taqwa*), becomes a key word. People who hear the call to practice guarding against evil are shown the possibility for a genuine nobility of character and personality by not acting impulsively or squandering their wealth. The summons is to live with moral sincerity, being ever conscious of the Day of Judgment. This is the ethical principle upon which the monotheistic perception of the world is based.

Monotheists Among the Quraysh

History records exceptions to idolatry among the Quraysh. These exceptions are the people who are known as *hunafa* (sing., *hanif*) or monotheists. They are people who have continued to follow the religion of Prophet Abraham even though most of their society and tribe are idol-worshippers. They are people who also "control their passions" through developing the ethic of *hilm* but they do so because of an innate sense of "guarding against evil" (*taqwa*) and belief in the One God.

Abd al-Muttalib, the Quraysh leader from the Hashim clan, is recorded to have been among the *hanif*. He is known for his *hilm* which he cultivates within himself, because of his perspective on life, which includes the One God Who is *al-Halim*, forebearing, patient and long-suffering.

Four Men Who Broke With Idol Worship

Shortly before the appearance of Muhammad, several men were not only seeking after the true faith (the religion of Abraham), but are in the mediate expection of the coming prophet. Of such inquirer among the Quraysh, Muslim biographies specify four.[13]

History

One day when the Quraysh assemble on a feast day to venerate and circumambulate the idol to which they offer sacrifices, this being a feast which they hold annually, four men draw apart secretly and agree to keep their counsel in the bonds of friendship. They are (i) Waraqa ibn Nawfal ibn Luayy; (ii) Ubayd Allah ibn Jahesh ibn Khuzayma, whose mother was Umayma bint Abd al-Muttalib; (iii) Uthman ibn al-Huwayrith ibn Qusayy; and (iv) Zayd ibn Amr ibn Kab ibn Luayy.

They are of the opinion that their people had corrupted the religion of their father Abraham, and that the Black Stone that they circumambulate is of no account. It can neither hear, nor see, nor hurt, nor help. They say: Find for yourselves a religion for by God you have none.

So they go their several ways in the lands, seeking the monotheists (*hunafa*), the religion of Abraham.[14]

WARAQA IBN NAWFAL IBN LUAYY

Waraqa becomes a Christian and studies its scriptures until he has thoroughly mastered them.

UBAYD ALLAH IBN JAHESH IBN KHUZAYMA

Ubayd Allah (by his mother a grandson of Abd al-Muttalib) embraces the Quranic message, emigrates with his family in the faith to Abyssinia, and there converts to Christianity.[15]

UTHMAN IBN AL-HUWAYRITH IBN QUSAYY

Uthman ibn al-Huwayrith goes to the Byzantine emperor and becomes a Christian. He is given high office there.

ZAYD IBN AMR IBN KAB IBN LUAYY

Zayd ibn Amr, a cousin of Umar, stays as he was. He accepts neither Judaism nor Christianity. He abandons the religion of his people and abstains from idols, animals that have died, blood, and things offered to idols. He forbids the killing of infant daughters, saying that he worships the God of Abraham, and he publicly rebukes his people for their practices. A woman says she saw him as a very old man leaning his back on the Kabah and saying: O Quraysh, By Him in whose hand is the soul of Zayd, not one of you follows the religion of Abraham but I.[16]

Then he says: O God, if I know how you wish to be worshipped I would so worship you, but I do not know. Then he prostrates himself on the palms of his hands. I am told by one of the family of Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl that when Zayd faces the Kabah inside the mosque, he would say: Here I am! (*labbayka*) in truth, in worship and in service. I take refuge in what Abraham took refuge when he stands and faces the *qibla*. Now al-Khattab had harassed Zayd that he forced him to withdraw to the upper part of Makkah, and he stopped in the mountain of Hira facing the town. Al-Khattab gave instructions to the young irresponsible men of Quraysh that they should not let him enter Makkah and he was able to do so in secret only. When they got to know of that, they told al-Khattab and drove him out and harassed him because of their fear that he would show their religion in its true colors and that some would join him in seceding from it. He said, making much of its sanctity against those of his people who treated it as ordinary.

Then he went forth seeking the religion of Abraham, questioning monks and rabbis until he had traveled to al-Mausil and the whole of Mesopotamia. Then he goes through the whole of Syria until he comes

to a monk in the high ground of Balqa. This man is well instructed in Christianity. He asks him about the monotheists, the religion of Abraham, and the monk replies: You are seeking a religion to which no one today can guide you, but the time of a Prophet who will come forth from your own country which you have just left has drawn near. He will be sent with the monotheists, the religion of Abraham, so stick to it, for he is about to be sent now and this is his time.

Now Zayd has sampled Judaism and Christianity and is not satisfied with either of them so at these words he went away at once making for Makkah, but when he was well inside the country of Lakhm he was attacked and killed before the rebuilding of the Kabah.[17]

2. Genealogy of the Messenger from the Prophets of Monotheism[18]

Muhammad's Pure Descent from Adam

Abu Muhammad Abdul-Malik ibn Hisham the Grammarian said: This is the book of the biography of the Prophet of God.

Muhammad was the son of Abd Allah, ibn Abd al-Muttalib (whose name was Shayba), ibn Hashim (whose name was Amr), ibn Abdu Manaf (whose name was al-Mughira), ibn Qusayy (whose name was Zayd), ibn Kilab, ibn Murra, ibn Kab, ibn Luayy, ibn Ghalib, ibn Fihr, ibn Malik, ibn al-Nadr, ibn Kinana, ibn Khuzayma, ibn Mudrika (whose name was Amir), ibn Ilyas, ibn Mudar, ibn Nizar, ibn Maadd, ibn Adnan, ibn Udd (or Udad), ibn Muqawwam, ibn Nahur, ibn Tayrah, ibn Ya'rub, ibn Yashjub, ibn Nabit, ibn Ishmael, son of Abraham, the friend of the Compassionate, ibn Tarih (who is Azar), ibn Nahur, ibn Sarugh, ibn Rau, ibn Falikh, ibn Aybar, ibn Shalikh, ibn Arfakh-shadh, ibn Sam, ibn Nuh, ibn Lamk, ibn Mattushalakh, ibn Akhnukh, who is the prophet Idris according to what they allege, but God knows best (he was the first of the sons of Adam to whom prophecy and writing with a pen were given), ibn Yard, ibn Mahlil, ibn Qaynan, ibn Yanish, ibn Shith, ibn Adam.

Ishmael son of Abraham begat twelve sons: Nabit the eldest, Qaydhar, Adhbul, Mabsha, Misma, Mashl, Dimma, Adhr, Tayma, Yajur, Nabish, Qayd-huma. Their mother was Rala d. Mudad ibn Amr al-Jurhuml. Jurhum was the son of Yaqtan ibn Aybar ibn Shalikh, and [Yaqtan was] Qahtan ibn Aybar ibn Shalikh. According to a report, Ishmael lived 130 years and when he died he was buried in the sacred precincts of the Kabah beside his mother Hagar.

Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn Ubaydullah ibn Shihab al-Zuhri told me that Abdul-Rahman ibn Abdullah ibn Kab ibn Malik al-Ansari, also called al-Sulami, told him that the Prophet of God said: When you conquer Egypt treat its people well, for they can claim our protection and kinship. I asked al-Zuhri what the Prophet meant by making them our kin and he replied: Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, was of their stock.

Ad ibn Aus ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Nuh and Thamud and Jadis the two sons of Abir ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Nuh, and Tasm and Imlaq and Umaym the sons of Lawidh ibn Sam ibn Nuh are all Arabs. Nabit ibn Ishmael begat Yashjub and the line runs: Yarub-Tayrah-Nahur-Muqawwam-Udad-Adnan.

From Adnan the tribes descended from Ishmael split off. Adnan had two sons, Maadd and Akk. Maadd had four sons: Nizar, Qudaa (he being his first born he was called Abu Qudaa), Qunus, and Iyad.

Qudaa went to the Yemen to Himyar ibn Saba whose name was Abd al-Shams; the reason why he was called Saba was that he was the first among the Arabs to take captives. He was the son of Yashjub ibn Yarub ibn Qahfan. Of Qunus ibn Maadd according to the genealogists of Maadd, none has survived. Al-Numan ibn al-Mundhir king of al-Hira belonged to their tribe. Al-Zuhri told me that this Numan belonged to the Qunus ibn Maadd.

Yaqub ibn Utba ibn al-Mughira ibn al-Akhnas told me that a shaykh of the Ansar of ibn Zurayq told him that Umar ibn al-Khattab, when he was given the sword of al-Numan ibn al-Mundhir, sent for Jubayr ibn Matim ibn Adiy ibn Naufal ibn Abdu Manaf ibn Qusayy (he being the best genealogist of the Qunaysh and indeed of all the Arabs and claimed to have been taught by Abu Bakr who was the greatest genealogist of the Arabs) and girded it on him. When he asked who al-Numan was, Jubayr replied that he was a survivor of the tribe of Qunus ibn Maadd. However, the rest of the Arabs assert that he belonged to the Lakhm of the Rabia ibn Nasr. Only God knows the truth.[19]

3. Muhammad's Immediate Ancestors

Qusayy (400-480 CE)

When Hulayl from the Khuzaah tribe is leader in Makkah, he gives his daughter to a man named Qusayy, who is from the Quraysh tribe. Qusayy proves to be a powerful leader who defeats Hulayl's sons for control of Makkah and guardianship of the Kabah.

Qusayy then places his brothers in prominent positions in Makkah. These men include his brother, Zuhrah, his uncle Taym, the son of another uncle, Makhzum, and several other cousins. These are the first people known as the Quraysh. Some of them are called the Quraysh of the Hollow because they live near the Kabah. Other are called the Quraysh of the Outskirts as they live in the surrounding hills .

Acting as the supreme ruler, Qusayy then has dwellings built around the Kabah similar to his House of Assembly. The people of Makkah all pay Qusayy a tax on their herds, the money of which he uses to feed pilgrims who come who are too poor to provide sustenance for themselves.

Among Qusayy's four sons, the one who shows the greatest promise of leadership is named Abd al-Manaf ibn Qusayy. Qusayy himself, however, prefers his older son, Abd al-Dar. When Qusayy is dying, he appoints his son, Abd al-Dar ibn Qusayy, to be in charge of the pilgrims and the Kabah, and he gives him the House of Assembly.

Hashim ibn Abd al-Manaf (464-497 CE)

The Alliance of the Perfumed Ones and the Alliance of the Confederates

Abd al-Manaf accepts his father's decision, but among the grandchildren of Qusayy, the sons of Abd al-Manaf (namely Abd al-Shams, Hashim, al-Muttalib and Nawfal), Hashim, again shows qualities of leadership lacking in the sons of Abd al-Dar. A dispute arises when those who support Abd al-Manaf's son, Hashim, demand the rights be turned over to him, while others claim the rights for Abd al-Dar.

The women on Abd al-Manaf's side take a bowl of perfume to the Kabah. Hashim, his brothers, and all his supporters dip their hands in the perfume and swear an oath to one another, promising never to abandon each other. In sealing the agreement, they rub their hands over the Kabah. They become known as the Perfumed Ones. The supporters of Abd al-Dar swear an oath to each other and they become known as the Confederates. Agreement is then reached between the Perfumed Ones and the Confederates.

The Asad, Zuhrah, Taym and Harith Clans were with the Abd al-

Manaf Clan or the Perfumed Ones, while with Abd al-Dar were with the Makhzum, Sahm, Jumah and Adiyy Clans as the Confederates. Amir ibn Luayy and Muharib ibn Fihr remain neutral.

The two groups agree that violence is to be forbidden in the area of the Kabah, which extends several miles in diameter outside of Makkah. It is further agreed that the sons of Abd al-Manaf should have the right to collect the tax on any herds and from that, to provide food for the pilgrims. The sons of Abd al-Dar are to continue to hold the keys to the Kabah and the House of Assembly.

THE TIME OF THE ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE

When the time approaches for the annual pilgrimage, and the collection of the tax on their herds, Hashim stands up and says to the people: O men of Quraysh, you are neighbors of God, the people of His House. God's visitors come to you at this feast, people who are pilgrims to His House. They are the guests of God and no guests have more claim on your generosity than God's guests. If my own wealth were sufficient, I would not burden you with the tax.

It is Hashim who organizes two caravans: one from Makkah to Yemen and one from Makkah to Palestine and Syria through northwest Arabia. One of the first stops of the summer caravan is eleven camel days north of Makkah in a place called Yathrib, later known as Madinah. At the time of Hashim, an Arab tribe from southern Arabia is the leading tribe of Yathrib. This tribe rules over idol-worshipping and Jewish tribes. The Jewish tribes live in the area in prosperity while they remain faithful to Judaism.

The rulers of Yathrib are known as the Qaylah Clan. They are divided into two branches—the Aws and the Khazraj Clans. On one of the caravan journeys, Hashim stops in Yathrib (Madinah) and asks for the hand of the daughter of the leader of the Khazraj tribe. Her name is Salma bint Amr. She is from the Najjar tribe of Yathrib. She agrees to the marriage on condition that she remain in complete control of her own property. He agrees and they are married. She remains in Yathrib while he lives in Makkah. She bears a son whom she names Shayba whose name means 'the old one' or 'white-haired' because he has a white streak of hear in the midst of black hair. Hashim does not live long after the birth of Shayba, dying in Gaza, Palestine on one of his journeys.

Hashim's two full brothers are Abd al-Shams and al-Muttalib, and his half-brother is Nawfal. Abd al-Shams spends his time in trade with Yemen and later with Syria. Nawfal deals with the trade route to Iraq.

Al-Muttalib then takes over the leadership of Makkah and the pilgrimage. After a few years in this position, al-Muttalib begins looking among his family for someone who can assume the leadership after him. Everything points to Shayba, the son of his deceased brother.

When al-Muttalib goes to Yathrib (Madinah) to take his brother's son, Shayba, Shayba's mother refuses to let her son do.

History

al-Muttalib, Shayba's uncle, argues with Shayba's mother that his nephew is now old enough to travel and is as an exile away from his own tribe who are the people of the House, of great local reputation, holding much of the government in their hands. Therefore, it is better for the boy that he should be among his own family. al-Muttalib refuses to go without Shayba. It is popularly asserted that Shayba refuses to leave his mother without her consent. She ultimately gives-in. So his uncle takes him away to Makkah. Shayba rides behind al-Muttalib on his camel. When the people see them coming, they say: It's al-Muttalib's servant whom he has bought. That is how he got the name of Abd al-Muttalib. His uncle calls out: Rubbish! This is my nephew whom I have brought from Madinah.[20]

4. Muhammad's Life Before the Revelation

The Land

Makkah

Within the great mountain range which skirts the Red Sea, and midway between the Yemen and the Syrian border, lies Makkah with and the Kabah. The traveler from the seashore approaches the sacred valley by an almost imperceptible rise of about fifty miles, chiefly through sandy plains and defiles hemmed in by low hills of gneiss and quartz rocks, which reach in some places the height of four or five hundred feet. Passing Makkah, and pursuing still an eastward course, he proceeds with the same gentle rise between hills of granite through the valley of Mina, and in five or six hours arrives at the mount of Arafat. Onwards the hills ascend to a great height, till about eighty miles from the sea the granite peaks of Jabal Qura crown the range, and Taif comes in sight thirty miles farther east. Between Jabal Qura and Taif, the country is fertile and lovely. Rivulets every here and there descend from the hills; the plains are clothed with verdure, and adorned by large shady trees.

Fertility of Taif

Taif is famous for its fruits. The grapes are large and of a delicious flavor; and there is no want of variety to tempt the appetite, for peaches, pomegranates, apples and almonds, figs, apricots and quinces, grow in abundance and perfection. Far different is it with the frowning hills and barren valleys for many a mile round Makkah.

Sterility of Makkah

Stunted brush wood and thorny acacias occasionally relieve the eye, and furnish a scanty repast to the camel; but the general features are rugged rocks without a trace of foliage, and sandy stony glens from which the peasant looks in vain for the grateful returns of tillage.

Valley of Makkah

In its immediate vicinity the hills are formed of quartz and gneiss, but a little to the east, grey strata of granite appear, and within one or two miles of the city, lofty and rugged peaks shoot upwards in grand masses. The valley is about two miles in length. The general direction and slope are from north to south, but the upper or northern extremity on the way to Arafat bends eastward while at the lower end, where the three roads from the Yemen, Jeddah, and Syria meet, there is a still more decided curve to the west. Here the valley opens out to the breadth of

half a mile. In this spacious amphitheater, shut in by rugged hills, lies the city with the Kabah in its center. Rocks rise precipitously all around, reaching on the eastern side a height of five hundred feet. It is here that the craggy defiles of Abu Qubays, the most lofty of the hills encircling the valley, overhand the quarter of the town in which Abd al-Muttalib and his family live.

CLIMATE

Though within the tropics, Makkah has not the advantage of tropical showers. The rainy season begins about December, but the clouds do not at any time discharge their precious freight continuously or with regularity. Sometimes the rain descends with excessive violence and inundates the little valley with floods from Arafat. Even in summer, rain is not infrequent. The seasons being thus uncertain the calamities of drought occasionally arise. The heart, especially in autumn, is oppressive. Surrounding ridges make the valley close and sultry. The sun, beating with violence on bare gravelly soil, reflects an intense and distressing glare. The native of Makkah, acclimated to the narrow vale, may regard with complacency its inhospitable atmosphere, but the traveler, even in winter, complains of stifling warmth and suffocating closeness.

LOVED BY THE MUSLIMS

Such is the spot, barren and unpromising, on which the Muslims look with fondest reverence as the cradle of their destiny and arena of the remote events which gave birth to their faith. Here Hagar alights with Ishmael, and in search of water hurries to and fro between the little hill of the Safa, a spur of Abu Qubays, and the eminence of the Marwa, an offshoot from the opposite range. Here the Jurhum Tribe establish themselves upon the failing fortunes of the ancestors of the Quraysh. From there they are expelled by the Quzaite invaders from the south. It is in this pent-up vale that Qusayy nourishs his ambitious plans, and, in the neighboring defiles of Mina, asserts them in a mortal struggle with his rivals. Here he establishes the Quraysh in their supremacy It is hard by the Kabah that his descendants, the children of Abd al-Dar and of Abd al-Manaf, are drawn up in battle array to fight for the sovereign prerogative. Here it is that Hashim exhibits his princely liberality and on this spot that Abd al-Muttalib toils with his solitary son till he discovers the ancient well of Zamzam. Thousands of such associations crowd upon the mind of the weary pilgrim, as the minarets of the Kabah rise before his longing eyes. In the long vista of ages reaching even to Adam, his

imagination pictures multitudes of pious devotees in every age and from all quarters of the globe, flocking to the little valley, making their seven circuits of the Kabah, kissing the mysterious stone, and drinking of the sacred water.

Abd al-Muttalib (Shayba) (497-578 CE): Muhammad's Paternal Grandfather

The people prefer to keep calling Shayba, Abd al-Muttalib. He is to become the grandfather of the Messenger, Muhammad. The clan of Abd al-Muttalib's father is from the Hashim branch of the Abd al-Manaf Clan of the Quraysh. The Hashim Clan traces its lineage back to Prophets Ishmael and Abraham.

Abd al-Muttalib (Shayba) has four wives: Sumra bint Jandab, mother of Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib; Lubna bint Hajira, mother of Abu Lahab Abd al-Uzza ibn Abd al-Muttalib; Fatimah bint Amr from the Makhzum tribe, mother of Abu Talib ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Zubayr ibn Abd al-Muttalib and Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Muttalib; Halah bint Wahib, mother of Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Muqum ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Hijli ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Safiyyah bint Abd al-Muttalib. His fifth wife is Natila bint Khabab Khuzriji, mother of Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib and Zarrar ibn Abd al-Muttalib.

After his uncle's death, Abd al-Muttalib (497-578 CE) takes over the responsibilities of the Kabah and enjoys sleeping in the semi-circular area beside it. One night he has a dream that he should find and dig out the well of Zamzam. He finds the well that his ancestors, the Jurhumites, had covered over.

Digging for Zamzam

History

While Abd al-Muttalib is sleeping in the sacred enclosure he has a vision in which he is ordered to dig Zamzam which is a depression between the two idols of the Quraysh, Isaf and Naila, at the slaughter-place of the Quraysh. It has been filled by the Jurhum when they left Makkah sometime before the birth of Muhammad. It is the well of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, where God gives him water when he is thirsty as a little child. His mother, Hagar, goes to seek water for him and can not find it, so she goes up to al-Safa praying to God and imploring aid for Ishmael. Then she goes to al-Marwa and does the same. God sends Gabriel, who hollow out a place in the earth with his heel where water appears. His mother hears the cries of wild beasts which

terrify her on his account, and she comes hurrying towards Ishmael. She finds him scrabbling with his hand at the water beneath his cheek while he drinks. She make hims a small hole. When the exact spot has been indicated to Abd al-Muttalib and he known that it corresponded with the facts, he takes a pick-axe and goes with his son, al-Harith — for the had no other son at that time—and begins to dig.

When the top of the well appears he cries: *Allahu akbar*! God is Greater!

Thus the Quraysh know that he has found the well. They come to him and say: This is the well of our father Ishmael. We have a right to it, so give us a share in it.

He answers: I will not. I was specially told of it and not you, and I am the one to be given it.

They say: Do us justice, for we shall not leave you until we have a judicial decision in the matter.

He says: Appoint anyone you like to decide between us.

He agrees to accept a woman diviner of the Saad Hudhaym tribe, who lives in the uplands of Syria.

Abd al-Muttalib, accompanied by some of his relations and a representative from all the tribes of the Quraysh, rides away. They go on through desolate country between the Hijaz and Syria until Abd al-Muttalib's group runs out of water. They fear that they will die of thirst. They ask the Quraysh tribes to give them water, but they refuse on the ground that if they give them their water, they, too, would die of thirst. In his desperation Abd al-Muttalib consults his companions as to what should be done, but all they could do is to say that they would follow his instructions. He says: I think that every man should dig a hole for himself with the strength that he has left so that whenever a man dies, his companions can thrust him into the hole and bury him until the last man, for it is better that one man should lie unburied than a whole company.

They accept his advice and every man begins to dig a hole for himself. Then they sit down until they should die of thirst. After a time Abd al-Muttalib says to his companions: By God, to abandon ourselves to death in this way and not to scour the country in search of water is sheer incompetence. Perhaps God will give us water somewhere. To your saddles!

So they get their beasts ready while the Quraysh watch them. Abd al-Muttalib goes to his camel and mounts her. When she gets up from her knees, a flow of fresh water breaks out from beneath her feet.

Abd al-Muttalib and his companions, cry out: *Allahu akbar*! God is Greater! dismount and drink and fill their water-skins. Then they invite the Quraysh to come to the water which God has given them and to drink freely.

After they have done so and fill their water-skins they say: By God, the judgment has been given in your favor Abd al-Muttalib. We will never dispute your claim to Zamzam. He who has given you water in this wilderness is He who has given you Zamzam. Return in peace to your office of giving water to the pilgrims.

So they all go back without going to the diviner.[21]

Abraha's Attempted Attack on the Kabah BH 53/570 CE

There has been years of strife in the Arabian peninsula between the Jews, Christians, and idol-worshippers. The Jews and Christians compete with one another for the conversion of the idol-worshippers to their respective faiths. This competition serves as the backdrop for the eventual attempt attack on the Kabah by the general of a Christian king of Abyssinia.

History

The Reign of Dhu Nuwas

The third son of Rabia ibn Nasr, Yusef Dhu Nuwas, converts to Judaism and rules as king of Yemen (517-525 CE). He is to be the last Himyarite king who rules over Yemen. All the tribes of Himyar join him.

There are some people in Najran who remain Christian, a virtuous and upright people who follow the Gospel. Their head is named Abd Allah ibn al-Thamir. The place where that religion takes root is in Najran, at that time the center of the Arabs' country. Its people, and, indeed, the rest of the Arabs, are idolaters. A Christian by the name of Faymiyun has settled there and converts the Najrani people to Christianity.

The people of Najran accept the religion of Abd Allah ibn al-Thamir according to the Gospel and the law which Jesus brought. Afterwards. they are overtaken by the misfortunes which befalls their co-religionists. Such is the origin of Christianity in Najran. But God knows best (what the facts are). Dhu Nuwas comes against them with his armies and invites them to accept Judaism, giving them the choice between that or death. They choose death. So he digs trenches for them, burns some in fire, slays some with the sword, and mutilates them until he has killed nearly twenty thousand of them. God revealed 85:4 in reference to Dhu Nuwas and his army.

It is said that among those put to death by Dhu Nuwas is their leader, Abd Allah ibn al-Thamir.[22]

THE MASSACRE

News of this massacre reaches the emperor of the eastern Roman empire who is a Christian and a strong supporter of his faith. One of the Christians from Najran, who had escaped the massacre, asks the help of the emperor to retaliate against Dhu Nuwas.

In spite of the emperor's support for Christian causes, he refuses to intervene in this case, but promises the Najrani that he will write to the king of Abyssinia, who is also a Christian, and ask him to take revenge. He writes a letter that he gives to the Najrani to take to Abyssinia. When the king of Abyssinia receives the letter, he sends the commander of his armed forces, Aryat, with 70,000 soldiers to Yemen.

The army sets up camp on the shores of Yemen. In a surprise attack, he defeats the army of Dhu Nuwas. The king of Abyssinia then appoints Aryat his governor in Yemen. Aryat, in gratitude to the king, builds a great church in Yemen. He writes to the king, tells him that this church will become famous as a center of pilgrimage for the Arab idol-worshippers, and that they will eventually forget the Kabah.

Contrary to Aryat's determination to establish Christianity in Arabia among the pre-Quranic nomadic idolaters, the people continue to go to Makkah every year for their annual pilgrimage. Aryat is replaced in Yemen by a new leader from Abyssinia whose name is Abraha.

Abraha then decides to attack the Kabah and destroy it in order to ensure that the Arab idol-worshippers will turn to the Christian church in Yemen for their annual pilgrimage. He leads his well-equipped army, including an elephant, towards Makkah. They defeat any opposition they encounter along the way. They finally stop at a town just outside Makkah. From there his troops begin to round up camels grazing in the area near Tihamah. Among these herds of camels are 200 that belong to Abd al-Muttalib, the leader in Makkah.

Abraha orders his second in command, Hanatah, to go to Makkah and tell the leader of the Quraysh that he plans to destroy the Kabah, but no one will be hurt as long as they do not offer any resistance. Hanatah does as he is commanded. He delivers the message to Abd al-Muttalib. In response, Abd al-Muttalib says: The Kabah is God's House which Prophet Abraham, Friend of God, rebuilt. God will do whatever is best for the people of the land.

Hanatah had not expected to hear this answer. As a Christian, he is familiar with Prophet Abraham. He wonders how a leader of the people who worship idols could have had such a notion. He asks Abd al-Muttalib to accompany him to his camp and to speak to Abraha himself.

They go back to the camp together. It is recorded that Abraha was impressed by Abd al-Muttalib who says to him: Among the camels your army took from Tihamah are 200 that belong to me. Order them to be returned to their owner.

Abraha, in surprise, answers: I never expected a person of your distinction to make such a request when I am about to destroy your center of pilgrimage.

Abd al-Muttalib, in a state of rightful 'moral reasonableness of a religiously cultured monotheist,' responds: I am the owner of the camels. The Kabah also has an Owner. Most assuredly He will prevent it from being destroyed.

Abraha, full of pride and arrogance, orders the release of Abd al-Muttalib's camels and then says to Abd al-Muttalib: I assure you that there is no power which can dissuade me from my resolve to destroy the Kabah.

Abd al-Muttalib then returns to Makkah and speaks to the Quraysh. He orders the people of Makkah to leave the city with their herds and to seek refuge and shelter in the surrounding mountains and hills. He accompanies them to the sheltered areas and, in the middle of the night, returns to the Kabah with several companions. He lays his hand upon the Kabah and with eyes filled with tears, calls out to the Creator: Oh Creator! You are our only refuge and hope. Almighty! Makkah is Your sacred territory. You have forbidden any aggression or fighting in its territory. Almighty God! The enemies of this House are Your enemies. Your servants are the enemy of those who commit aggression against Your House. Oh God! Prevent them from committing aggression against Your House. Creator! Let not their force destroy Your House!

In the morning, Abraha, full of rebelliousness against God's commands, moves towards Makkah. Suddenly flocks of birds appear from the direction of the Red Sea, each one carrying a stone in its beak and each of its claws. The air so fills with birds that the earth below them is darkened. As the birds drop the stones they are carrying upon the heads of Abraha's army of men and elephant, the men fall to the ground, bleeding from the wounds made by the falling stones. Abraha is also wounded, and he knows that this is God's wrath upon him as he sees his fallen army. He is obliged to call a retreat and return to Yemen. It is recorded that Abraha later dies in Yemen from the wounds he sustained. God has saved His House for which He had a greater plan.

Later the Quran is to reveal:

Have you not considered what your Lord
accomplished with the Companions of the Elephant? (105:1)
Makes He not their cunning leading to nothing? (105:2)
And He sent upon them flocks of birds, (105:3)
throwing at them rocks of baked clay. (105:4)
Then, made He them like
ones who are consumed by stalks of husked grain. (105:5)

The news of the event spreads quickly among the people, both the friends and foes of the Kabah alike. It has been such an amazing occurrence that the pre-Quranic Arabs reckoned their history, before and after, by the Year of the Elephant. It is 570 CE, the year of the birth of Muhammad.

FROM BIRTH TO THE AGE OF FIVE: BH 53-47/570-575 CE

ABD ALLAH IBN ABD AL-MUTTALIB (553-570 CE)

At the period of Abraha's retreat from Makkah, Abd al-Muttalib, now above 70 years or age (567 CE), enjoys rank and consideration as the foremost chief of Makkah. Some months previous to that event, he has taken his youngest son, Abd Allah,[23] then about twenty-four years of age, to the house of Wahb, a distant kinsman descended from Zuhrah, brother of the famous Qusayy. There he is married to Amina, the niece of Wahb, under whose guardianship she lives. At the same time, Abd al-Muttalib decides on a matrimonial alliance on his own account. He marries Halah, the cousin of Amina and daughter of Wahb. Of this late marriage, the famous Hamza is the first fruits.

As is customary in a marriage at the home of the bride, Abd Allah remains there with Amina for three days. Not long after, he leaves his wife with child, and sets out on with a caravan expedition to Gaza in the south of Syria.[24] On his way back he becomes ill at Madinah. He is left behind by the caravan with his father's maternal relatives. Abd al-Muttalib, on learning of Abd Allah's sickness, despatchs his son Harith to take care of him. Reaching Madinah, Harith finds that his brother has died about a month after the departure of the caravan. He returned with these tidings, and his father and siblings mourned for Abd Allah. He had been but twenty-five years of age, and Amina had not yet been delivered. He leaves behind him five camels fed on wild shrubs,[25] a flock of goats, and Umm Ayman, a slave-girl (called also Baraka), who tended the infant borne by his widow.

This little property, and the house in which he dwelt, are all the in heritance Muhammad receives from his father, but, little as it is, the simple habits of the Arab require no more. Instead of being evidence of poverty, the possession of a female slave is rather an indication of prosperity and comfort.

Amina bint Wahb

Amina is the daughter of Wahb bin Abd al-Manaf ibn Zuhrah ibn Kilab ibn Murrah. Her father is the grandson of Zuhrah, the brother of his great, great grandfather, Qusayy. Wahb is the eldest and noblest member and chief of the Zuhrah Clan until he dies and is succeeded by his brother who raises Amina after her father's death.

Muhammad is Born BH 53/570 CE

Amina Delivered of a Son, Rabi Awwal, 570 CE

Muhammad ibn Abd Allah is born in the month of Rabi Awwal (either the 12th or the 17th) in the Year of the Elephant or CE 570, two months after the death of his father, Abd Allah. No sooner is that infant born, than Amina sends to tell Abd al-Muttalib. The messenger carrying the good tidings reachs the chief as he sits in the sacred enclosure of the Kabah, in the midst of his sons and the principal men of his tribe. He stands, and those who were with him, and goes to visit Amina. Then he takes the young child in his arms and goes to the Kabah. As he stands beside it, he gives thanks to God. The child is called Muhammad.

The name is rare among the Arabs, but not unknown. It is derived from the root *hamada* and signifies The Praised. Another form is Ahmed, a translation of the Paraclete in Arabic versions of the New Testament, as it reflects the fact that the title under which the Prophet had been in their books predicted.

Muhammad is nursed in Makkah for a short time. After that, it is seen to be advantageous for the child to grow up in the desert with a wet nurse. This is the custom among the Arabs as it protects small children from epidemics that periodically threaten Makkah. It is also thought that the desert air and nomadic ways will strengthen a child physically and character-wise. Muhammad is given to Halima bint Abu Dhuayb, an impoverished Bedouin woman of the Saad Clan. The Saad Clan is a branch of the Hawazin Tribe. Every so often she takes the child to Makkah to see his mother, Amina, and grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, and then she returns with him to her desert home.

The following is how Ibn Ishaq describes the woman who became

Muhammad's foster-mother and how he was raised by this Bedouin woman:

HISTORY

Abd al-Muttalib tries to find a foster-mother for him. Halima bint Abu Dhuayb of the Saad ibn Bakr Clan is asked to nurse him. Her father, Abu Dhuayb, was Abd Allah ibn al-Harith ibn Shijna ibn Jabir ibn Rizam ibn Nasira ibn Qusayya ibn Nasr ibn Sad ibn Bakr ibn Hawazin ibn Mansur ibn Ikrima ibn Khasafa ibn Qays ibn Aylan. Her husband and Muhammad's foster-father is al-Harith ibn Abd al-Uzza ibn Rifaa ibn Mallan ibn Nasira ibn Qusayya ibn Nasr ibn Sad ibn Bakr ibn Hawazin.

His foster-brother is Abd Allah ibn al-Harith. Unaysa and Hudhafa are his foster-sisters. The latter is called al-Shayma, her people not using her proper name. These are the children of Halima bint Abd Allah ibn al-Harith. It is reported that al-Shayma carried him in her arms to help her mother.

Halima, the Messenger's foster-mother used to say that she had gone forth from her country with her husband and little son whom she is nursing, among the women of her tribe in search of other babies to nurse. This is a year of famine when they are destitute. She is riding a she-donkey of hers with an old she-camel which does not yield a drop of milk. They cannot sleep the whole night because of the weeping of her hungry child, Abd Allah ibn al-Harith. She has no milk to give him, nor could their she-camel provide a morning drink of milk, but she is hoping for rain and relief. (Jahm ibn Abu Jahm, the client of al-Harith ibn Hatib al-Jumahi, on the authority of Abd Allah ibn Jafar ibn Abu Talib or from one who told him it as from him, informed Ibn Ishaq of this.)

She saya: I rode upon my donkey which has so kept back the other riders through its weakness and emaciation so that it is a nuisance to them. When we reach Makkah, we look out for foster children. The Messenger of God is offered to everyone of us. Each of us women refuse him when we are told he was an orphan, because we had hope to get payment from the child's father. We say: An orphan! and what will his mother and grandfather do? So we spurn him because of that. Every woman who came with me found a baby to nurse except me. When we decide to leave, I say to my husband: By God, I do not like the idea of returning with my friends without a baby to nurse. I will go and take that orphan.

He replies: Do as you please. Perhaps God will bless us on his account.

So I go and take him for the sole reason that I could not find any-

one else. I take him back to my baggage. As soon as I put him in my bosom, my breasts overflowed with milk which he drinks until he is satisfied as is his foster-brother whom I had brought with me. Then they sleep whereas before this we could not sleep because they were so hungry. My husband gets up and goes to the old she-camel and lo, her udders are full. He milks it and he and I drink of her milk until we are completely satisfied, and we pass a happy night.

In the morning my husband says: Do you know, Halima, you have taken a blessed creature?

I say: By God, I hope so.

Then we set out and I ride my she-ass carrying him with me. My she-ass goes at such a pace that the other donkeys cannot keep up so that my companions say to me: Confound you! stop and wait for us. Isn't this the donkey on which you started?

Certainly it is, I say.

They reply: By God, something extraordinary has happened.

Then we come to our dwellings in the Saad country and I do not know a country more barren than that.

When he is with you, my flock yield milk in abundance. We milk them and drink while other people have not a drop, nor can they find anything in their animals' udders, so that our people say to their shepherds: Woe to you! Send your flock to graze where the daughter of Abu Dhuayb's shepherd goes.

Even so, their flocks came back hungry not yielding a drop of milk, while mine had milk in abundance. We cease not to recognize this bounty as coming from God for a period of two years, when I wean him. He is growing up as none of the other children grow. We took him back to his mother when he was five.

Thaur ibn Yazid from a learned person who I think was Khalid ibn Madan al Kalai told me that some of the Messenger's companions ask him to tell them about himself. He says: I am what Abraham, my father, prayed for and the good news of my brother Jesus. When my mother was carrying me, she had seen a light proceeding from her which showed her the castles of Syria. I had been suckled among the Saad ibn Bakr Clan.

The Messenger of God used to say to his companions: I am the most Arab of you all. I am of Quraysh, and I was suckled among the Saad ibn Bakr Clan. It is alleged by some, but God knows the truth, that when his foster-mother had brought him to Makkah he escaped her among the crowd while she was taking him to his people. She had sought him and could not find him, so she goes to Abd al-Muttalib and says: I brought Muhammad tonight and when I was in the upper part of Makkah. He has escaped from me and I don't know where he is.

So Abd al-Muttalib goes to the Kabah praying to God to restore

him. They assert that Waraqa ibn Nawfal ibn Asad and another man of the Quraysh find him and bring him to Abd al-Muttalib saying: We have found this son of yours in the upper part of Makkah.

Abd al-Muttalib takes him and puts him on his shoulder as he goes round the Kabah confiding him to God's protection and praying for him. Then he sends him to his mother Amina.[26]

It is probable that the constitution of Muhammad was rendered robust, and his character free and independent, by these five years among the Saad Clan. At any rate, his speech was thus formed upon one of the purest models of the beautiful language of the Peninsula. When eloquence began to form an important element of success, a pure language and standard dialect were advantages to him of essential moment.

FROM AGE FIVE TO TWELVE BH 47-40/575-582 CE

HIS MOTHER TAKES HIM TO MADINAH (YATHRIB)

When Muhammad is five years old, he is returned to the care of his mother, Amina bint Wahb, in Makkah. She takes him to Yathrib to visit her family of the Adiyy ibn al-Najjar Clan. So she departed with her slave-girl Umm Ayman, who tended the child. They rode upon two camels. Arriving in Madinah, she alighted at the house where her husband had died and was buried. The visit was on sufficient duration to imprint the scene and the society, notwithstanding his tender age, upon the memory of Muhammad. He used in later days to call to recollection things that happened on this occasion.

THE DEATH OF AMINA BINT WAHB (D. 577 CE)

After staying in Madinah about a month, Amina decides to return to Makkah, and sets out in the same manner as she had come. But when about half way, twenty-three miles from Madinah on the road to Makkah, they reach a spot called Abwaj, she falls ill and dies. She is buried there.[27] The little orphan is carried back to Makkah by Umm Ayman, who, although then quite a girl, is a faithful nurse to the child, and continues to be his constant attendant.

The early loss of his mother no doubt imparted to the youthful Muhammad something of that pensive and meditative character by which he was afterwards distinguished. In his seventh year he could appreciate the bereavement and feel the desolation of his orphan state. In the Quran he has alluded touchingly to the subject. While reassuring his heart of the divine favor, he recounts the mercies of the Almighty and

amongst them the first is this: *Did he not find **you** an orphan and furnished **you** with a refuge?* (93:6)

Guardianship and Death of Abd al-Muttalib (d. 578 CE)

The charge of the orphan is now undertaken by Abd al-Muttalib, who has by this time reached the age of eighty. The child is treated by him with singular fondness. A rug used to be spread under the Kabah and on it the aged chief reclines in shelter from the heat of the sun. Around the carpet, but at a respectful distance, his sons sit. The little Muhammad used to run up close to his grandfather and unceremoniously take possession of his rug. His sons, seeking to drive him off, Abd al-Muttalib would interpose saying: Let my little son alone. He would stroke him on the back and delight to listen to his childish prattle. The boy is still under the care of his nurse, but as often as possible he would leave her and run into the apartment of his grandfather even when his grandfather is alone or asleep.

Then Muhammad's grandfather becomes ill. Realizing his impending death, he places Muhammad under the guardianship of his son, Abu Talib, who is the full brother of Muhammad's father, Abd Allah, and a prominent chief of the Quraysh. Abu Talib had been made custodian of the Kabah following the death of his older brother, Zubayr.

History

Muhammad ibn Said ibn al-Musayyib told me that when Abd al-Muttalib knew that death was at hand he summoned his six daughters: Safiya, Barra, Atika, Umm Hakim al-Bayda, Umayma, and Arwa, and said to them: Compose elegies over me so that I may hear what you are going to say before I die.

Safiya bint Abd al-Muttalib said in mourning her father:

I could not sleep for the voices of the keening women,
Bewailing a man on the crown of life's road,
It caused the tears to flow
Down my cheeks like falling pearls
For a noble man, no wretched weakling,
Whose virtue was plain to all.
The generous Shayba, full of merits,
Thy good father inheritor of all virtue,
Truthful at home, no weakling,
Standing firm and self-reliant.

Powerful, fear-inspiring, massive,
Praised and obeyed by his people,
Of lofty lineage, smiling, virtuous,
A very rain when camels had no milk.
Noble was his grandfather without spot of shame,
Surpassing all men, bond or free,
Exceeding mild, of noble stock,
Who were generous, strong as lions,
Could men be immortal through ancient glory,
(Alas immortality is unobtainable!)
He would make his last night endure forever
Through his surpassing glory and long descent.

His daughter Barra said:

Be generous, O eyes, with your pearly tears,
For the generous nature who never repelled a beggar.
Of glorious race, successful in undertaking,
Of handsome face, of great nobility.
Shayba, the laudable, the noble,
The glorious, the mighty, the renowned,
The clement, decisive in misfortunes,
Full of generosity, lavish in gifts,
Excelling his people in glory,
A light shining like the moon in its splendor.
Death came to him and spared him not,
Change and fortune and fate overtook him.

His daughter Atika said:

Be generous, O eyes, and not miserly
With your tears when others sleep,
Weep copiously, O eyes, with your tears,
While you beat your faces in weeping.
Weep, O eyes, long and freely
For one, no dotard weakling,
The strong, generous in time of need,
Noble in purpose, faithful to his word.
Shayba the laudable, successful in undertaking,
The reliable and the steady,
A sharp sword in war
Destroying his enemies in battle,
Easy natured, open handed,
Loyal, stout, pure, good.

His house proudly rooted in high honor
Mounted to glory unobtainable by others.

His daughter Umm Hakim al-Bayda said:

Weep, O eye, generously, hide not thy tears,
Weep for the liberal and generous one,
Fie upon thee O eye, help me
With fast falling tears!
Weep for the best man who ever rode a beast,
Thy good father, a fountain of sweet water.
Shayba the generous, the virtuous,
Liberal in nature, praised for his gifts,
Lavish to his family, handsome,
Welcome as rain in years of drought.
A lion when the spears engage,
His womenfolk look on him proudly.
Chief of Kinana on whom their hopes rest,
When evil days brought calamity,
Their refuge when war broke out,
In trouble and dire distress.
Weep for him, refrain not from grief,
Make women weep for him as long as you live.

His daughter Umayma said:

Alas, has the shepherd of his people, the generous one, perished,
Who gave the pilgrims their water, the defender of our fame,
Who used to gather the wandering guest into his tents,
When the heavens begrudged their rain.
You have the noblest sons a man could have
And have never ceased to grow in fame, O Shayba!
Abu al-Harith, the bountiful, has left his place,
Go not far for every living thing must go far.
I shall weep for him and suffer as long as I live.
His memory deserves that I suffer.
May the Lord of men water thy grave with rain!
I shall weep for him though he lies in the grave'.
He was the pride of all his people,
And was praised wherever praise was due.

His daughter Arwa said:

My eye wept and well it did

For the generous modest father,
The pleasant natured man of Mecca's vale,
Noble in mind, lofty in aim,
The bountiful Shayba full of virtues,
Thy good father who has no peer,
Long armed, elegant, tall,
Twas as though his forehead shone with light,
Lean waisted, handsome, full of virtues,
Glory, rank, and dignity were his,
Resenting wrong, smiling, able,
His ancestral fame could not be hid,
The refuge of Malik, the spring of Fihr,
When judgment was sought he spoke the last word.
He was a hero, generous, liberal,
And bold when blood was to be shed,
When armed men were afraid of death
So that the hearts of most of them were as air,1
Forward he went with gleaming sword,
The cynosure of all eyes.

Muhammad ibn Said ibn al-Musayyib told me that Abd al-Muttalib made a sign to the effect that he was satisfied with the elegies, for he could not speak just before he died.[28]

The guardianship of Abd al-Muttalib lasts but two years. He dies eight years after the attack of Abraha.[29] The orphan child bitterly feels the loss of his indulgent grandfather. As he follows the bier he is seen to weep, and when he grows up, he retains a distinct remembrance of his death. The heart of Muhammad in his tender years is thus again rudely wounded, and the fresh bereavement is rendered more poignant by the dependent position in which it left him. The nobility of his grandfather's descent, the deference paid to him throughout the vale of Makkah, and his splendid hospitality towards the pilgrims, in furnishing them with food and drink, are witnessed with satisfaction by the thoughtful child. These things no doubt leave behind them a proud remembrance, and form the seed perhaps of many a thought of helping others.

The death of Abd al-Muttalib leaves the children of Hashim without any powerful head while it enables the other branch, descended from Umayah, to gain ascendancy. Of the latter family the chief at this time is Harb, who held the leadership in war, and is followed by a numerous and powerful body of relations.

From Age Eight to Twenty-Five
BH 44-22/578-595 CE

Abu Talib ibn Abd al-Muttalib (539-613 CE)

Abu Talib ibn Abd al-Muttalib (549–619 CE) had married Fatima bint Asad. Fatima bint Asad ibn Hashim becomes Muhammad's second mother as he lives for seventeen years with she and Abu Talib. Fatima is the daughter of Asad ibn Hashim and Fatima bint Haram ibn Rawaha who is the daughter of Khadija's maternal grandfather. Muhammad now grows up in the house of his full uncle, Abu Talib, and his wife, Fatima.

Abu Talib and Fatima bint Asad have three sons: Aqil ibn Abu Talib, born in 590 when Muhammad is twenty; Jafar ibn Abu Talib, born between 590 and 600 CE and Ali ibn Abu Talib, born to Abu Talib and Fatima bint Asad after 595 CE. Abu Talib and Fatima bint Asad also have two daughters: Fakhita bint Abu Talib (Umm Hani) and Jumanah bint Abu Talib.

The Sons of Abd al-Muttalib

Of Abd al-Muttalib's sons, Harith, the eldest, is now dead. He is survived by his brothers, Zubayr and Abu Talib (both by the same mother as Abd Allah); Abu Lahab, Abbas, and Hamza (from different mothers). The last two are still very young. Zubayr is the oldest, and to him Abd al- Muttalib bequeathes his offices. Zubayr, again, leaves them to Abu Talib, who, finding himself too poor to discharge the expensive and onerous task of providing for the pilgrims, waives the honor in favor of his younger brother, Abbas. As the family of Hashim had fallen from its high estate only Abbas is able to retain the giving of drink, while the furnishing of food passed into the hands of another branch. Abbas is wealthy, and his influential post, involving charge of the well Zamzam is retained by him until the beginning of the revelation, and then confirmed to his family by the Prophet.

Abu Talib and Abbas

Abu Talib possesses many noble qualities, and wins greater respect. It was thus that in the oscillations of government, the prestige of the house of Hashim has begun to wane, and nearly disappear while the rival Umayyad branch is rising to importance. This phase of the political state of Makkah had begun with the death of Abd al-Muttalib, and continues until the conquest of the city by Muhammad himself.

Abu Talib Becomes Guardian of His Orphan Nephew

To Abu Talib, the dying Abd al-Muttalib consigns the guardianship

of his orphan grandchild. Abu Talib faithfully and kindly discharges the trust. His fondness for the boy equals that of Abd al-Muttalib. He makes him sleep by his bed, eat by his side, and go with him wherever he walks. And this tender treatment continues for seventeen years.

FIRST JOURNEY TO SYRIA AND THE STORY OF BAHIRA THE MONK (582 CE)

It is during this period that Abu Talib, accompanied by Muhammad, undertakes a commercial journey to Syria. He intends to leave the lad behind, for now twelve years of age he is able to take care of himself. But when the caravan is ready to depart, and Abu Talib about to mount, the child, overcome by the prospect of so long a separation, clings to his protector. Abu Talib is moved, and carries him along with the party.[30] The expedition extended to Busra, perhaps farther.

HISTORY

[In 582 CE] When the caravan reachs Busra in Syria, there is a monk there in his cell by the name of Bahira, who is well versed in the knowledge of Christians. A monk has always occupied that cell. There he gains his knowledge from a book that is in the cell handed on from generation to generation.

Their caravan has often passed by him in the past. He had never spoken to them or taken any notice of them until this year. When they stop near his cell he prepares a great feast for them because of something he had seen while in his cell. While the monk had been in his cell, when the caravan approachs, he sees Muhammad in the caravan with a cloud overshadowing him among the people.

Then they stop in the shadow of a tree near the monk. He looks at the cloud when it overshadowed the tree, and its branches are bending and drooping over Muhammad until he is in the shadow beneath it.

When Bahira sees that, he comes out of his cell and sends word to them: I have prepared food for you, O men of Quraysh, and I should like you all to come both great and small, bond and free.

One of them says to him: By God, Bahira! Something extraordinary has happened today. We have often passed by you and you never treated us so. What has happened to you today?

He answers: You are right in what you say, but you are guests. I wish to honor you and give you food so that you may eat.

So they gathered together with him, leaving Muhammad behind with the baggage under the tree, on account of his extreme youth. When Bahira looks at the people he does not see the mark that he knows and finds in his books. He says: Has someone been left remain

behind?

They tell him that no one who should come has remained behind except a boy who is the youngest of them and has stayed with their baggage. Thereupon he tells them to invite him to come to the meal with them.

One of the men of Quraysh says: By al-Lat and al-Uzza, we are to blame for leaving behind the son of Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Muttalib.

Then he gets up and embraces him and makes him sit with the people. When Bahira sees him, he stares at him closely, looking at his body and finding traces of his description in the Christian books. When the people have finished eating and gone away, Bahira gets up and says to him: Boy, I ask you by al-Lat and al-Uzza to answer my question.

Now Bahira says this only because he has heard his people swearing by these gods. Muhammad says to him: Do not ask me by al-Lat and al-Uzza, for by God nothing is more hateful to me than these two.

Bahira answers: Then by God, tell me what I ask.

He replied: Ask me what you like.

So he began to ask him about what happened in his waking and in his sleep, his habits, and his affairs generally. What Muhammad tells him coincided with what Bahira knows of his description.

Then he looks at his back and sees the seal of prophethood between his shoulders in the very place described in his book.

When he has finished, he goes to his uncle, Abu Talib and asks him what relation this boy is to him. When he tells him he is his son, he says that he is not, for it could not be that the father of this boy is alive.

He is my nephew, he says. When he asks what had become of his father, he tells him that he had died before the child had been born.

You have spoke the truth, says Bahira. Take your nephew back to his country and guard him carefully against the Jews, for by God! if they see him and know about him what I know, they will do him evil. A great future lies before this nephew of yours, so take him home quickly.[31]

The journey lasts for several months, and affords to the youthful Muhammad opportunities of observation which are not lost upon him. He passs near to Petra, Jerash, Amman and other remains of former mercantile grandeur. The sight must have deeply imprinted upon his reflective mind the instability of earthly greatness. The wild story of the valley of Hijr, with its lonely deserted habitations hewn out of the rock, and the tale of divine vengeance descending on the cities of the plain over which now rolled the waves of the Dead Sea, would excite apprehension

and awe while such strange histories, rendered more startling and tragical by Jewish tradition and local legend, would win and charm the childish heart ever yearning after the marvelous. On this journey too, he passes through several Jewish settlements, and came in contact with the Christians of Syria.

MUHAMMAD THE SHEPHERD

Muhammad helps his uncle, Abu Talib, out by working with the herds as a shepherd. He takes the herds of his relatives and other people of Makkah to the surrounding areas for which he receives a wage. He gives his earnings to his uncle to help with expenses.

This livelihood gives him time to reflect and contemplate. He matures into a person who is generous, good-tempered, magnanimous, kind, helpful, tolerant, truthful, and trustworthy. He is to say in later years: There is no Prophet but has shepherded a flock. When they ask: You, too, Messenger of God? He said: Yes.[32]

MUHAMMAD LEARNS ARCHERY

By the time Muhammad is twenty, Abu Talib has made sure that he and his uncles, Hamza and Abbas, receive some training in the use of the bow and arrow. Muhammad proves to be a good archer, as Prophets Abraham and Ishmael had been. He is particularly good at it because of his keen eyesight. It is said he could count twelve of the stars of the Pleiades.

THE SACRILEGIOUS WAR 580-590 CE

The peaceful life in Makkah is shattered when fighting begins in what is known as the Fijar or Sacrilegious War when Muhammad is ten years old, because it breaks out during one of the months in which fighting is forbidden at the annual Ukaz fair.

UKAZ FAIR HELD ANNUALLY

In the sacred month preceding the annual pilgrimage (Dhul Qida), a fair is held at Ukaz where, within three days' journey east of Makkah, the shady palm and cool fountain offered a grateful resting-place to the merchant and traveler after their toilsome journey.[33]

CONTESTS OF CHIVALRY AND POETRY

Goods are bartered, vain glorious contests (those characteristic exhibitions of Bedouin chivalry) are held, and verses recited by bards of

the various tribes. The successful poems produced at this national gathering are treated with distinguished honor. They are transcribed in illuminated characters, and thus styled Golden or they are attached to the Kabah and honored with the title Suspended. Seven Suspended Poems still survive from a period before Muhammad, a wondrous specimen of eloquence. The beauty of their language and wild richness of their imagery are acknowledged by many, but the subject is limited, and the beaten track seldom deviated from. The charms of his mistress, the envied spot marked still fresh traces of her encampment, the solitude of her deserted haunts, his own generosity and prowess, the unrivalled glory of his tribe, the noble qualities of his came, these are the themes which, with little variation of treatment, and with no contrivance whatever of plot or story, occupied the Arab muse and some of them only added fuel to the besetting vices of the people, vainglory, envy, vindictiveness, and pride.

Origins of the Sacrilegious War

At the fair of Ukaz, a rivalrous spirit had been about this period engendered between the Quraysh and the Hawazin Tribe, a large tribe of kindred descent, which dwelt in the country between Makkah and Tai. An arrogant poet, vaunting the superiority of his tribe, is struck by an indignant Hawazinite. A woman of Hawazin descent rudely treated by some Qurayshite youths. An importunate creditor is solently repulsed. On each occasion the sword is unsheathed, blood flows, and the conflict would have become general unless the leaders interfere to calm the excited people. Such is the origin of the Sacrilegious War.

Precautions for Peace

These incidents suggest the expediency of requiring all who frequented the fair to surrender, while it lasted, their arms, and to deposit them with Abd Allah ibn Judan, a chief of Makkah. By this precaution peace is preserved for several years, when a wanton murder supplies more serious cause of offense.

Hostilities Precipitated by a Murder

The leader of Hira has despatched to the fair a caravan richly laden with perfumes and musk. It proceeds under the escort of an Hawazin chieftain. Another chief, friend of Quraysh, jealous at being supplanted in charge of the convoy, watches his opportunity, and, falling upon the caravan, kills its leader, and flees with the booty. On his flight he meets

a man of the Quraysh whom he charges to proceed with expedition to the fair then being held at Ukaz, and communicate the intelligence to his confederate Harb[34] and other Qurayshite chiefs. The message is promptly conveyed, and Ibn Judan, thus privately informed of the murder, forthwith gives back to all their arms, and, feigning urgent business at Makkah, departs with his whole tribe. The news of the murder begins rapidly to spread at Ukaz, and as the sun goes down it reaches the ears of the Hawazin chief, who at once, perceiving the cause of the precipitate departure of the Quraysh, rallies his people and proceeds in hot pursuit. The Quraysh have already entered the sacred limits, and so their enemy contents themselves with challenging them to a rencounter at the same period in the following year.

A TRUCE AFTER FOUR YEARS FIGHTING

The challenge is accepted, and both parties prepare for the struggle. Several battles are fought with various success, and hostilities, more or less formal, prolong for four years, when a truce is called. The dead are counted, and as twenty have been killed of the Hawazin more than of Quraysh, the latter consents to pay the price of their blood, and for this purpose delivers hostages. One of these was Abu Sufyan, the famous antagonist in after days of Muhammad. In some of these conflicts, the whole of the Quraysh and their allies are engaged. Each tribe is commanded by a chief of its own and Ibn Judan guides the general movements.

UMAYYIDS AND HASHEMITES BOTH ENGAGED IN THE STRUGGLE

The descendants of Abd Shams are headed by Harb, son of Umaya, and took a distinguished part in the warfare. The children of Hashim are present also, under command of Zubayr, eldest surviving son of Abd al-Muttalib, but they occupy a less prominent position.

PART TAKEN BY MUHAMMAD

In one of the battles Muhammad attends upon his uncles, but, though now near twenty years of age, he has not acquired the love of arms. According to some, his efforts are confined to gathering up the arrows of the enemy as they fall, and handing them to his uncles. Others assign him a somewhat more active share, but the sentence in which even this is preserved does not imply much enthusiasm in the warfare. I remember, the Prophet, he used to say, being present with my uncles in the Sacrilegious War. I discharged arrows at the enemy, and I do not regret it.[35]

A few weeks after the end of the Fijar War, a merchant from Yemen sells some valuable goods to a leader of the Sahm Clan. The man who took the goods then refused to pay the agreed-upon price. The member of the Sahm Clan knows that the merchant is a stranger in Makkah with no clan to support him. The merchant then goes to the area of the Kabah and pleads his case before the Quraysh.

Revival of the Pact of Chivalry (Futuwwah): Hilf al-Fuzul 590 CE

There was no one to exercise an authority such as had been enjoyed by Qusayy and Hashim, or even by Abd al-Muttalib. When any of the separate tribes neglect to punish its members for oppression and wrong-doing, no chief at Makkah is strong enough to stand up as champion of the injured. Right is not enforced. Wrong remains unpunished. Certain glaring acts of tyranny suggest to the principal Qurayshite families the expedience of binding themselves by an oath to secure justice to the helpless.[36]

The honor of originating the movement is ascribed to Zubayr, eldest surviving son of Abd al-Muttalib. The descendants of the two groups the Alliance of the Perfumed Ones and the Alliance of the Confederate still hold to their ancestors' agreement. The clan of the man who refuse to pay for the goods is from the Confederates.

The Perfumed Ones gather under the leadership of the leader of the Taym clan, Abd Allah ibn Judan, who is one of the wealthiest men in Makkah. Abd Allah ibn Judan offers his home as a meeting place for all those who love justice. Representatives of the Hashim, al-Muttalib, Zuhrah, Asad, and Taym clans all attend. They are joined by one of the former Confederates, the Adiyy tribe. The clans of Abd al- Shams and Nawfal, which had been among the original Perfumed Ones, do not attend the meeting.

The group decides that a way of justice must be found to protect the weak. They form a chivalric order known as Hilf al-Fudul. They go to the Kabah and pour water over the Black Stone which they collect in a bowl. Each man then drinks of this water. They raise their right hands above their heads and vow to stand together against any oppression that may take place in Makkah until justice is done, whether the oppressed person is a member of the Quraysh or otherwise. They then make the Sahm clansman pay for the goods he had received. None of the Confederates oppose their decision, even though they had not joined in the pact.

Among the people who form this chivalric order of the *futuwwah*

are Zubayr, who brings his nephew Muhammad, with him. Also present is Abu Quhafah of Taym, who brings with him his son, Abu Bakr, who is a few years younger than Muhammad. In later years, Muhammad is to say: I was present in the house of Abd Allah ibn Judan at so excellent a pact that I would not exchange my part in it for a herd of red camels. If now, with the Quranic message, I were summoned unto it, I would gladly respond.[37]

Muhammad's participation in this Pact is seen as a stand for the protection of human rights in a tribal society fraught with ignorance and backwardness. It is a Pact to protect the oppressed and homeless. Later it is to be used to protect the oppressed in Makkah against the tyrants and oppressors.

FROM AGE TWENTY-FIVE TO FORTY
BH 27-12/595-610 CE

ABU TALIB SUGGESTS MUHAMMAD TAKE A CARAVAN TO SYRIA

Abu Talib is endeavoring to find a suitable profession for his nephew to help him get started in life. He suggests that Muhammad lead a caravan to Syria. One of the well-known caravan owners had been that of a woman, Khadija bint Khuwaylid.

KHADIJA BINT KHUWAYLID

Khadija bint Khuwaylid is a respected Qurayshi business woman. She employs people to assist her in her business enterprises. Her mother, a member of the Amir ibn Luayy ibn Ghalib Clan and a distant relative of Muhammad, had died in 575 CE. Her father, Khuwaylid, had been the grandson of Asad. Asad had been the grandson of Qusayy. Khuwaylid had commanded in the Sacrilegious War a considerable section of Quraysh, and so did his nephew Uthman. He died in 585. Khadija had inherited great wealth from her father. She, then, is able to successfully manage her father's business interests and preserve her inherited family fortune. To the blessing of affluence, she added the more important endowments of discretion, virtue, and an affectionate heart.

HISTORY

Khadija bint Khuwaylid had been married Hind ibn al-Nabbash ibn Zurara of Tamim, known as Abu His father is a noble among his people. He settles in Makkah and forms an alliance there with the Abd al-Dar ibn Qusayy Clan. The Quraysh used to marry their allies.

Khadija bore Abu Hala a son called Hind and a son called Hala.

Then after the death of Abu Hala, she marries Atiq ibn Abid of the Makhzum Clan. She bears him a girl called Hind who marries her cousin, Sayfi ibn Umayya ibn Abid of Makhzum. She gives birth to a boy named Muhammad.

This clan is called " Muhammad's tribe" because of the position of Khadija. It exists in Madinah but eventually dies out. Khadija is called Umm Hind.

Mughira ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Asadi relates that his people said that they ask Hakim ibn Hizam which of them is older—the Messenger of God or Khadija? He said that Khadija is fifteen years older than him.

Ibn Abbas relates that the women of the people of Makkah met for a festival which they held in the month of Rajab. Nothing is more important to them than attending that festival. While they are in retreat with an idol, something in the shape of man appears to them, came up to them, and then calls out in his loudest voice to the women of Taym that a Messenger would appear in their land who would be called Ahmad. He would be sent with the message of God. Any woman who was able to be his wife should do so. The women threw stones at him. They denounced him and were harsh toward him. Khadija ignored what he said but did not treat him as the other women did.[38]

Every Qurashi nobleman desires to marry Khadija. Among the one mentioned are Uqbah ibn Abu Muit, Abu Jahl and Abu Sufyan. She refuses all of them. It is said that when the Quraysh's trade caravans gather to leave for either Syria during the summer or to Yemen during the winter, Khadija's caravan equals the caravans of all other traders of Quraysh put together.

Muhammad's Second Journey to Syria

Muhammad Accompanies a Syrian Caravan in Charge of Khadija's Venture

When the proposal was made, Muhammad's generous soul at once felt the necessity of doing all that was possible to relieve his uncle. He cheerfully responded to the call. The story is as follows:[39]

History

When his nephew was now twenty-five years of age, Abu Talib addressed him with these words: I am, as you know, a man of small substance. Truly the times deal hard with me. Now here is a caravan of your own tribe about to start for Syria, and Khadija, daughter of

Khawaylid, needs men of our tribe to send forth with her merchandise. If you were to offer yourself, she would readily accept your services. Muhammad replied: Be it so as you have said. Then Abu Talib went to Khadija, and inquired whether she wished to hire his nephew, but he added: We hear that you have engaged such a one for two camels, and we should not be content that my nephew's hire were less than four. Khadija discreetly answered: Had you asked this thing for one of a distant or alien tribe, I would have granted it; how much rather now that you ask it for a near relative and friend! So the matter was settled, and Muhammad prepared for the journey. Muhammad accepts the proposal, and on the 16th of Dhu Hijjah, BH 27/595 CE, the two set forth until they came to Syria.[40]

When the caravan is about to set out, his uncle commends him to the men of the company. Maysara, servant of Khadija, likewise travels along with Muhammad in charge of her property.

THE CARAVAN REACHES BUSRA

The caravan takes the usual route to Syria, the same which Muhammad had traveled with his uncle thirteen years before. In due time they reach Busra, on the road to Damascus, about sixty miles to the east of the Jordan.

HISTORY

Muhammad stopped in the shade of a tree near a monk's cell, when the monk came up to Maysara and asked who the man was who was resting beneath the tree. He told him that he was of the Quraysh, the people who held the sanctuary. The monk exclaimed: None but a prophet ever sat beneath this tree.[41]

The transactions of that busy mart, where the practiced merchants of Syria seek to overreach the simple Arabs, are ill suited to the tastes and habits of Muhammad, yet his natural sagacity and shrewdness carry him prosperously through the undertaking. He returns from the barter with a balance more than usually in his favor. It is said that at the height of noon when the heat was intense as he rode his beast, Maysara saw two angels shading the Prophet from the sun's rays.[42]

RETURNING, MUHAMMAD REPORTS TO KHADIJA

When Muhammad disposes of the merchandise and, according to her command, purchases for Khadija such things as she had need of, he retraces his steps in company with the caravan to his native valley. The

mildness of his manners and kind attention has won the heart of Maysara and, as they draw near to Makkah, the grateful servant persuades Muhammad to go in advance of the rest, and bear to Khadija first tidings of the successful traffic.

Khadija was sitting in the upper storey of her house,[43] on the watch for the earliest glimpse of the caravan, when she sees a camel rapidly advance from an expected quarter. As it approachs, she perceived that Muhammad is the rider. He enters, recounts the prosperous issue of the adventure, and enumerates the various goods that she had asked for. She is delighted at all she hears. There is a charm in the dark and pensive eye, in the noble features, and the graceful form of her assiduous agent as he stands before her, which pleases her even more than her good fortune.

Khadija Sends to Negotiate Marriage with Muhammad

A sister (according to other accounts, a servant) is the agent deputed to sound his views. What is it, O Muhammad, she says, adroitly referring to the unusual circumstance of his being unmarried at his age, what is it that hinders you from marriage? I have nothing, replied he, in my hands wherewithal I might marry. But if haply that difficulty were removed, and you were invited to espouse a beautiful and wealthy lady of noble birth, who would place you in affluence, would you not desire to have her? And who, said Muhammad, startled at the novel thought, might that be? It is Khadija. But how can I attain unto her? Let me worry abou that, returned the female. The mind of Muhammad was at once made up, and he answers: I am ready. The female departs and tells Khadija.

Marriage to Khadija

When a marriage proposal is made to Muhammad on behalf of Khadija, Muhammad speaks to Abu Talib and asks for his opinion. Abu Talib regards the proposal as being very auspicious. Muhammad tells his other uncles of Khadija's proposal as well. His uncle, Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib, goes with him to Khuwaylid ibn Asad and asks for Khadija's hand and he marries her.

He describes his nephew's character for those present at the marriage ceremony: No matter with whom among the Quraysh you compare Muhammad, Muhammad is superior to any one of them. Even though he does not have much wealth, he is genuine, sincere and trustworthy. These qualities will remain, while wealth is never lasting.

Hakim bin Hizam then offers Khadija bint Khuwaylid, the wife of Muhammad, to choose any slave for herself. She chooses Zayd, who is

then sent to her household. On the occasion of her marriage to Muhammad, Muhammad sets free his slave, Barakat (Umm Ayman). Barakat had been a servant woman who had been owned by the late father of Muhammad, Abd Allah bin Abd al-Muttalib. After the passing away of his father, this slave Barakat, had come into the custody of Muhammad. He often referred to her (Barakat) as his mother (*ummi*) in later days. Also on the occasion of marriage, Khadija had given Zayd as a gift to her new husband.

THE UNION FORTUNATE AND HAPPY

Upon him the marriage confers a faithful and affectionate companion and is not a not unfruitful wife. Khadija, on her part, fully appreciates the noble genius and commanding mind of Muhammad, which his reserved and contemplative habit, while it veils from others, could not conceal from her. Her house was thenceforward his home, and her bosom the safe receptacle of those doubts and longings after spiritual light which began to agitate his soul.

PERSON OF MUHAMMAD DESCRIBED

No description of Muhammad at this period has been attempted by tradtionalists.[44] But from the copious accounts of his person in later life, an approximate outline may be traced of his appearance in the prime of manhood. Slightly above the middle size, his figure though spare was handsome and commanding; the chest broad and open; the bones and framework large, and the joints well knit together. His neck was long and finely molded. His head, unusually large, gave space for a broad and noble brow. The hair, thick, jet black, and slightly curling, fell down over his ears. The eyebrows were arched and joined. The countenance thin, but ruddy. His large eyes, intensely black and piercing, received additional lustre from eyelashes long and dark. The nose was high and slightly aquiline, but fine, and at the end attenuated. The teeth were far apart. A long black bushy beard, reaching to the breast, added manliness and presence. His expression was pensive and contemplative. The face beamed with intelligence, though something of the sensuous might also be discerned. The skin was clear and soft; the only hair that met the eye was a fine thin line which ran down from the neck towards the navel. His broad back leaned slightly forward as he walked and his step was hasty, yet sharp and decided, like that of one rapidly descending a declivity.[45]

His Manner and Conversations

When he turned towards you, it is never partially, but with the whole body. Taciturn and reserved, Muhammad was sorrowful in temperament, continually meditating. He had no rest. He never spoke except from necessity. He used to be long silent. He expressed himself in pregnant sentences, using neither too few nor too many words. He was yet in company distinguished by a graceful urbanity. His words were pregnant and laconic, but when it pleased him to unbend, his speech was often humorous and sometimes pungent. At such seasons he entered with zest into the diversion of the moment, and now and then would laugh immoderately. But in general he listened to the conversation rather than joined in it.

His Emotions Under Control and Treatment of Friends and Enemies

He was the subject of strong passions, but they were so controlled by reason and discretion, that they rarely appeared upon the surface. He was generous and considerate towards his friends.

Latent Force of Will

Behind his quiet retiring exterior lay hid a high resolve, a singleness of purpose, a strength and fixedness of will, a sublime determination, destined to achieve the marvelous work of bowing towards himself the heart of all Arabia as the heart of one man. Khadija was the first to perceive the noble and commanding qualities of her husband, and with a child-like confidence surrendered to him her soul, her will, and faith.

History

Khadija tells Waraqa ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza, who is her cousin and a Christian who has studied the scriptures and is a scholar, what her servant Maysara had told her that the monk had said and how he had seen the two angels shading him. He says: If this is true, Khadija, verily Muhammad is the Prophet of this people. I know that a Prophet of this people is to be expected. His time has come, or words to that effect. Waraqa is finding the time of waiting wearisome and used to say: How long?[46]

Rebuilding the Kabah (605 CE)

The first incident which interrupts the even tenor of his married life is the rebuilding of the Kabah, when he is about thirty-five years of age.[47]

One of those violent floods which at times sweep down the valley, had shattered the Kabah. Its walls showed ominous rents, and they feared lest it should fall. The treasury is also insecure, owing to the absence of a roof and thieves had lately clambered over and stolen some of the precious relics. These are recovered, but it was resolved that similar danger should for the future be avoided by raising the walls and covering the roof. While the Quraysh deliberate how this might best be done, a Grecian ship is driven by stress of weather not far off upon the Red Sea shore. The news reaching Makkah, the aged chief, al-Walid, accompanied by a body of the Quraysh, proceed to the wreck, purchase the timber of the broken ship, and engage her captain, a Greek, by name Bakum, skilled in architecture, to assist in the reconstruction of the Kabah.[47] The several tribes of the Quraysh are divided into four bodies. To each is assigned the charge of one side. With such mysterious reverence is the Kabah regarded, that apprehensions are entertained lest the apparent sacrilege of dismantling the walls should expose even the pious restorers to divine wrath. At last Al-Walid seizes a pickaxe, and, invoking the Deity in a deprecatory prayer, detaches and throws down a portion of the wall. They then retire and wait until the morning, when, finding that no mischief has befallen the adventurous chief, all join in the demolition. They continue to dig until they reach a hard foundation of green stones which resists the pickaxe stroke.[48]

THE BLACK STONE

They begin to build the wall using that wood. Stones of grey granite from the neighboring hills are carried by the citizens upon their heads to the sacred enclosure. The whole body of Quraysh assisted in the work, and all proceeded harmoniously until the structure rose four or five feet above the surface. At that stage it becomes necessary to build the Black Stone into the eastern corner, with its surface so exposed as readily to be kissed by pilgrims upon foot. This stone, which is semicircular, measures some six inches in height and eight in breadth. It is of a reddish-black color.

RIVALRY FOR PLACING THE BLACK STONES

The virtue of the edifice depending on this mysterious stone, each family of the Quraysh advances pretensions to the exclusive right of placing it in its future receptacle. The contention becomes hot, and it is feared that bloodshed would ensue. For four or five days the building is suspended. At last the Quraysh again assemble on the spot amicably to decide the difficulty. Then the oldest citizen stands and says: O Quraysh,

listen to me! My advice is that the man who chance first to enter the court of the Kabah by yonder gate, he shall be chosen either to decide the difference amongst you, or himself to place the stone. The proposal is confirmed by acclamation, and they await the issue. Muhammad, who has at the moment is observed approaching, is the first to enter. Seeing him they all exclaim: Here comes the Trustworthy Arbiter. We are content to abide by his decision. Calm and self-possessed, Muhammad receives the commission and at once resolves upon an expedient which should conciliate them all. Taking off his mantle and spreading it upon the ground, he places the stone thereon, and says: Now let one from each of your four divisions come forward, and raise a corner of this mantle. Four chiefs approach, and holding each a corner lift thus the stone. When it reaches the proper height, Muhammad, with his own hand, guide it to its place. The decision raises the character of Muhammad for wisdom and judgment while the singular and providential call.

The Kabah Finished

The stone thus deposited in its proper place, the Quraysh build on without interruption. When the walls had risen to a considerable height they roof them over with fifteen rafters resting upon six central pillars A covering of cloth, thrown across the temple according to ancient custom, hung like a curtain round on every side.[49] The Kabah thus rebuilt is surrounded by a small enclosure, probably of not more than fifty yards in diameter. To the west stands the Hall of Council, with its door towards the Kabah. On the east is the gateway of the Shayba clan, close by the sacred well Zamzam. At a respectful distance are built all round the houses of the Quraysh. The great idol Hubal is placed in the center of the Kabah. Outside are ranged various other images. The door for entering the Kabah is then near the Black Stone on the eastern side, and several feet above the ground—a fact attributed by Muhammad to the pride of the Quraysh, and desire to retain in their own hands the power of admission. The building, though now substantial and secure, occupies somewhat less space than its dilapidated and roofless predecessor. The excluded area lay to the north-west, and is still without the sacred walls.[50] The Kabah, as it now stands, is an irregular cube, the sides of which vary from forty to fifty feet in length. The quadrangle, or court, corresponds loosely with the direction of its walls.

Absence of Any Paramount Authority

The circumstances which gave occasion for the decision of Muham-

mad strikingly illustrate the absence of any paramount authority in Makkah, and the number of persons among whom the power of government is at this time divided. Each main branch of the Qurayshite stock is independent of the other. The offices of state and religion created by Qusayy with the view of securing undisputed command had, from their distribution among several independent families, lost their potency. It is a period in which the genius of a Qusayy might have again dispensed with the prestige of place and birth, and asserted dominion by strength of will and inflexibility of purpose. But no such leader appears, and the divided aristocracy move on with feeble and distracted step.

UTHMAN IBN AL-HUWAYARITH ATTEMPTS TO SEIZE THE GOVERNMENT

A curious story is related of an attempt made about this period to gain the rule at Makkah. The aspirant is Uthman, nephew of Khadija's father. He is dissatisfied with the idolatrous system of Makkah and travels to the court of the Roman Emperor, where he is honorably entertained, and baptized.[51] Returning to Makkah, he lays claim, on the strength of an imperial grant, to the government of the city. But his claim is rejected, and he flees to Syria, where he found a refuge with the Ghassanid prince. He there revenge himself by using his influence for the imprison ment of the Qurayshite merchants who chance to be at the Syrian court. But emissaries from Makkah, by offering gifts, counteracted his authority with the prince, and at last procure his death.

COMMERCE FLOURISHED AT MAKKAH

Notwithstanding the absence of a strong government, Makkah continues to flourish under the generally harmonious combination of the several independent patriarchs. Commerce is carried towards Syria and Iran with greater vigor than ever. About the year 606 CE we read of a mercantile expedition under Abu Sufyan, which, for the first time, penetrates to the capital of Persia, and reaches even the presence of the Chosroes.

MUHAMMAD'S FAMILY GROWS

Within the next ten or twelve years (595-607 CE), Khadija bore to Muhammad two sons and four daughters. The first born was named Qasim and, after him, according to Arabian custom, Muhammad received the title of Abu Qasim, the father of Qasim. This son died at the age of two years. Meanwhile, his eldest daughter Zaynab was born. After

her, at intervals of one or two years, three other daughters, Ruqiyya, Umm Kulthum and Fatima. Last of all was born his second son, who died in infancy.

Salma, maid of Safiyya, Muhammad's aunt, officiated as midwife on these occasions. Khadija sacrificed at the birth of each boy two kid goats, and one at the birth of every girl. Her children she nursed herself. Many years after, Muhammad used to look back to this period of his life with fond remembrance. Indeed so much did he dwell upon the mutual love of Khadija and himself that Ayisha was later to declare herself more jealous of this rival whom she had never seen, than of all the other wives to contested with her for the affection of the Prophet.

Qasim ibn Muhammad

Qasim is their first child. He is born in Makkah before the beginning of the Prophet's mission and dies at the age of two. Muhammad is sometimes called Abu al-Qasim, "the father of Qasim."

Zaynab bint Muhammad ibn Abd Allah

Zaynab bint Muhammad is the oldest daughter of the Messenger o. God said to have been born in ca. 598 CE when the Prophet was twenty-seven years old. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does.

Ruqayya bint Muhammad ibn Abd Allah

Ruqayya, said to be born three years after her sister, Zaynab, in ca. 601 CE. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does.

Umm Kulthum bint Muhammad ibn Abd Allah

Umm Khulthum is born a year after her sister, Ruqayya. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does.

Ali ibn Abu Talib (599-661 CE)

Ali is born in 599 CE. When he is six years old in 605 CE, he moves to the home of Muhammad and Khadija where he grows up. He is placed in the care of Muhammad and Khadija because a of a famine in Makkah.

Muhammad Becomes the Guardian of His Cousin Ali

Shortly after the rebuilding of the Kabah, Muhammad comforts himself for the loss of his infant son Qasim by becoming the guardian of Ali, his first cousin, the child of his uncle, Abu Talib.[52] It fell out thus: a season of severe scarcity visited Makkah and Abu Talib, still poor, was put to shifts for the support of his numerous family. His difficulties were

perceived by Muhammad, who, prompted by his usual kindness and consideration, repaired to his rich uncle Abbas, and said: O Abbas! Your brother, Abu Talib, has a burdensome family, and you see what straits men are brought to. Let us go to him and relieve him somewhat of the care of his children. I will take one son, if you will take another. And we shall support them. Abbas consenting, they proposed the thing to Abu Talib. He replied: Leave me Akil and Talib and do you with the others as it pleases you. So Muhammad took Ali, and Abbas took Jafar.

Zayd ibn Haritha, Adopted Son of Muhammad

Sold into slavery at an early age, he is bought by a nephew of Khadija, the wife of the Messenger of God. She gives him to Muhammad in 595 CE before the revelation begins at the time of their marriage. Zayd is treated with such kindness and love that when his own father comes to get him, although Muhammad tells him that he is free to return to his home with his father, Zayd prefers to remain with Muhammad and Khadija. Once Zayd made this decision, Muhammad took him straightway to the Black Stone of the Kabah and said: Bear testimony, all you that are present. Zayd is my son. I will be his heir, and he shall be mine.

Fatima bint Muhammad ibn Abd Allah

The youngest daughter of the Messenger of God, Fatima is born some say five years before the Messenger began his mission and some say five years after the mission began. Whichever one it is, it has been recorded that her early years are spent bearing the suffering and difficulties of her father with a very special sympathy. For those who say she is born five years before the revelation, they say that she accepts the Quranic message at the same time as her mother and sisters.

Abd Allah

Abd Allah is born after the call to prophethood. He dies while still young.

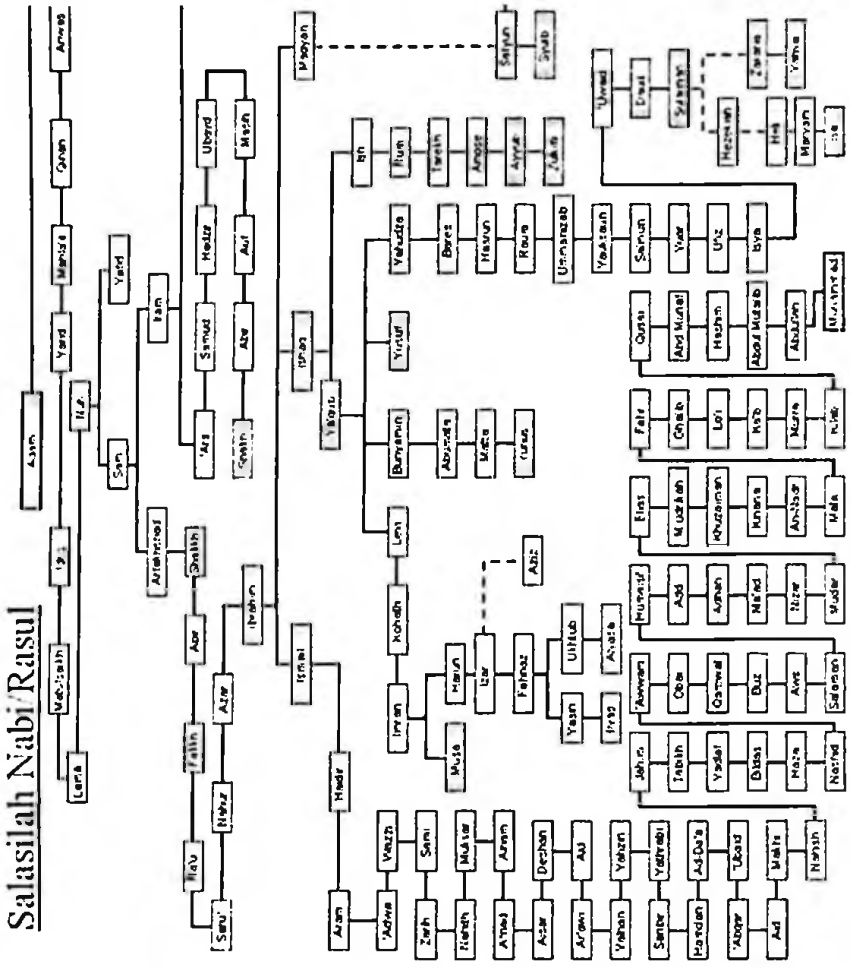
Barakat

Born of Abyssinian parents, Barakat (Umm Ayman) is sold into slavery in Makkah like so many whose names we do not even know. As her name Barakat indicates, she is among the most blessed because she is bought and freed by Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Muttalib and taken to his home to help his wife, Amina. She is to become one of the women who raised God's Messenger. She accepts the Quranic message when the other members of his family do.

Marriage of Three Eldest Daughters

The sister of Khadija is married to al-Rabi, a descendant of Abd al-Shams, and has borne him a son called Abu al-Aas who, in course of time has grown up, and is respected for his uprightness and mercantile success. Khadija loves her nephew, and looks upon him as her own son. She prevails upon Muhammad to join him in marriage with their eldest daughter, Zaynab, who had but just reached the age of womanhood. The union proved to be one of real affection, though during the troubled rise of the Quranic message it was checquered, as we shall see, by temporary severance, and by several incidents. Somewhat later the two younger daughters, Ruqiyya and Umm Kulthum, are to be given in marriage to Utba and Utayba, sons of Abu Lahab, uncle of Muhammad, but these marriages are never consumated and dissolved when the revelation begins.[53] Fatima, the youngest, was yet a child. By Muhammad's desire Zayd marries Muhammad's attendant, Umm Ayman (Barakat). Though nearly double his age, she bears him a son called Usama, who is the leader in the expedition to Syria at the time of Muhammad's fatal illness.[54]

Appendix 1: Genealogy of the Messenger from the Prophets of Monotheism



NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. Francis E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, SUNY Press, 1994, p 109.

2. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, pp 87-88.

3. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 87-88.

4. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 87-88.

5. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 87-88.

6. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 87-88; 7:29 ff is revealed about them.

7. *Taj al-Arus*

8. *Muhit al-Muhit,* I, 443-444.

9. See Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, II, 603.

10. Toshiko Izutsu, *Structure of Ethical Terms*, p 27.

11. Izutsu, *Structure of Ethical Terms*, p 29.

12. Izutsu, *Structure of Ethical Terms*, p 29.

13. Ibn Qutayba, p 28.

14. Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari,* i, 1772.

15. Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari,* i. 1772. He dies in Abyssinia. After the migration of Muhammad to Madinah, the Messenger marries Ubayd Allah's widow, Umm Habiba, daughter of Abu Sufyan.

16. Hisham ibn Urwa from his father on the authority of his mother Asma bint Abu Bakr said that she saw him.

17. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 98-100.

18. See Appendix 1 for a chart of the names.

19. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 41 ff.

20. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 56-57.

21. Yazid ibn Abu Habib al-Misri from Marthad ibn Abd Allah al-Yazani from Abd Allah ibn Zurayr al-Ghafiqi told me that he heard Ali ibn Abi Talib telling the story of Zamzam. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 45; pp 62-64)

22. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 4-18.

23. Ibn Hisham, p 109; Tabari, i. 1078; Ibn Saad, p 58. Abd Allah, or Servant of God, was a name common among the pre-Quranic Arabs.

24. Tabari, i. 1081.

25. That is to say, not reared at home, and, therefore, of an inferior kind.

26. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 70-71.

27. Ibn Hisham, p. 107; Ibn Saad, p. 73.

28. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 73-76.

29. Ibn Hisham, p. 108; Tabari, i. 1123; Ibn Saad, p. 74.

30. Ibn Hisham, p 1 I 5; Tabari, i. 1124; Ibn Saad, p 75.

31. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 79-81.

32. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 71.

33. Later chapters will show the significance of this Fair in the life of the Prophet.

34 Harb was the son of Umayr and father of Muhammad's opponent Abu Sufyan. As confederate of the murderer he was bound to take up his cause.

35 The Traditions differ as to the role played by Muhammad..

36. Ibn Hisham, p. 85; Ibn Saad, p. 86.

37. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 86.

38. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 86.

39. Ibn Hisham, p. 119; Tabari, i. 1127; Ibn Saad, p. 82.

40. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 82.

41. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 82.

42. Thus Nestor, seeing Muhammad as he sat under a tree below which none ever sat but a Prophet, immediately embraced him as such.

43. Her house was a little to the north-east of the Kabah. It is called the birth place of Fatima.

44. Cf. Ibn Hisham, p 266.

45. Some say he walked like a man ascending a hill; others as if he were wrenching his foot from a stone. These descriptions imply decision of step. The hollows of his hands and feet were more than usually filled and level: a feature regarded by Orientals with interest.

46. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 82.

47. Ibn Saad, p 93. Ibn Hisham does not mention the captain, and says a Copt carpenter rebuilt the House. Tabari, i. II 35.

48. Ibn Hisham, p 122; Tabari, i. I 138; Ibn Saad, p 93.

49. The custom of veiling the Kabah is of extremely remote date. Originally the cloth covered the whole building, including the top. Before a roof was built by the Quraysh it must have constituted the only protection from the weather. The curtain is now attached only to the walls. The covering in those days was of Yemen cloth. Umar renewed it yearly of Egyptian linen. Various materials, as striped Yemen stuff, red brocade, or black silk, have been at different times used. It has been changed as often as six times a year. To supply the curtain came to be regarded as a sign of sovereignty. It is now worked at Cairo, and renewed yearly at the season of pilgrimage. It is a coarse tissue of silk and cotton mixed. A band of two feet, embroidered with texts, is inserted about a third from the top. It was of a brilliant black (says Burton), and the *hizam*—the zone or golden band running round the upper portion of the building —as well as the *burka* (face veil) were of dazzling brightness. The *burka* is the gold embroidered curtain covering the Kabah door. Muir, Vol. iii. p 295.

50. The sill of the door is about seven feet above the level of the ground, and a movable wooden staircase is used for ascending. It is distant six feet from the corner of the Black Stone. After the conquest of Makkah, Muhammad is related to have said: Truly, they have drawn back the foundations of the Kabah from their original limit and if it were not that the inhabitants are fresh from idolatry, I would have restored to the building that which was excluded from the area thereof. But in case the people may again after my time need to renew the structure, come, and I will show you what was left out.' So he showed a space in the or excluded area of about seven yards. This space at present lies to the north-west of the Kabah, about the distance pointed out by Muhammad as the limit of the old building. It is now marked by a semicircular parapet of white marble, five feet high, facing the Kabah, and is still regarded as equally holy with the temple itself. Uthman A.H. 26, and ibn al-Zubayr, A.H. 64, enlarged the square by purchasing and removing the adjoining houses of the Quraysh, and enclosed it by a wall. Various similar changes and improvements were made by successive Caliphs until, in the third century of the Hijra, the quadrangle with its imposing colonnade assumed its present dimensions. Muir, ibid.

51. Ibn Hisham, p 143.

52. Tabari, i. I 163.

53. When the Messenger of God was sent and God sent down, 'Perish the hands of Abu Lahab,' (111) Abu Lahab said to his sons that they must not marry the daughters of the Messenger.

54. Ibn Hisham, p 143.

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series

Critical Thinking Quranic Perspective

Teacher's Manual

Laleh Bakhtiar

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

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PREFACE

What is the critical or creative thinking that the Quran taught the Prophet and continues to teach us? Critical or creative thinking is known as discernment (*furqan*) in the Quran. Critical thinking is defined as: The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and action.

Quranic thinking becomes critical when it evaluates the reasoning of a sign (*ayah*): Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner. The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, (ask questions) and solve problems. In general, our thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought, that is, when there is thinking wedded with wisdom (*hikmah*).[1]

This critical thinking *Teacher's Manual* teaches the process of **how** the Quran teaches us to think. Doing this, studying **how** the Quran teaches us to think, we learn to connect what we do with what we think and believe. In terms of psychology, we could say we learn to connect our behavior to our cognition. This is different from the disconnect that occurs between our behavior and our cognition when we just memorize the Quran without understanding the process behind what the sacred text says which is, unfortunately, the way full time and weekend Islamic schools in the West teach. That is, if we were to study history and its principles, or any secular subject in a mainstream American high school today, our teacher would most probably be teaching us through the process of critical thinking that he or she learned to become a teacher.

However, it needs to be said that learning **how** the Quran teaches us to think in no way questions the eternality of the Quran or in its having been a divine revelation to Prophet Muhammad. Just as a study of history as the "content" of a course in history has to accept the principles of history, so a study of the sacred text has to accept the principles that Quranic "content" teaches.

In addition, even though this sacred text was revealed centuries before there was any formal study of the critical thinking process, all of the later nine standards, eight elements of reasoning and seven moral traits are to be found in the Quran as we hope to show through this course on Quranic Studies. The Quran actually incorporates and teaches these to ones who engage in the process of critical thinking.

What is the Quranic Worldview?

> The Quranic worldview contains a foundation for reform. It should be reflected in a cogent, coherent, critical manner in the structure, applications, and outcomes of Islamic societies. Lack of awareness of the Islamic worldview's structure and content has caused a loss of vitality, resilience, relevance, and intellectual productivity. Islamic

principles, concepts, and values lack influence despite the abundance of writings from Islamic heritage and methodological tools for understanding....

Muslim thought patterns should be reformed through the critical study and examination of Muslim tradition. ... Muslim intellectuals should ... adopt objectivity and constructive criticism to view their own history and culture. The Islamic worldview contains the doctrinal foundation and the intellectual, psychological, and emotional impetus for the Muslim community to recover what it has lost....

The purported conflict between revelation and reason for Muslim communities is an illusion with no foundation in human nature or objective reality. At question are the written texts of revelation and the reality of human nature and the laws of the universe. Reason's job is to verify that revelation describes the reality of human nature and the wider universe. Since revelation and universal laws derive from the same source, there is no discord between the actual meaning and guidance conveyed by divine revelation....

Concern regarding the mind, or reason, relates not to reason or its axioms–which are an unchanging aspect of human nature–but rather with how reason and its capacities are used. The Quran speaks frequently of the processes of comprehending (*al-tadabbur*)–using one's reason (*al-aql/al-taaqqul*), reflection (*al-tafakkur*), and seeing (*al-ibsar*).

The proper understanding of revelation cannot possibly require coercion, compulsion, or a negation of human nature or laws of the cosmos. Divine revelation came to lead us to an understanding of our own true nature and creation as a whole: the only way to build a just, healthy, creative society. This revelation urges and guides human beings to activate and obey their will to do good. For example, the Quran ... guides us to use our human capacity for good, and is motivated by faith, wisdom, and a sense of ethical purposefulness. The Quranic worldview contains no possibility of genuine conflict between revelation and the facts of nature, human and cosmic. All a seeker requires to discover truth is to persevere in weighing and comparing available input....

Over time, the Quran was viewed just as a means to acquire a blessing and a heavenly reward through recitation and memorization while *ijtihad* (attempts to grapple with its meanings in new and creative ways) was lacking.... The Quran remains a constitution, an eternal message, a call, a law, and a worldview valid for all times and places. Its function is not to issue instructions or promulgate laws to manage society in specific times and places; instead, it presents a timeless, divinely inspired worldview....

The Quranic worldview is an ethical, monotheistic, purposeful,

positive perspective on the world and reflects the healthy, well-balanced human nature God created within us. Subsequently, a scientific, law-governed perspective supports responsible stewardship of the earth and its riches. A Muslim who has grasped the Quranic worldview will live in harmony with his or her God-given nature, which is essentially good. We as Muslims are called upon to instill in our children's minds and hearts a vision of love, dignity, and peace....

We can begin to envision the implications of the Quranic worldview for our societal institutions by applying its concepts to various areas of life. Such concepts include mutual consultation, justice, charity, the doing of good, and purification. Opposing concepts are injustice, wrongdoing, aggression, and all that counters reason and human interests. We seek to establish a proper understanding of the Quran as the source of guidance and a constructive spiritual worldview for our lives and society. The Quran serves as a measuring rod for all proposed aims and purposes–as well as a set of criteria for evaluating the content of narratives and other texts....

The Quran is not a discourse of the supernatural and the miraculous, like revelations delivered to humanity in earlier periods of its development. It is the discourse of knowledge, reading, reflection, and contemplation; of reason, argument, and persuasion, and of guidance, brotherhood, justice, and peace....

Sound application of Islamic values and concepts within the context of particular times and places requires wisdom, knowledge, and discernment. The Quran, which is the word of God and His final message to humankind, is also the source of valid guidance in the proper use of nature and the laws of the cosmos in all times and places....

Monotheism is the most fundamental principle of this worldview, since it provides the most intuitively convincing, universal response to human spiritual need. It also represents the 'ceiling' of human logic in understanding the various dimensions of life and existence: *There is not like Him anything. He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (42:11) The Quran's instructions reflect the essential nature of human conscience with its purposeful, ethical, and spiritual inclinations.

The principle of divinely granted stewardship is reflected in God's statement to the angels upon His creation of human beings. On the individual and communal levels, humans possess awareness and understanding. The principle of stewardship, which implies the ability to act in the world, bestows an honored position on human beings. This position entails the right to exercise freedom in the making of life decisions, and duties, responsibilities, and accountability for our actions on earth....

Justice (fair-mindedness) is the central aim of all human action and interaction on all levels: material, spiritual, economic, social, and

political. Without justice and moderation, all dimensions of human existence and stewardship are devoid of meaning and purpose: justice is the measuring rod for sound human conduct. The Quran helps us see the all-inclusiveness of justice in all aspects of life for the individual and the community....

Humans are distinguished from other creatures by their spirit and conscience, and by their desire to seek knowledge. This honor entails a responsibility that in turn requires that humans enjoy freedom to make meaningful choices. However, freedom does not justify chaos or hurting the rights and interests of other individuals, the community, or coming generations. Hence, no one may infringe upon this human right of stewardship in its individual and communal dimensions....

Subjective personal freedom is a freedom of conscience related to an individual's convictions, doctrinal beliefs, and worldview.... (It) is the freedom to act within the social sphere. This freedom impacts society and has corresponding limits determined through mutual consultation. The community determines boundaries and controls and should strive for the proper balance between individual rights and freedoms, and the right of the community to ensure its well-being and survival.

The Quran assures us that God's enduring reward shall be given to those ...*who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them*... (42:38). Consultation's purpose is to provide guidance for the ordering and management of society as a whole without infringing on individual rights and freedoms.

People are led both rationally and intuitively to the conviction that, within the limits of their abilities and circumstances, they are free to make meaningful choices for which they are responsible. The Quranic worldview sees human life as a serious, meaningful venture of fundamental goodness. It sees the fruit of all we accomplish in this life by way of reform, creativity, and service as extending into the spiritual realm of eternity. Our inborn spiritual perception is the foundation for the religious and moral sense. By bringing such aspirations into the center of our awareness, the Quranic worldview becomes our focus and source of inspiration.

One becomes better able to make conscious, well-informed, and responsible decisions about one's direction in life. The worldview intensifies our awareness of our responsibility and moral accountability, which are inseparable parts of our God-given human nature and among the features that qualify us to fulfill the role of God's stewards on earth.

By virtue of their growing knowledge, human beings have been given the ability to make use of the earth's resources and to build cultures and civilizations. They have also been granted freedom, the abil-

ity to choose, and a capacity for spiritual and moral perception that leads them to live purposefully and to seek goodness and rectitude, and an awareness of their accountability before their Maker....

To right the course of Islamic thought and culture today, Muslim thinkers and reformers should reclaim a comprehensive, scientific point of view (of critical thinking). Then, based on the solid foundation of the Quranic worldview, they can reform the Muslim community's approach to culture, education, and child rearing, which form the basis for the community's thought, academic institutions, and training.

The senses serve as tools of reason, which is the measure of human thought. Based on logic and the fundamentals of reason and common sense, we make observations and comparisons that enable us to form judgments about the world. The will serves as the basis for one's choices and decisions, either in pursuit of righteousness, justice, and reform on earth—or in satisfaction of selfish ends. As individuals and as a society, Muslims can repair what is broken in their way of thinking and the thinking of future generations.

The task of reform belongs to Muslim thinkers and pioneers who, in order to overcome cultural restraints and rigid, backward thinking, will need a generous dose of objectivity (non-egocentricity and/or socio-centricity), patience (integrity, confidence in reason, fair-mindedness), and courage.

We need an earnest, objective, critical reexamination of this community's heritage and history so we can distinguish the good from the bad, the useful from the useless. If we purge our intellectual, educational, and social spheres of weaknesses, prejudices, and distortions, we will be able to nurture an objective (non-egocentric), Quranically grounded, global perspective that derives its inspiration from the wisdom embodied in the life of the Prophet and the ways he applied the teachings of the Quran to real-life situations.

Knowledge and understanding are, first and foremost, the craft of thinkers, scholars, academicians, and intellectuals, as well as that of schools and teachers. The parents' tasks are, first and foremost, child-rearing and the education and refinement of their children's spirit and conscience, and guidance in their children developing proper conduct. Thinkers, educators, and reformers need to pay particular attention to writings and institutions that concern themselves with research on education from a cultural, scientific perspective, and then provide such research to parents by whatever means possible, particularly now that we live in the age of electronic communication and the Internet.

Muslim students and researchers need to do the following: free themselves from the habit of imitation (*taqlid*) and mental subordination, arming themselves with a creative, comprehensive, critical, scientific, and analytical way of thinking; develop a good understanding

of the Quranic perspective on human beings and the world around them, with its unchanging values and principles; equip themselves with a thorough knowledge of the scientific (and critical thinking) method of studying human nature and the laws and patterns of the material universe, as well as human societies and their potentials and strengths within the context of their particular temporal and geographic contexts; and benefit from both the Islamic heritage and the scientific achievements of modern Western society.[2]

About This Book

This work is divided into three chapters:

Chapter I: Critical thinkers apply the Nine Standards (clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, importance and fairness) to:

Chapter II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning (point of view, purpose, questions, inferences, concepts, information, implications, assumptions): Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues) in order to develop:

Chapter III: The Seven Moral Traits (belief in One God, God-consciousness, integrity through moral discipline, empowering courage, persevering in goodness, empathic altruism and being fair and just).

As previously noted, critical thinking is a process that analyzes how we think. This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. In English, the words "critical thinking" and "critical judgment" both refer to basically the Quranic concept of discernment (*furqan*). While our first reaction to the word "critical" may be that we think it means something negative such as "to criticize," this is not what critical thinking or critical judgment is about. There are no negative connotations. Critical thinking (judgment, discernment (*furqan*)) refers to analyzing thoughts in order to become better at thinking. In this case, it is analyzing the Quranic text by studying HOW to think.

Students best develop Quranic critical thinking skills through dialogical learning. Dialogic learning is learning that takes place through dialogue. It is typically the result of dialogue where those engaging in dialogue relate to, or believe in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. In other words, the consequence of a dialogue in which different people provide arguments based on validity claims and not on power claims. Through dialogue with the Quranic text with classmates, with a teacher or mentor, the goal of the students is to achieve ethically rational development, that is, a genuine sense of justice or fair-mindedness.

If critical thinking is taught simply as atomic skills, separate from the empathic practice of entering into points of view that students are fearful of or hostile toward, they will simply find additional means of rationalizing prejudices

and preconceptions, or convincing people that their point of view is the correct one.•

In order for students to develop into Quranic critical thinkers, they have to engage in questioning as the sacred text does through many of its signs (*ayat*). Learning from the Quranic way of questioning deepens students' understanding and strengthens their belief. They are then able to put what they believe into practice in a fair and meaningfully way. As emerging critical thinkers who learn to deeply question what they believe, they bridge any gap that may be present between their beliefs and their practice.

How Do Teachers Ask Questions?

As teachers, we want students to think with us as we lecture or guide a discussion. How do we ask questions that stimulate this kind of intellectual engagement? We can best promote critical thinking by asking open questions that cannot simply be answered 'yes' or 'no' or with a single 'right' answer. Our questions can invite Quranic Studies students to analyze, synthesize or evaluate'course material. 'Why?' and 'How?' can be more profitable for discussion than 'What?'

Ask your students to clarify their comments or answers. You might do this even when the comment is clear to you. This can be helpful for other students in the class:

Are you saying that...?
Could you give me an example?

Ask questions that probe your students' assumptions. They may be unaware of their assumptions until asked to articulate them:

What are you assuming here? What could we assume instead?
Is this always the case?
Why do you think the assumption holds here?

Ask questions that probe reasons, evidence and causes. Lead students to support their arguments:

What are your reasons for saying that?
What other information do we need to know?
Is there good evidence for believing that?
What do you think the cause is?

Ask questions that probe implications and consequences:

When you say___, are you implying that____?
If you do that, what will happen?

How is that connected to the question?
How does that bear on ____?
How does that follow?

Ask questions that help students recognize, and clarify, their own thought processes:

Could you explain further where you're having difficulties?
Could you express that point in another way?
Could you be more specific?
Have you thought of...?
What factors make this a difficult problem?
What would this look like from the point of view of ___?

Ask questions that require students to defend their positions. Play 'devil's advocate,' (a person who expresses a contentious opinion in order to provoke debate or test the strength of the opposing arguments) even with students you agree with or who articulate their points most clearly and persuasively. All students can benefit from this intellectual exercise.

Ask a question with multiple possible answers. Write all options on the board without commenting on the list being produced. Then have the class discuss the options, explaining why some answers are better than others.

When you ask open questions, be sure to allow students time to respond (between 10 and 30 seconds). This time feels longer than it is; try not to rush in too soon to rephrase the question or answer it yourself. If the silence is protracted, however, you might try rephrasing the question or have a student rephrase it for you or give students a few minutes to write about the question or discuss it with a peer.[3]

TACTICS

In addition to placing an emphasis on questions, have students:

Summarize or put into their own words what the Quran has said.
Elaborate on what it has said.
Relate the issue or content to their own knowledge and experience.
Give examples to clarify or support what they have said.
Make connections between related concepts.
State the question at issue.
Describe to what extent their point of view differs.

THIS QURANIC TRANSLATION

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran* unless other-

wise indicated. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of *The Sublime Quran*, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

Universal: The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature.

This opens up the study of who this Prophet actually and adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

Inclusive language: Examples of this would be the translation of the derivatives of *k f r*, literally meaning: To hide, to deny the truth or cover over something. Most English translations use the verb "to disbelieve" or "to be an infidel" making the active participle "one who disbelieves" or "one who is an infidel." In the present translation the more inclusive viable terminology is used, namely, "to be ungrateful," the active participle being "one who is ungrateful" where the context allows. The Quran itself declares its timelessness and universality. Therefore, its understanding or interpretation must also be eternal and for all time, inclusive of all of humanity rather than exclusive to one group of people.

Another example is that when the Quran refers to "the Children of Israel," it is not referring to a geographical area, but to Prophet Jacob who was called "Israel." Therefore, the Children of Jacob is used here.

Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well intentioned a person may be, the use of the word Allah instead of God when speaking English, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (*tawhid*). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, name- ly, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

Thou vs You: In regard to the second person singular (thou) as opposed to the second person plural (you) in English, in the Arabic language is very specific. There are fourteen personal pronouns in Arabic as opposed to six in English. Arabic includes the nominative "thou"; the objective, "thee"; and the possessive, "thy".

It is important to keep the distinction. The distinction between using the second person singular (Thou, Thee, Thy) refers to the Oneness of God, the singular God. Whereas when "you" or second person plural is used for God, we are indicating that there are plural gods. This is the only sin that the Quran says is unforgivable.

In order not to burden the reader with King James' language, wherever the reader sees **you** in bold, this indicates that the original was thou or thee, **your** indicates that the original was thy.

God knows best.

Laleh Bakhtiar
Chicago, 2016

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My gratitude to Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali for his permission to use his excellent essay on "Reading the Signs: A Quranic Perspective on Thinking," as the Introduction to this work. His work gave me the courage to publish what I had learned of critical thinking when translating the Quran into English. I realized that not only did the Quran teach me what to think, but more importantly for critical thinking, it taught me HOW to think and Professor Kamali's essay confirmed my intuitions as I hope it does for the readers of this textbook.

I am also grateful to the Center for Critical Thinking[4] and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (*furqan*), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, *In the Shade of the Quran*, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

My thanks also to Abu Hamid Abu Sulayman for his work entitled, *The Quranic World View*, published by IIIT in Herndon, Virginia and M. M. Sharif and B. A. Dar for their essays: "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," respectively published in *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (1963), now available online. The fruit of these latter two works and their importance for critical thinking are to be found in Chapter III of this work indicated by *.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PROLOGUE[5]

It is important for students to learn to read well as they develop into Quranic critical thinkers. By doing so, they learn how to engage in a process known as "close reading." Close reading describes, in terms of critical thinking, "the careful, sustained interpretation of a brief passage of text. Such a reading places great emphasis on the single particular over the general, paying close attention to individual words, syntax, and the order in which sentences and ideas unfold as they are read.•

Students in a Quranic Studies program not only need to learn how the sacred text teaches Quranic thinking, but also how to "own" the important Quranic ideas. This is accomplished by students learning the active use of intellectual or cognitive skills. This, in turn, requires the art of close reading by actually learning how to put it into practice in understanding the Quranic message.

The focus here in this prologue is to show some of the basics necessary to develop close reading. What does it mean to think Quranically from a close reading of it?

Reading Needs to Have a Purpose

When we ask questions about the purpose, aim or objective of the Quranic text we are reading, this forces us to develop certain tasks. Readers developing into critical thinkers read for a purpose, a goal, objective or agenda. What this purpose is depends on what they are reading and determines how they read. In the case here, the purpose is to understand the Quranic message. Reading the Quran has a universal purpose: to figure out or understand the logic of what God has to say on a given subject by asking as they read the Quran:

What is the purpose of this sign (*ayah*)?
Is the Quranic purpose in this sign well stated or clearly implied?

The Quran consists of words and when students engage in close reading, they learn to translate the words into meaning. The Quranic message has translated ideas and experiences of the past into words. Now students must take those same Quranic words and re-translate them back into the original meaning that they had with the aid of their own ideas and experiences. By accurately translating Quranic words into intended meanings, critical thinkers have engaged in analytic, evaluative, and creative acts.

Unfortunately, few Quranic readers are skilled at translating the Quranic meanings of words. There are few who are able to accurately mirror the meaning that the Quran intended. They project their own meanings into it. They unintentionally distort or violate the original meaning of the Quran that they read.

In general, then, students should read to figure out what the Quranic signs (*ayat*) mean. Their reading will be influenced by their purpose for reading and by the nature of the Quranic text itself. For example, if students are reading for

spiritual reward, it may not matter if they do not fully understand the Quranic text. This is fine as long as they know that they do not deeply understand it. Some of the various purposes for reading the Quran include:

1. Sheer spiritual reward: requires no particular skill level.
2. To enter, understand, and appreciate the Quranic world-view: requires close reading skills in working through a challenging series of tasks that stretch our minds.
3. To learn how the Quran teaches us to think: requires close reading skills in internalizing and taking ownership of the Quran's organized system of meanings.

With these points in mind, teachers know that in close reading there are certain tools and skills needed to read the sacred text. In addition to being clear about the purpose of students in reading, they must also be clear about God's purpose in the revelation. Both are relevant.

Developing Quranic Knowledge[6]

All knowledge exists in 'systems' of meanings, with interrelated primary ideas, secondary ideas, and peripheral ideas. Imagine a series of circles beginning with a small core circle of primary ideas, surrounded by concentric circles of secondary ideas, moving outward to an outer circle of peripheral ideas. The first ideas, at the core, explain the secondary and peripheral ideas. Whenever we read the Quran to acquire knowledge, we should take ownership, first, of the first ideas. These primary ideas are the key to understanding all of the other ideas. Moreover, when we gain an initial understanding of the primary ideas, we can begin to think within the system as a whole. The sooner we begin to think within a system, the sooner the system becomes meaningful to us.

We should relate the core ideas we learn within Quranic Studies to core ideas in other systems of knowledge, for knowledge exists not only in a system but also in relation to all other systems of knowledge. To do this, we must learn how to read the Quran for its core ideas and for its system-defining function. Mastering any set of foundational ideas makes it easier to learn other foundational ideas. Learning to think within one system of knowledge helps us learn how to think within other systems.

Reading to Understand the Quranic System of Thought

Close reading of the Quran requires disciplined reading in understanding tits systems of thought. This means learning the elements of how our thought process works. Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve is-

sues). Reading in this way, we are able to construct the Quranic systems of thought.

When we come to understand these eight basic elements of thinking or reasoning, we have powerful intellectual tools that enable us to think better. We understand that whenever we reason about anything whatsoever, these parts of thinking are inherent in our mind's operations.•

Thus, when we read, we are reasoning through the Quran; we are reading for a purpose, using concepts or ideas and assumptions of our own, making inferences, thinking within a personal point of view. At the same time, the Quranic text we are reading is the product of Quranic reasoning. We, therefore, recognize that embedded in the Quran is God's purpose, questions, assumptions, concepts and so forth. The better we are at understanding our own reasoning within our own perspective, the better we can understand the reasoning of the Quran. The better we understand Quranic logic, the better we understand our own.•

When we can effectively move back and forth between how we are reading and how we are thinking, we bring how we think to bear upon what we read and what we read to bear upon how we think. We are able to change our thinking when the logic of how we read improves how we think. We are able to withhold accepting new ideas when we cannot reconcile them with our own.•

Understanding the Quranic Systems of Thought

To understand the Quranic point of view, disciplined reading approaches it as systems of thought. The Quranic sacred text is not only based on a system of thought, but it is a system of systems. Quranic content as a large-scale system also contains sub-systems within it: semantics, grammar, rules of recitation, pronunciation, calligraphy, exegeses, and so forth, as well as serving as the basis for the development of many other sciences such as cosmology, metaphysics, physics, biology, psychology, economics and so on. Therefore, the sacred text can be seen as a system of systems.

To understand this system within systems, students have to actively engage in a dialogue with the sacred text, actively seeking the Quranic purpose in its revelation, looking for the systems of meaning within it.

Close reading requires that students form questions and look for answers to those questions while, at the same time, reading the text. Students should learn to connect new ideas they are learning from the sacred text to ideas they have previously learned about the Quran, correcting their errors when it is necessary to do so.

Who is a Strong-Sense Quranic Critical Thinker?

According to research done in this area, the following would describe a strong-sense Quranic critical thinker:

1. An ability to question deeply their own framework of thought;

2. An ability to reconstruct sympathetically and imaginatively the strongest versions of points of view and frameworks of thought opposed to their own;

3. An ability to reason dialectically (multilogically) in such a way as to determine when one's own point of view is at its weakest and when an opposing point of view is at its strongest.

The Quran, for instance, often makes contrasts between believers and non-believers (18:29), between paradise and hell, life and death, angels and satans, manifest and hidden and openness (see 4:123-124 and 92:5-8). It uses phrases such as 'whosoever ... and whosoever; as for one who ... and as for one who; and as for ... and as for (see 3:106-107; 89:25-30).

A Quranic thinker, comfortable thinking about multilogical problems, is comfortable thinking within multiple perspectives, in engaging in dialogical and dialectical thinking, in practicing empathic altruism, in thinking across disciplines and domains. Multilogical thinking is thinking that sympathetically enters, considers, and reasons within multiple points of view.

Strong sense critical thinkers are not routinely blinded by their own points of view. They know they have points of view and therefore recognize on what framework of assumptions and ideas their own thinking is based. They realize the necessity of putting their own assumptions and ideas to the test of the strongest objections that can be leveled against them. Teaching for critical thinking in the strong sense is teaching so that students analyze and develop, understand, and critique their own deepest prejudices, biases, and misconceptions, thereby discovering and contesting their own egocentric and sociocentric tendencies.

Only if we contest our inevitable egocentric and sociocentric habits of thought can we hope to think Quranically in a genuinely fashion. Only dialogical thinking about basic issues that genuinely matter to the individual provides the kind of practice and skill essential to strong sense critical thinking.

Who is a Weak-Sense Quranic Critical Thinker?

Again, based on studies in this area, the following characteristics defines a weak-sense Quranic critical thinker:

1. Those who do not hold themselves or those with whom they ego-identify to the same intellectual standards to which they hold 'opponents' (for example, the early ungrateful Quraysh).

2. Those who have not learned how to reason empathically within points of view or frames of reference with which they disagree (extremists who operate from a scriptural rigid and intensely literal interpretation of the Quranic text).

3. Those who tend to think monologically (within only one point of view; those who have a tribal mentality and deep intolerance).

4. Those who do not genuinely accept, though they may verbally espouse, the values of critical thinking (narrow-minded, inflexible individuals).

5. Those who use the intellectual skills of critical thinking selectively and

self-deceptively to foster and serve their vested interests (at the expense of truth such as hypocrites to whom the Quran describes); able to identify flaws in the reasoning of others and refute them; able to shore up their own beliefs with reasons.

Who is an Uncritical Quranic Thinker?

The following describes the uncritical Quranic thinker based on cognitive research studies:

1. Such a person has undeveloped intellectual skills resulting so that such person is naive, conformist, easily manipulated, dogmatic, easily confused, unclear, closed-minded, careless in word choice, inconsistent, unable to distinguish evidence from interpretation.
2. Does not recognize that he or she is not a critical thinker.

Reading While Thinking About Reading

The human being has been endowed with a reflective mind. It can then use this to reflectively think about how it is reading the Quran. In this case, the mind moves back and forth between thinking and, then, thinking about thinking. It moves forward a bit, then loops back upon itself to check on its own operations. It checks its tracks. It makes good its ground. It rises above itself and exercises oversight on itself.•

For students to learn how to monitor their own thinking while processing what the Quran is teaching is an important ability for them to have. An example would be, if students do not understand what they are reading, they should slow down and put the meaning of each sentence they are reading in their own words.

How to Engage the Sacred Text

In engaging with the sacred text, students should ask themselves:

Can I summarize the meaning of this sacred text in my own words?
Can I give examples from my own experience of what the Quran is saying?
Can I generate metaphors and diagrams to illustrate what the Quran is saying?
What is clear to me from the Quranic signs and what do I need clarified?
Can I connect the core ideas in the Quran to other core ideas I understand?

The Quran is a Teacher

The Quran is a teacher. By close reading of the Quranic text, students learn the essential meaning of how the teacher is teaching. This, then, helps students put the Quranic meanings into practice. When they take the basic, core ideas of the Quranic teachings into their minds through close reading, they can begin to use them productively in their own life.

Questions to Ask Students

Do you know how your mind operates?
Are you aware of your prejudices and preconceptions?
Are you aware of the extent to which your thinking mirrors the thinking of those around you?
Are you aware of the extent to which your thinking has been influenced by the thinking of the culture in which you have been raised and conditioned?
To what extent can you step outside your day-to-day mindset and into the mindset of those who think differently from you?
Are you able to imagine being "wrong" in some of your beliefs?
What criteria would you use to evaluate your personal beliefs?
Are you aware of how to upgrade the quality of your own beliefs?•

The Intellectual Endeavor of Close Reading

Reading is a form of intellectual work. Intellectual work requires willingness to persevere through difficulties. But perhaps even more important, intellectual work requires understanding what such work entails. This is where most students fall short. Consider the challenge of analyzing, evaluating, and repairing an automobile engine. The biggest challenge is in knowing how to do what needs to be done: how to use the tools of auto mechanics in taking the engine apart and how to run tests on specific systems in it. And learning this requires learning how an automobile engine functions, the internal combustion system it represents.•

No one would expect to know how to repair an automobile engine without training, involving both theory and practice. If we learn to 'read' without understanding what good reading involves, we learn to read poorly. That is why reading is a fundamentally passive activity for many students. It is as if their theory of reading was something like this: We let our eye move from left to right, scanning one line at a time, until somehow, in some inexplicable way, meaning automatically and effortlessly happens in our mind.•

Here we have emphasized the fact that close reading, reading that is substantive in nature, requires a particular form of engagement of the mind. It requires intellectual skills that enable the readers to analyze and assess as they read. It requires the ability to question in special ways while reading. Only when students actively engage their minds in a skilled dialog with the texts they read, disciplining their thinking as they read, are they achieving depth of understanding.•

Close reading teaches the following:

Understanding our purpose in reading the Quran
Understanding God's purpose in the revelation of the Quran
Seeing ideas in the Quranic text as being interconnected
Looking for and understanding systems of Quranic meaning

Engaging the sacred text while reading
Going beyond impressionist reading of the Quran
Formulating questions and seeking answers to those questions while reading the Quran

To read the Quran, particularly reading it in translation, in addition to having the above understandings, students must be able to identify the big picture within the Quran, to determine the key ideas within the Quran early on, and to see the scaffolding that connects all the ideas within the Quran. In other words, they need to develop structural reading abilities. Moreover, students need to see that there are generalizable skills they must develop to read signs (*ayat*, singular, *ayah*) and sections (singular, *ruku*) as well as chapters (*suwar*, singular, *surah*). In addition, students must develop reading skills specific to reading the Quran.

What does this sign (*ayah*) tell me about the Quran?
What is the main idea in the Quran?
What are the parts of the Quranic whole, and how does it deal with those parts?
In the light of my structural reading, what questions would I pursue during close reading of the Quran?

Reading Quranic Sentences

Reading a Quranic sentence consists, first of all, in finding a way to state what the sentence says so we can think the thought the sentence expresses. Further ways to make the meaning of a sentence clear are: elaborating the sentence, finding an example, and illustrating its meaning.•

Finding key sentences means finding the sentences that are the driving force within the sacred text. Structural reading is one way by which we locate key paragraphs and boil them down to key sentences, and then to key Quranic ideas and key questions.•

An important part of reading with discipline is to connect sentences to the broader context within which they are located, to see how they fit within the written piece. For every sentence we read, we might ask:•

How does this sentence connect with the other sentences in the sacred text?
How does this Quranic sentence relate to the organizing idea of this text as a whole?

Good readers read sentences in relationship to other sentences, connecting each sentence with the purpose of the sacred text. Taking a sentence out of context can pose problems because sentences read in isolation from the sentences that precede or follow them often overstate a point. The sentences that precede or follow clarify the Quran's true meaning, or bring it in line with supporting facts. Good readers read a text charitably and generously. They look for quali-

fications of points that otherwise might seem false or overstated.•

Reading a Quranic Section (*ruku*)

Carefully reading a Quranic section involves finding the idea or question that is the driving force within it. Finding key Quranic words consists of finding the ideas or questions that are the driving force within the section. Structural reading, we recall, is an important means by which we locate key Quranic ideas.

All sections within the Quran should connect to other sections so that we can see logical connections between Quranic ideas. All Quranic ideas should form a system of meanings. As we move from section to section, ask ourselves:

What is the most important idea in this Quranic section?
How do the ideas in this Quranic section relate to the ideas in previous Quranic sections?
How are the important ideas in the Quran connected?

Connect the Quranic ideas, when possible, to situations and experiences that are meaningful in our life. To actively connect ideas to life situations, ask:

How can I relate this Quranic idea to something I already understand?
Is there an important Quranic idea here that I can use in my thinking?
Have I ever experienced a situation that sheds light on this Quranic idea?

How to Read the Quran for Quranic Studies

The first and most important insight necessary for successfully reading the Quranic text is that it will focus on 'systems' which, when internalized, can help students reason through a specific set of problems. They focus on a special way of thinking about a special set of things.

The reading strategy should not be whole, part, part, part, part, part...but, rather, whole, part, whole, part, whole, part. They should first be grounded in a basic (though introductory) idea of the whole. They then relate each part (each subsequent section) to that whole. They understand the whole through integrating the parts into it. They use the whole as their tool of synthesis. They use their knowledge of the parts as a tool of analysis.

Questions to Ask About Quranic Study

Answer as many of these questions as you can by examining the Quran on the subject. You may need help from your instructor on some of them):

To what extent are there competing schools of thought within Quranic Studies?
To what extent do experts in Quranic Studies disagree about the answers they give to important questions?
What other areas deal with this same Quranic Studies (from a different standpoint, perhaps)?

To what extent are there conflicting views about Quranic Studies in light of these different standpoints?
To what extent, if at all, is Quranic Studies properly called a science?
To what extent can questions asked in Quranic Studies be answered definitively?
To what degree are questions in Quranic Studies matters of (arguable) judgment?
To what extent is there public pressure on professionals in Quranic Studies to compromise their professional practice in light of public prejudice or vested interest?
What does the history of Quranic Studies tell us about the status of knowledge in the field? How old is Quranic Studies?
How common is controversy over fundamental terms, theories, and orientation?
If there are competing schools of thought within Quranic Studies, what is the orientation of the translator?
Do they highlight these competing schools and detail the implications of that debate?
Are there commentaries available that approach this field from a significantly different standpoint?
If there are, how should we understand the orientation or bias of this commentary?
Would other experts in Quranic Studies disagree with any of the answers given in this commentary to important questions?
How would they disagree?
Are there books in other fields that deal with this same subject (from a different standpoint, perhaps)?

Some Questions to Raise About the Logic of the Quran

Most traditional Quranic study programs in the Muslim world take a didactic approach in teaching. They introduce principles or concepts, then provide drills. Specific skills are often torn from their proper contexts and practiced merely for the sake of practice. Yet, without context, skills have little or no meaning. An occasional simple reiteration of basic purposes or ideas is insufficient. Students need to see for themselves when, how, and why each skill is used specifically as it is.

As the students read and come to understand the Quranic content in regard to rules of grammar, they will find examples of grammatical shifts for rhetorical purposes. For example, a change in the person being addressed: *Is not **He** better Who created the heavens and the earth and caused to descend for you from the heavens, water? With it **We** caused joyous, fertile gardens to develop. It had not been for you to cause their trees to develop. Is there any god besides God? Nay! They are a folk who equate others with God.* (27:60); a change in number from singular, dual and plural: *And* I *swear an oath by the reproachful soul.* (75:2)

Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? (75:3) *Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again.* (75:2-4)[11]

Keeping in mind the idea that language and grammar are, on the whole, logical, we should ask questions that help students discover this logic within the sacred text. Students should learn how to use grammatical distinctions, and why. For example, though students 'cover' the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs, they see no reason to make this distinction when they read the Quran. They should learn to supply implied objects of transitive verbs when they read it. They should use grammatical analysis to help them read.

What is a Quranic sentence? How is it different from a group of words?
What is a Quranic section (*ruku*)?
How is it different from a group of Quranic sentences?
What are Quranic words for? What do they do? How?
How are words alike? Different? What kinds of words are there?
How is each used in the Quranic context?
Why are some ways of using a word right and others wrong?
What different kinds of Quranic sentences are there?
When and how should each be used?
Why follow the rules of Quranic grammar?
How does punctuation help the reader?
How does knowing about grammar help me write? Read?
When do I need to know this distinction or concept?
How should I use it? How does knowing this help me as a writer?
A reader? Why and how do different signs of the Quran differ?
What do they have in common?

Some Questions to Raise About the Logic of Persuasive Writing

The persuasive text of the Quran has a straightforward logic. In it, the message attempts to describe some dimension of real life and hopes to persuade us to take it seriously. We, as readers, need to grasp what is being said and judge whether it does make sense or in what way or to what degree it makes sense. For example, see 4:63 where the Prophet is admonished to speak with penetrating words or 2:183-2:187 where believers are told to fast during the month of Ramadan, then, one by one the Quran removes any obstacle that may arise is a believer's mind about it. (See Abdul Haleem, *The Study Quran.*)

What parts of this sacred text do I seem to understand?
What parts don't I understand?
What, exactly, is the Quranic message trying to say? Why?
How does the Quranic message support what is said with reasons, evidence, or experiences?
What examples can I give to further illuminate these ideas?

What counter-examples can I cite?
How could the Quranic message respond to my
counter-examples?
What are the basic parts of this sacred text?
How are the pieces organized?
Which claims or ideas support which other claims or ideas?
What beliefs does this claim presuppose?
What does it imply?
What are the consequences of believing or doing as
the Quranic message says?
How could I check, or better evaluate what the sacred text says?
How are such Quranic questions settled, or such claims evaluated?
What deeper meaning does this sacred text have?
What criticisms can I make? What is left out? Distorted?
How are opponents to the Quran addressed?
Are these opponents represented fairly?
Does the evidence support exactly the Quranic conclusions drawn?
If not, am I sure I understand the conclusions and evidence?
What is the source of the evidence? How should I evaluate it?
What is left unexplained? What would the Quran say about it?
Of all the Quranic ideas or concepts, which is the most fundamental
or basic?
How are these Quranic concepts used?
What other Quranic concepts are they related?
How does the Quran use of concepts relate to mine and
to that of others?
Should other concepts have been used instead?
How can I reconcile what has been said with what others
have said?

Introduction
Reading the Signs: A Quranic Perspective on Thinking
by Mohammad Hashim Kamali

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values (see Chapter III). The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

The Divine Signs (*ayat*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the*

earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that

power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur*; *tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related pressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and reportsed and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on unerstanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah*

is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa galb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth

and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a

view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be Godfearing of your Lord Who created*

you from a single soul. (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique ɜature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harıony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of ſadinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral alues formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen ere expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, uman dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, egel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spirıal took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any imɔt in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between : secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast beeen the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit ıs the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a dispro-

portionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

Obstacles to Correct Reasoning

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.*(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakariya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative im-

pulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may

also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

Conclusion

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between

the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements

is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

Chapter I. Nine Standards

Introduction to the Nine Standards•

1. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: *tabayyana*)
2. Accuracy (to be free from error: *al-rushudu mina l-ghayi*)
3. Precision (exact to the necessary level, to be precise: 'ahkama)
4. Relevance (to make relevant, to relate: qassa)
5. Depth (containing complexities and interrelationships: *'arada*)
6. Breadth (involving multiple viewpoints: *'arada*)
7. Logic (to be reasonable: *'aqala*)
8. Significance (Focusing on the important, not trivial, to be worthy: *ahl*)
9. Fairness (not self-serving or egocentric), to be fair: (hasan)

These nine standards are general rules for thought. Developing them as the basis for our thoughts requires extensive practice and hard intellectual endeavor (*ijtihad*). It requires a great deal of time, time that is well spent when the goal is to learn **how** the Quran teaches us to think in order to confront the irrationality and injustice students face among the people and societies in which they live.

Students are cleverly manipulated by Muslim extremists, among others, to follow a path that goes against both their Quranic long-term and short-term interests. Students are faced with skilled propaganda, political debate, defense of a group's interests and deception of an enemy in the guise of a friend to try to turn them away from developing critical thinking skills in learning and defending fair-minded truth.•

1. Clarity• (understandable, to be clear: *tabayyana*)

The word "clarification" or to be clear (*bayan*) occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarification in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error.

Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

In order to help students clarify their thinking, have them try to figure out

the meaning of what the Quranic message below (4:94) is saying. Have them explain their understanding of an issue mentioned in the following Quranic section (*ruku*) (4:92-4:94) to someone else to help clarify it in their own mind.

Have them practice summarizing in their own words what the Quranic section or sign(s) is saying. Then ask:

Did you understand the sign(s) correctly?
Did you agree or disagree with what your classmate said before you clearly understood what the Quranic text is saying?
Did you feel that you were thinking clearly?
Did you feel your thinking was vague, muddled, deceptive or misleading?

Have them:

Summarize in their own words what they think the Quran said.
Have them give one point at a time, explain it and elaborate on what they mean.
Mention a life experience that illustrates the point in hand.
Use metaphors or analogies to help them connect their ideas to things they have already understood.

Being clear about what they think when they read a sign(s) of the Quran, helps them understand what the analytic, evaluative and creative process is.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—CLARITY

O those who have believed! When you travel in the way of God, then be ***clear*** *and say not to whomever gives you a proposal of peace: You are not one who believes, looking for advantage in this present life. With God is much gain. Thus you had been before like this. Then God showed grace to you so become* ***clear****. Truly God has been Aware of what you do.* (4:94)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 4: WOMEN

Sec. 13

It had not been for the one who believes to kill one who believes unless by error. Whoever killed one who believes by error, the letting go of a believing bondsperson and blood money should be handed over to his family unless that family be charitable. If he had been from the enemy folk of yours and he be one who believes, then, there should be the letting go of a believing bondsperson. If he had been of a folk who between you and between them is a solemn promise, then, blood money should be handed over to the family and the letting go of a believing bondsperson. Then, whoever finds not the means, then, formally fast

for two successive months as a penance from God. God had been Knowing, Wise. (4:92)

Whoever kills one who believes as one who is willful, then, his recompense is hell, one who will dwell in it forever. God was angry with him and cursed him and He prepared for him a tremendous punishment. (4:93)

O those who believed! When you traveled in the way of God, then be clear and say not to whomever gave you a proposal of peace: You are not one who believes, looking for advantage in this present life. With God is much gain. Thus, you had been like that before, then God showed grace to you, so be clear. Truly, God had been Aware of what you do. (4:94)

QURANIC COMMENTARY ON 4:92-4:94

In this section above, the Quran speaks about internal relations among Muslims from the same or different countries. The only fighting or killing allowed among Muslims is for the punishment of certain crimes. Nothing can supersede the relationship that exists between Muslims. No Muslim can kill another Muslim because of the strong tie of faith that exists between them unless it be an accidental killing. An accidental killing requires certain legal provisions.

These signs provides legal provisions for four types of killing, three of which are accidental and occur among Muslims in the same community or different communities. The fourth of which is deliberate murder, according to the Quran, should not happen in the first place.

The signs here begin with the legal provisions for accidental killing. *It had not been for the one who believes to kill one who believes unless by error.* (4:92) This is the only possibility which is acceptable to the Islamic sense and which is possible in reality.

Muslims living together in a community is a great blessing. For a Muslim in this situation to deliberately take a step to remove this great blessing by committing such a terrible crime is difficult to conceive. There are three cases for which legal provisions are made in the case of accidental killing.

The first is when the victim is a Muslim, living in a Muslim country. Here, a believing prisoner-of-war must be set free and an indemnity paid to the victim's family. To set another prisoner-of-war free is to revive another Muslim's soul in exchange for the accidental killing of a Muslim.

The indemnity is paid to the victim's family to help those who are immediately affected by the accidental killing. It helps to compensate them for their loss. However, the victim's family may chose to forego this indemnity. *Whoever killed one who believes by error, the letting go of a believing bondsperson and blood money should be handed over to his family unless that family be charitable.* (4:92)

The second case mentioned here is where the victim is a believer and his family is at war with the Muslim community. Again, another prisoner-of-war must be freed to compensate for the believer who was accidentally killed. There

is no indemnity to be paid in this case as it would only serve to strengthen their ability to fight Muslims.

The third example is where the victim is part of a group that has a treaty with the Muslims. Here the victim is again a believer. *If he had been of a folk who between you and between them is a solemn promise, then, blood money should be handed over to the family and the letting go of a believing bondsperson.* (4:92)

In all three cases, the victim is a believer. The believer's family may be believers nor living in a Muslim community or a believer belonging to a hostile group at war with Muslims or a people at peace with Islam who have a treaty with the believers.

In the case of a deliberate murder of a believer, it cannot be compensated for by any indemnity or setting free of prisoners-of-war. The punishment for this crime is exacted by God Himself: *Whoever kills one who believes as one who is willful, then, his recompense is hell, one who will dwell in it forever. God was angry with him and cursed him and He prepared for him a tremendous punishment.* (4:93)

In order to guard against any accidental killing and to make sure that the purity of those who fight for God's cause be totally dedicated to Islam, the Quran says that Muslims should not fight with anyone or kill anyone if they are not sure of the identity of the person. If the person claims to be a Muslim, the Muslims must accept this. *O those who believed! When you traveled in the way of God, then be clear and say not to whomever gave you a proposal of peace: You are not one who believes, looking for advantage in this present life. With God is much gain. Thus, you had been like that before, then God showed grace to you, so be clear. Truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:94)

Questions that focus on clarity in thinking include:•

Let me state in my own words what I think you just said.
Am I clear about your meaning?
I hear you saying "____."
Am I hearing you correctly, or have I misunderstood you?
What is the main point of this Quranic section?
Can you explain further its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
Can you give an example of its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
To give you an analogy...(give an illustration of tyrants who kill believers because they say that they believe in God)
To give you an analogy ... (give an illustration of Muslim tyrants who kill other Muslims because they have determined that these people are not Muslim. They are not Muslim because the only Muslims are the ones who follow their ideology.)
Does such a view go against the Quranic sign? Explain.

To clarify students' thinking, consider asking the following:•

Can you restate the points of the Quranic sign 4:92 in your own words?
I didn't understand you.
Can you give an example?
Let me tell you what I understand you to be saying.
Did I understand you correctly?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 4:92-4:94. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them). After that, they should show how that sign or those signs fit into the entire section. The above questions should help them do that.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.
When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.
I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words).
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.
4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant. In other words, I frequently **stated, elaborated, illustrated** and **exemplified** my points.

2. ACCURACY• (TO BE CLEAR FROM ERROR: *AL-RUSHUDU MINA L-GHAYI*)

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when students concern themselves with accuracy and truth. They should ask themselves:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand,?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—
ACCURATE, CLEAR FROM ERROR

*There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely right judgment has become **clear from error**.* (2:256)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)
CHAPTER 2 THE COW
Sec. 34

O those who believed! Spend of what We provided you, before a Day approaches when there is neither trading in it nor friendship nor intercession. The ones who are ungrateful, they are the ones who are unjust. (2:254)

God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal. Neither slumber takes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. Who will intercede with Him but with His permission? He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them. And they will not comprehend anything of His knowledge, but what He willed. His Seat encom-

passed the heavens and the earth, and He is not hampered by their safe-keeping. He is The Lofty, The Sublime. (2:255)

There is no compulsion in the way of life (din). *Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities* (singular, *taghut*) *and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:256)

God is The Protector of those who believed. He brings them out from the shadows into the light. Those who were ungrateful, their protectors are false deities. They bring them out from the light into the shadows. Those will be the Companions of the Fire. They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (2:257)

QURANIC COMMENTARY ON 2:254-2:257

Here, the Quranic section addresses believers directly. It encourages them to give of their wealth that God has blessed them with, to give for the cause of God. (2:254)

The section then describes God with the famous sign known as the Throne Verse (*ayat al-kursi*). (2:255) Each of the three attributes shows a basic and fundamental aspect of the Islamic worldview. *There is no compulsion in the way of life* (din). *Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:256)

Faith or belief in the Islamic view is a matter of personal conviction once the basic facts have been given and explained. Belief is never a matter of compulsion or coercion. This personal conviction is developed through our mind and intellect, through our common sense, emotions and feeling, through our innermost human nature and our conscious self. There are no coercive tactics or physical miracles to confound our mind or anything beyond our ability to understand. Islam does not seek personal conviction to arise through compulsion or threats or pressures of any kind. It establishes a universal principle, namely: *There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely, right judgment became clear from error.* (2:256)

The Quranic style is beautiful and at the same time articulate in the original Arabic syntax when it describes belief in the singular as light and ingratitude as darkness in the plural. The forms of darkness come from the abandoning of God's guidance. Leaving God's light tends to put the human being into darkness and despondency: (2:257)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Questions of accuracy force you to evaluate and test for truth and correctness.

How does right judgment become clear from error?
How is this an example of accuracy?

How could we verify or test it?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the accuracy (clear from error) they find in the Quranic Signs 2:254-2:257. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically.
(Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

3. PRECISION• (EXACT TO THE NECESSARY LEVEL, TO BE PRECISE: *'AHKAMA*)

Precision indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is precision a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (AYAH)—PRECISE

It is He who has sent forth to you the Book. In it are signs, ones that are ***precise.*** (3:7)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 3 THE FAMILY OF IMRAN
In the Name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate
Sec. 1

Alif Lam Mim. (3:1)

God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal. (3:2)

He sent down to ***you*** *the Book with The Truth, that which establishes as true what was before it. He caused to descend the Torah and the Gospel* (3:3) *before this as a guidance for humanity. He caused to descend the Criterion between right and wrong. Truly, those who were ungrateful for the signs of God, for them is a severe punishment. God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital.* (3:4)

Truly, God, nothing is hidden from Him in or on the earth nor in heaven. (3:5) *It is He Who forms you in the wombs how He wills. There is no god but He, Almighty, Wise.* (3:6)

It is He who caused the Book to descend to ***you****. In it are signs, ones that are* <u>*precise*</u>*. They are the essence of the Book and others, ones that are unspecific. Then, those whose hearts are swerving, they follow what was unspecific in it, looking for dissent and looking for an interpretation, but none knows its interpretation but God. The ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believed in it as all is from our Lord. None recollects, but those imbued with intuition.* (3:7)

Our Lord! Cause our hearts not to swerve after ***You*** *had guided us. Bestow on us mercy from that which proceeds from* ***Your*** *Presence. Truly,* ***You, You*** *alone are The Giver.* (3:8) *Our Lord! Truly,* ***You*** *are One Who Gathers humanity on a Day in which there is no doubt in it. Truly, God breaks not His solemn declaration.* (3:9)

QURANIC COMMENTARY ON 3:1-3:9

Alif Lam Mim (3:1) have been explained in multiple ways over the cen-

turies. Their meanings remain unclear and are considered by most Muslims to be divine secrets. They are also known as "openers" as they form the opening sign of their respective chapters.

God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal. (3:2) This sign stresses the absolute Oneness of God in a most emphatic way. God has no partner in His divinity.

The section then speaks to the People of the Book, a Quranic term used to denote people of earlier divine revelation, especially the Jews and Christians. (3:3-3:6)

The Quran is revealed as the criterion (*furqan*) by which previous scriptures should be understood. It implies that there can be no reason for people of earlier revelations to not accept this as well. It has also been revealed to a human messenger and it confirms the previous scriptures.

It is He who caused the Book to descend to you. In it are signs, ones that are precise. They are the essence of the Book and others, ones that are unspecific. Then, those whose hearts are swerving, they follow what was unspecific in it, looking for dissent and looking for an interpretation, but none knows its interpretation but God. The ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believed in it as all is from our Lord. None recollects, but those imbued with intuition. (3:7)

In this brief passage, the section mentions the fact that there is precision and absolute clarity in some of the signs and others that have more than one explanation. However, *ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge* accept everything that they receive from Him whether it be the precise signs that are the essence of the Quranic message or the signs that are beyond human perception.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Could you be more specific in explaining what these signs mean to you?
Could you give more details about your understanding?
Could you be more precise?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 3:1-3:9. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that the Quranic message contains some signs that are precise.

I looked for interconnections between these various Quranic signs.
I realized the interconnectness of ideas in these signs.
I did not memorize the signs and repeat them like a parrot does,
but I studied them as a detective would, relating new things
I learned to things that I previously knew.

4. RELEVANCE• (TO MAKE RELEVANT, TO RELATE: *QASSA*)

Relevance means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The relevance of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that a student puts into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of their learning. Quranic relevance connects to its teaching students **how** to think. Once students have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, their thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete and relevant arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge relevance is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating relevance and by arguing for and against the relevance of facts.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—RELEVANCE

Say: I am with a clear portent from my Lord and you have denied it. I have not of that which you seek to hasten. The determination is from God. He makes The Truth relevant. He is the best of the ones who distinguish truth from falsehood. (6:57)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 6 THE FLOCKS

In the Name of God The Merciful, The Compassionate

Sec. 7

Say: I was prohibited that I worship those whom you call to other than God. Say: I will not follow your desires, for, then, I would have gone astray. I would not be of the ones who are truly guided. (6:56)

Say: I am with a clear portent from my Lord and you denied it. I have not of that which you seek to hasten. The determination is with God. He makes The Truth relevant. And He is Best of the ones who distinguish truth from falsehood. (6:57)

Say: Truly, if with me was what you seek to hasten, the command would be decided between me and between you. And God is greater in knowledge of the ones who are unjust. (6:58)

With Him are the keys of the unseen. None knows them but He. He knows whatever is on dry land and in the sea. Not a leaf descends but He knows it, nor a grain in the shadows of the earth, nor fresh nor dry thing, but it is in a clear Book. (6:59)

It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime and He knows what you were busy with by daytime. Again, He raises you up in it so that the term, that which is determined, is decided. Again, to Him is your return. Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing. (6:60)

Quranic Commentary on 6:56-6:60

It is God who makes the determination and makes The Truth relevant. (6:56-6:57) The Prophet's belief is not lessened by the attitude of the ungrateful who deny the relevance of the Quranic message for their lives. (6:58-6:59)

Whatever good or evil we do, and whatever our hands take or leave, is known to God. None of our movements are left out. (6:60)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Is the Quranic message in a position to know?
What subjects or perspectives, what kinds of details, what sorts of analyses would someone need knowledge of in order to develop a complete and fair-minded view of the Quran?
How is what you are saying relevant to the Quranic signs here?
How does what you are saying bear on the question?
How does what you are saying help us with the issue of relevance?
I don't see how what you said bears on the question. Could you show me how it is relevant?
Could you explain the connection between your question and the question we are addressing?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 6:56-6:60. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.
I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.
I was able to distinguish information that related to the problem of relevance from information that did not relate to it.

5. DEPTH• (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: *'ARADA*)

The sections (*ruku*) and signs (*ayat*) in the Quran contain a depth of complexities and interrelationships. They require students to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. The classroom experience exploring the Quranic message depends on the quality of the students' commitment to develop their ability to discern the depth of what they are studying.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—INTERRELATIONSHIPS

The males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe, some are protectors of some other. They command to that which is honorable and they prohibit that which is unlawful and they perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and obey God and His Messenger. Those, God will have mercy on them. Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (9:71)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE

SEC. 9

The ones who are male hypocrites and the ones who are female hypocrites, some are of some other. They command that which is unlawful and prohibit that which is honorable and close their hands. They forgot God so He forgot them. Truly, the ones who are hypocrites, they are the ones who disobey. (9:67)

God promised the males, ones who hypocrites and the females, ones who are hypocrites and the ones who are ungrateful, the fire of hell, ones who will dwell in it forever! It will be enough for them. God cursed them. For them is an abiding punishment. (9:68)

Like those before you who had been with more strength than you and more wealth and children, they enjoyed their apportionment so you enjoyed your apportionment as enjoyed those who were before you their apportionment. You engaged in idle talk as they engaged in idle talk. As to those, their actions were fruitless in the present and are such in the world to come. Those, they are the ones who are losers. (9:69)

Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud, and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian, and that which are cities overthrown? Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents. So it had not been God who did wrong to them, rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

The males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe, some are protectors of some other. They command to that which is honorable and they prohibit that which is unlawful and they perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and obey God and His Messenger. Those, God will have mercy on them. Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (9:71)

God promised males, the ones who believe and the females, the ones who

believe, Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever and good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. The greater contentment is with God. That, it is the winning of the sublime triumph. (9:72)

Commentary on 9:67-9:72

The first three signs (9:67-70) deal with the interrelationship between male and female hypocrites. Both males and females are described equally as wrongdoers and both have the same nature and the same characteristics. They are both ill intentioned towards others, with a sickness in their hearts, because they feel themselves to be weak and cowardly. They encourage others to do what they know is wrong and discourage them from doing what they know is right. They are misers and only give to show off. They conceal their motives and notions. They ridicule and slander people due to their inner insecurity.

In contrast to the interrelationships of the hypocrites are the interrelationship among believers who have a different nature, show different behavior and have a different destiny. (9:71-9:72)

While the hypocrites have the same characteristics, the believers are interrelated such that they engage in mutual consultation to achieve what is right for their community. (9:71)

Believers are described as having four characteristics: Enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, worshipping together in formal prayer and paying the purifying alms. These are contrasted with four characteristics of the hypocrites who: Enjoin what is wrong, forbid what is right, forget God and tighten their fists. God's mercy which He bestows on the believers is shown here in contrast to His rejection of the hypocrites: (9:72) Awaiting them is *the winning of the sublime triumph.* (9:72)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Why does the text tell you about interrelationships among the hypocrites and among the believers?
Why does the Quranic message think this interrelationship is worth knowing?
What factors make the interrelationship among hypocrites a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 9:67-9:72. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in these signs.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

I now know the four points of how a hypocrite acts and how a believer acts.

6. BREADTH• (INVOLVING MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: *'ARADA*)

In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth. The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

*Truly, those who believed, **those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality**, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.*(5:69)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)
CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD
Sec. 10

O Messenger! State what was caused to descend to you from your Lord, for if you have not accomplished it, then, you will not have stated His message. And God will save you from the harm of humanity. Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (5:67)

Say: O People of the Book! You are not based on anything until you adhere to the Torah and the Gospel and what was caused to descend to you from your Lord. Certainly, many of them increase by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord in defiance and ingratitude. So grieve not for folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (5:68)

Truly, those who believed, <u>those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality</u>, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse. (5:69)

Certainly, We took a solemn promise from the Children of Jacob and We sent Messengers to them. Whenever a Messenger drew near them with what they themselves yearn not for, a group of people denied them and a group of people kill them. (5:70)

They assumed there would be no test. They were in darkness and became unhearing. Again, God turned to them in forgiveness. Again, in darkness and became unhearing many of them. God is Seeing of what they do. (5:71)

Certainly, were ungrateful those who said: Truly, God is He, the Messiah, son of Mary, but the Messiah said: O Children of Jacob! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord. Truly, whoever ascribes partners with God, then, surely, God forbade the Garden to him. And his place of shelter will be the fire. For the ones who are unjust, there are no helpers. (5:72)

Certainly, ungrateful were those who said: Truly, God is the third of three. There is no god but One God. If they refrain not themselves from what they say, there will afflict those who were ungrateful among them a painful punishment. (5:73)

Will they not, then, turn to God for forgiveness and ask for His forgiveness? God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (5:74)

The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger. Surely, Messengers passed away before him. His mother was a just person (f). They both had been eating food. Look on how We make manifest the signs to them. Again, look on how they are misled! (5:75)

Say: Worship you other than God what controls neither hurt nor profit for you? God, He is The Hearing, The Knowing.(5:76)

Say: O People of the Book! Go not beyond limits in your way of life but with The Truth and follow not the desires of the folk who, surely, went astray before. They caused many to go astray. They themselves went astray from the right way. (5:77)

COMMENTARY ON 5:67-5:77

The Quranic revelation in the first three signs here (5:67-69) gives clear instructions of groups of multiple viewpoints. It is well-received by people of multiple viewpoints who accept the faith as it is stated clearly and precisely and contains wisdom and good advice. The method it uses is not the use of ambiguous language to conceal the truth or to avoid committing itself, but rather it states the full truth about faith. Neither does the Quran nor the Prophet compromise with those who are ungrateful. (5:71)

Those who denied the Quranic message: *those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality,* and its Messenger in the past as well as those extremists who deny this today, only accept their own viewpoint in regard to belief instead of accepting the Quranic view expressed here. (5:72-5:73)

Questions to Ask the Students•

What are some of the multiple viewpoints presented in these signs?
What relevant points of view have been ignored thus far?
Have you considered this issue from an opposing perspective?
Are you not open to changing your view?
Have you entered the opposing views in good faith, or only enough to find flaws in them?
Do you need to look at this from another perspective?
Do you need to consider another point of view?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 90:1-

90:20. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered class time as a time in which I practiced
thinking (within the subject) using the fundamental concepts
and principles of the course.
I did not sit back passively, waiting for knowledge to fall into my head.

7. LOGIC• (REASONABLE: *'AQALA*)

The Quranic signs have their own logic. Events did not just happen. Events described in the sacred text make sense within their meanings. Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life.

As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With this method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

> The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....[1]

Being Reasonable Leads to Unity (*tawhid*)

> The prevailing reading of the Quran on being reasonable consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason.[2]

Principle•

To be reasonable is to realize that our own interests and those of humanity at large will best be served in this way. It comes about by encouraging people to come to their own conclusions by using independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in developing their rational faculties.

It is to reject the use of force or tricks to change another person's mind. It is to accept that with the proper encouragement, people can begin to think for themselves, to form reasonable points of view and to draw reasonable conclusions, to think clearly and logically, to persuade each other by reason and, ultimately, become reasonable persons, despite the deep-seated obstacles in the natural character of our mind and in society as it has developed.

It should be noted that the act of faith being recommended is not blind faith.

> The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading.[3]

It is tested in everyday experiences. In other words, students should have confidence in reason because reason works. Confidence in reason does not deny the reality of intuition. Rather, it provides a way of distinguishing intuition from prejudice. When they know the source of their thinking and keep their minds open to new reason and evidence, they will be more likely to correct their prejudiced thought.

The rational person recognizes the power of reason and the value of disciplining thinking in accordance with rational standards. Virtually all of the progress that has been made in science and human knowledge testifies to this power, and so to the reasonability of having confidence in reason. To develop this faith is to come to see that ultimately one's own higher interests and those of humankind at large will be served best by giving the freest play to reason, by encouraging people to come to their own conclusions through a process of developing their own faculties of understanding. The Quran speaks of the irrational:

So remind! (O Ungrateful!) ***You** are not, by the divine blessing of **your** Lord, a soothsayer nor one who is possessed.* (52:29) *Or command their faculties of understanding to this? Or are they a folk, ones who are defiant?* (52:32) *Or say they: He fabricated it? Nay! They believe not.* (52:33) *Then, let them bring a*

discourse like it, if they had been ones who are sincere. (52:34) *Or were they created out of nothing? Or are they ones who are creators of themselves?* (52:35) *Or created they the heavens and the earth? Nay! They are not certain.* (52:36) *Or are the treasures of your Lord with them? Or are they ones who are registrars?* (52:37) *Or have they a ladder by means of which they listen? Then, let ones who are listening bring a clear authority.* (52:38)

It is to believe that, with proper encouragement and cultivation, people can develop the ability to think for themselves, to form reasonable points of view, draw reasonable conclusions, think coherently and logically, persuade each other by reason and, ultimately, become reasonable persons, despite the deep-seated obstacles in the natural character of the human mind and in society as we know it.

Application•

As a teacher, you can model confidence in reason in many ways. Every time you show your students that you can make rules, assignments, and classroom activities intelligible to them so that they can see that you are doing things for well-thought-out reasons, you help them to understand why confidence in reason is justified. Every time you help them solve a problem with the use of their own thinking or 'think aloud' through a difficult problem in front of them, you encourage them to develop confidence in reason. Every time you encourage them to question the reasons behind rules, activities, and procedures, you help them to recognize that they should expect reasonability to be at the foundation of their lives. Every time you display a patient willingness to hear their reasons for their beliefs and actions you encourage confidence in reason. Every time you clarify a standard of good reasoning, helping them to grasp why this standard makes sense, you help them to develop confidence in reason.

One reason students have little faith in reason is that they don't see reason being used in their everyday lives. Power, authority, prestige, strength, intimidation, and pressure are often used instead of reason. Students develop a natural cynicism about reason which educators should help them to overcome.

Give students multiple opportunities to try to persuade each other and you. Insist that students who disagree reason with each other, rather than using ridicule, intimidation, peer pressure, etc.

By beginning study of a new topic by discussing what they know about it, students can begin to realize that their initial knowledge is worthwhile. By allowing students to tackle problems and tasks on their own before explaining what to do, teachers help students experience the power of their own minds. By then showing them a better way that scholars have developed, students can see its superior power for themselves. Thus, as they learn, they can feel their minds grow.

Dealing with Egocentrism•

While students may have some egocentric thinking, it is referred to in the Quran as thinking exemplified by Iblis and Pharaoh, among others. Pharaoh told Moses that he, Pharaoh, was the Lord to be worshipped.

Then, Pharaoh said: I am your lofty lord. (79:24)

It is found in the disposition in human nature to think with an automatic subconscious bias in favor of oneself. On a daily basis, students can begin to observe their egocentric thinking in action.

Once they identify egocentric thinking in operation, students can then work to replace it with more rational thought through systematic self-reflection.

If students find that they continually conclude that a rational person would behave just as they behaved, they are probably engaging in self-deception.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—REASON

Thus, We explain precisely the signs to a folk who are ***reasonable.*** (30:28)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 30 THE ROMANS

Sec. 4

He propounds a parable for you from yourselves. Among those whom your right hands possessed, you do not ascribe them as associates in what We provided you. You do not share with them as equals. You do not fear them like your awe for each other [so why would you share what God has given you with other creatures, jinn, gods beside God]. *Thus, We explain distinctly the signs to a folk who are reasonable.* (30:28)

Nay! Those who did wrong [by ascribing other creatures as their partners giving them a share of what God has given you] *followed their own desires without knowledge. Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray? They will not have ones who help.* (30:29)

So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not. (30:30)

QURANIC COMMENTARY ON 30:28-30:30

The ungrateful create partners with God when God alone is the Creator and the Provider for all. When they do not allow what their right hands possess to be partners with them, why would they choose idols, jinn and others to be so? *He propounds a parable for you from yourselves.* You do not need to travel or make an effort to contemplate it. *Have you—among those whom your right hands possessed—ascribed them as associates in what We provided you so that you share as equals?* (30:28)

The Quran gives the reason for this. The ungrateful follow their own desires without reasonable basis or thinking. *Nay! Those who did wrong followed their own desires without knowledge. Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray? They will not have ones who help.* (30:29)

This directive then follows: *So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30) Consider living your life as one who believes in the Oneness of God who created the human being.

Questions to Ask the Students•

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 30:28-30:30. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.
I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what these signs say.

8. SIGNIFICANCE• (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE WORTHY: *AHL*)

Significance is the quality of being worthy.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—WORTHINESS

God sent forth His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had better right to it and were more ***worthy*** *of it.* (48:26)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 48: THE VICTORY

Sec. 3

God was well-pleased with the ones who believe (f) when they take the pledge of allegiance to ***you*** *beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* (48:18) *They will take much gain. And God had been Almighty, Wise.* (48:19)

God promised you much gain that you will take and He quickened this for you. He limited the hands of humanity from you so that perhaps it will be a sign to the ones who believe and that He guide you to a straight path (48:20) *and other gains which are not yet within your power. Surely, God enclosed them. God had been over everything Powerful.* (48:21)

If those who were ungrateful fought you, they would have turned their backs. Again, they would not have found a protector or a helper. (48:22) *This is the way of God which was, surely, in force before.* ***You*** *will never find in the way of God any substitution.* (48:23)

He it is who limited their hands from you and your hands from them in the hollow of Makkah after He made you victors over them. God had been Seeing of what you do. (48:24)

They were ungrateful, and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram, and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift from reaching its place of sacrifice. If it had not been for men, ones who believe, and for women, ones who believe, whom you know not that you tread on them and guilt should light on you without your knowledge. This was so that God may cause to enter into His mercy whomever He wills. If they were clearly apart, separated, We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them with a painful punishment. (48:25)

Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing. (48:26)

COMMENTARY ON 48:18-48:26

This section addresses the believers, their attitudes and their thoughts giving them the good news of the result of their allegiance, praising their firm belief and preparing them for God's cause. They fall directly under God's care as He bore witness to their allegiance under the tree. Pleased with them, He ensures them of victory. (48:18-23)

The signs remind the believers of God's grace. It was He who prevented their enemies who wanted to fight them from doing so. He denounced those who prevented the believers from entering the Sacred Mosque.

This was all according to God's design and by His will. (48:24-48:25)

Among them were believing men and women unknown to the believers who may have been killed for which the believers would have been responsible.

God knew them and the believers did not. *Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing.* (48:26)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Why were the believers rewarded with victory?

What is the central idea in these signs?

Which of the facts in these signs are most important?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 92:1-92:21. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain this to someone.

I know that if I cannot explain these signs to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

9. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC, TO BE FAIR: *IIASAN*)

Having a sense fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that students learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness, described as wisdom in the Quranic perspective, is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairnesss when weighing two views or opinions helps students overcome any lingering egocentricity. They may have thought that they knew the truth only to find that they were wrong. They also learn not to judge any ideas until they are familiar with them and they have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, students are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. They learn to put themselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. They learn to overcome their self-centered point of view of identifying truth with their immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. They gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. They reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not their own. They can recall times when they were wrong but convinced that they were right. Students begin to realize that their behavior and judgments affect others so that they learn to see things from another's point of view.

Realize that their classmate may see things differently then they do, teachers may ask:

What is your classmate angry about?
Why does that make him/her mad?
So-and-so, is that right?

Teachers can encourage students to consider the reasons for positions that they disagree with, for example, that of their parents or siblings.

Why doesn't your mother want you to such-and-such?
Why does she think it's bad for you (wrong, etc.)?
What does she think will happen?

Teachers can ask students who have not yet expressed themselves:

What makes sense about what each side said?

What seems wrong?
What aren't you sure about?

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—FAIRNESS

And those who avoided false deities so that they worship them not and were penitent to God, for them are good tidings. So give good tidings to My servants, those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-18)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS

Sec. 2

Say [God says]*: O My servants who believed! Be Godfearing of your Lord. For those who did good in the present, there is benevolence, and the earth of God is that which is extensive. Only ones who remain steadfast will have their compensation without reckoning.* (39:10)

Say: Truly, I was commanded to worship God, one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:11) *And I was commanded that I be the first of the ones who submit to God.* (39:12)

Say: Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord the punishment of a tremendous Day. (39:13)

Say: God alone I worship as one sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:14) *So worship what you would other than Him.*

Say: Truly, the ones who are losers are those who lost themselves and their people on the Day of Resurrection. Truly, that is a clear loss. (39:15) *They will have overshadowings above from the fire and beneath them, overshadowings. With that, God frightens His servants. O my servants! Be Godfearing of Me!* (39:16)

And those who avoided false deities so that they worship them not and were penitent to God, for them are good tidings. So give good tidings to My servants [God says]. (39:17) *those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:18)

Against whom was realized the word of punishment? Will you be saving him from the fire? (39:19)

But those who were Godfearing of their Lord, for them are the highest chambers with the highest chambers built above them, beneath which rivers run. This is the solemn declaration of God. God never breaks His promise. (39:20)

Have you not considered that God caused to descend water from heaven and threaded fountains in the earth, again, brings out crops by it of hues, ones that are at variance? Again, they wither so you see them as ones that are grow-

ing yellow. Again, He makes them chaff. Truly, in this is a reminder for those imbued with intuition. (39:21)

Commentary on 39:10-39:21

It is important to note here how the Arabic text is phrased. The words between brackets, [God says], are not in the text. They are added to remove confusion. The text should originally read: "Say to My servants," but the Prophet is made to address them, because an address alerts the addressees and makes them more aware of what is to come. When the Prophet addresses them, he does not call them as his servants, because they are God's servants, not his. This means that he is addressing them in God's name, making the address from God directly to them. The Prophet is merely the means by which the address is given.

To be Godfearing means to have a heart that is sensitive and aware of God and to look to God with a sense of humility. (39:10)

The two concepts of the divinity and servanthood are clarified here. There is no confusion between the two. (39:11-39:13)

The Prophet once again is told to say that he will remain with God's way, leaving the idolaters to their way. (39:14-39:15)

Then the Quranic sign expresses the extent of the loss of the ungrateful. (39:15-39:16) As to those who are safe: (39:17-39:18)

The word *taghut* implies an excessive sense of going beyond the bounds. Those who refuse to worship those who exceed the bounds are those who reject the worship of anyone other than God in any form whatsoever.

One of the qualities of those who believe in the Oneness of God alone and who refuse to bow down to anyone who exceeds the limits set by God are those who listen to what is being said. They choose the fairest of it: *those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:18)

The next sign states that those who worshipped the *taghut* have had the punishment realized against them. (39:19)

As for those who are Godfearing: (39:20)

The Quran then draws attention to the natural phenomena that encompass the earth. (39:21)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Do I have any vested interest in judging this issue?

Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 93:1-93:11. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

Chapter II. Eight Elements of Reasoning

Introduction

1. Embody Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: *tadhakkur*)
2. Generate Purpose, Aim, goal, Objective: (consider: *ra'a*)
3. Raise Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: *tafakkara*)
4. Use Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: *basirah*)
5. Make Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: *tabassur*)
6. Utilize Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: *idhdhakara*)
7. Make Assumptions, Prepositions, Taking for Granted (opinions: *zunun*)
8. Generate Implications, Consequences (ponder, evaluate: *tadabbur*)

As you have students read the Quranic signs in the text, you ask them to critique them. (That is, critique: discerning judgment (*furqan*), an objective judging, analysis, or evaluation of something. The purpose of critique here is to critique the Quranic message in order to understand the Quranic way of **how** to think.)

This means to think about the Quranic signs for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** that lead to **implications** and **consequences.** You use **concepts, ideas** and **theories** to **interpret data, facts** and **experiences** in order to answer **questions, solve problems,** and **resolve issues.** We begin with purpose (aim, goal, objective).

Students learn from the Quran **how** to think, not what to think by:

- Analyzing their thinking
- Assessing their thinking
- Reconstructing their thinking

1. Embody Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart: *tadhakkur*)

The point of view or frame of reference for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

This leads into a second purpose of the Quran. It is to give guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom.

This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought hu-

manity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise. (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses says:

Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one. (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness in the plural, while light is in the singular refering to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

As the revealed Word of God, the Quran presents arguments from various points of view depending on who is speaking. This will become clear as we move forward.

In this section three strategies are presented. They are:

A. Thinking Independently
B. Developing Insight into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
C. Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts

A. Thinking Independently

Principle•

The Quran teaches students to think for themselves when they read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely, right judgment became clear from error. (2:256)

With this sign from God's point of view, students learn that it is up to each one of them to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, students learn how right judgment is clear from error. They come to realize that those that know are not on the same level as those who do not know. If they develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, they will enhance their sense of intuition and insight. They will enhance their ability to reflect on their beliefs and actions.

Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for oneself.

Many of the beliefs of students are acquired at an early age, when they have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because they want to believe, because they are rewarded for believing). Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them.

Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

Application•

An education in Quranic Studies respects the autonomy of the student. Students should be encouraged to discover information and use their knowledge, skills and insights to think for themselves. Merely giving students 'facts' or telling them 'the right way' to answer a question is a way of compelling them to believe. Accepting beliefs through compulsion does not lead to being able to discern right judgment. They believe because they have been told what to believe. They have not been taught how to think to then believe. They learn that developing "discernment," deciding something for themselves, leads to "right judgment becoming clear from error."

In other words, the Quran teaches **how** to think to then believe, not **what** to believe without knowing **how** to think. The Quranic process of teaching **how** to think—by thinking independently without being compelled to think—leads to right judgment in belief. Being compelled to believe through social pressure or due to a teaching method that solely relies on memorization results in a thought-less belief, an un-discerning belief. This type of belief results in egocentric or socio-centric belief as we shall see with the next strategy.

Say: Are those who know on the same level as those who know not? Only those imbued with intuition recollect. (39:9)

When different students have used different sets of categories to form groups, the teacher can ask such questions as:

Questions to Ask Students•

From whose point of view is 39:9 presented?
What does the sign (39:9) mean by "those who know"?
Does "knowing" require thinking before believing something?
How does "knowing" require thinking independently?

The sacred text should be examined in depth.

Why does the sacred text tell you about the importance of knowledge?
Why does the Quranic message think this (concept, skill, procedure, step) is worth knowing?
Why does the sacred text tell you to do this?
What would happen if you didn't?

When giving written assignments, those assignments should provide many opportunities for the student to exercise independent judgment: in gathering and assembling information, in analyzing and synthesizing it, and in formulating and evaluating conclusions. Have students discuss how to organize their points in essays.

The teacher could routinely ask students as a beginning of discussion: What are the most important points covered in the sign(s). The class could brainstorm about what they learned when studying a sign or signs. Only after they have exhausted their experiences can the teacher try to elicit any crucial points neglected.•

B. Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity Principle•

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the Salafists as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the Salafis today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continueto be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right

about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricty? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the sociocentric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how

to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Know Ourself

The best way to develop insight into ego-centeredness or society-centeredness is through knowing our self.

According to al-Ghazzali, the establishment of any of the relationships begins with gaining knowledge of our self.

> Know that the key to knowledge of God is knowledge of one's self. That is why it has been said: One who knows one's own 'self,'

knows one's Lord. That is also why God said: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. Suffices not thy Lord that, truly, He is Witness over all things?* (41:53)

In short, nothing is closer to you than you. If you do not know your 'self,' how will you know others? Moreover, you may think that you know your 'self' and be mistaken, for this kind of knowing is not the key to the knowledge of the Real. The beasts know this much of themselves—since of your 'self' you know no more than the outward head, face, hands, feet, flesh, and skin. Of the inward dimension you know that when you are hungry, you eat bread, and when you are angry, you fall on the other person, and when 'attraction to pleasure' dominates, you make for the marriage act. All the beasts know that much. Hence you must seek your own reality. What thing are you? From whence have you come? Where will you go? For what work have you come to this dwelling place? Why were you created? What and where is your felicity? What and from where lies your misery?

If you want to know your 'self,' you should know that when you were created, two things were created: one is this outward frame, which is called the body. It can be seen with the outward eye. The second is the inward meaning that is called the self (or the soul), the spirit, and the heart. It can be recognized through inward insight but cannot be seen with the outward eye. Your reality is that inward meaning. Everything else follows upon it.

When reason or thinking positively predominates, positive feelings or desires and actions result. As an example, when we come to realize through our reason that our happiness lies in keeping our instinct to preserve the species (attraction to pleasure) and to preserve the individual (avoidance of harm/pain) in moderation, then we no longer go against or objects to the commands of reason. It often happens that one may have strong powers of reason thinks of some desirable worldly or religious objective. At that point, no matter how much one's avoidance of harm may dislike certain aspects of it, and even though one's attraction to pleasure function finds pleasures slipping through one's hands, still one's 'self' obeys reason.

These characteristics are like natural, physical needs. It is impossible to totally eradicate them. They may be temporarily concealed while severe spiritual exercises are being performed but no sooner are these spiritual exercises discontinued than they reappear once more. In fact the moral healing of these characteristics can only consist in this: that one uses them in their proper place, contenting oneself with what is necessary and avoiding excess. That is, that one learn to exercise justice towards the self as critical thinkers.

Knowing our self is to improve our self, a value of critical thinkers

who compare and contrast ideals with practice or ideals with facts on their way to developing intellectual good faith.

Beginning with our self and moving towards centering ourselves by completing the perfection of nature in its mode of operation is to submit to God's Will, thereby attaining happiness and well-being. It is an arduous task in which many who have attempted have not succeeded.[7]

Application•

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
I have a right to have everything I want.
Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

Teachers can also have students point out the contradictions of egocentric attitudes:

When I use something of yours without permission, it is borrowing.
When you use something of mine, it is stealing.
Taking something without asking is okay. Taking something without asking is wrong.
Persons like Pharaoh or Korah illustrate ego-centricity.

The most real and immediate form of socio-centricity students experience is in the mini-society of their peers. Student attitudes present a microcosm of the patterns which exist on a larger scale in societies. Most students share some attitudes which are sociocentric. Furthermore, students divide themselves into 'subcultures' or cliques, each of which is narrower than the school-wide 'cul-

ture'. Honest and realistic exploration of these phenomena allows students to clarify and evaluate the ways in which 'group think' limits them.

The Quranic text often attempts to discourage socio-centricity by encouraging tolerance—asking students to agree that people whose ways are different are not necessarily wrong. Yet, if teachers keep the discussion general and do not introduce specific advantages of different ways, students are left with a vague sense that they should be tolerant, rather than a clear Quranic sense that others have ways worth knowing about and learning from. The teacher could encourage students to recognize sociocentric bias, reconstruct and consider other views of current and historical issues, and discuss how to avoid thinking socio-centrically.

Assume not those who are misers that what God has given them of His grace is better for them. Nay! It is worse for them. To be hung around their necks will be what they were misers with on the Day of Resurrection. To God is the heritage of the heavens and the earth. God is Aware of what you do. (3:180)

Questions to Ask Students•

What are these people like?
What do you think of when you think of them?
How have you seen them portrayed in movies and on T.V.?

After study, students could evaluate their ideas in light of what they have learned, and why they had them.

Those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them. We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin! For them is a despised punishment. (3:178)

Questions to Ask Students•

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

C. Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts

Principle•

In order to better analyze themselves, students need to separate their sense of reason from their emotions, their *nafs al-natiqah* from their *nafs al-ammarah* as if they were two opposing parts of their mind. Yet, they are closely connected.

Their reason is based on some level of their emotions and their emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who they are, they need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way. The Quran cautions:

So follow not your feelings that you become unbalanced. (4:135)

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

Had you thought about him who took to himself his own feelings as his god? (25:43)

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question:

Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

Questions to Ask Students•

Why do I feel this way? How do I view the situation?
What is my evidence or proof for feeling this way in this situation?
What am I assuming?
Do the conclusions I come to make sense?
Are there other ways that I could use to interpret this situation?

Once students begin to see a pattern in the assumptions that they make in situations, they begin to understand their emotions (within their *nafs-i ammarah* or animal soul). This is the first step towards self-control and self-improvement. In order for this to happen, students need to understand their feelings in relation to their thoughts.

Although it is common to separate thought and feeling as though they were independent opposing forces in the human mind, the truth is that virtually all human feelings are based on some level of thought (*nafs-i natiqah* or rational soul) and virtually all thought generate some level of feeling (*nafs-i ammarah* or animal soul). To think with self-understanding and insight, students must come to terms with the intimate connections between thought and feeling, rea-

son and emotion, these two aspects of themselves—their animal soul and their rational soul.

Critical thinkers realize that their feelings are their response (but not the only possible, or even necessarily the most reasonable response) to a situation. They know that their feelings would be different if they had a different understanding or interpretation of that situation. They recognize that thoughts and feelings, far from being different kinds of things are two aspects of their responses.

Uncritical thinkers see little or no relationship between their feelings and their thoughts, and so escape responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Their own feelings often seem unintelligible to them.

When students feel sad or depressed, it is often because they are interpreting their situation in an overly negative or pessimistic light. They may be forgetting to consider positive aspects of their life. They can better understand their feelings and thereby learn to discern fairly by listening to this Quranic sign:

Give judgment fairly among humanity and follow not your feelings, for it will cause you to go astray from the way of God. (38:26)

Questions Students Ask Themselves•

How have I come to feel this way?
How am I looking at the situation?
To what conclusion have I come?
What is my evidence?
What assumptions am I making?
What inferences am I making?
Are they sound inferences?
Are there other possible ways to interpret this situation?

Students can learn to seek patterns in their assumptions and so begin to see their separate emotions. Understanding themselves is the first step toward self-control and self-improvement. This self-understanding requires that they understand their feelings and emotions in relation to their thoughts, ideas, and interpretations of the world.

Application•

Whenever a class discusses someone's feelings, the teacher can ask students to consider what the person might be thinking to have that feeling in that situation:

Whenever there was sent forth a chapter of the Quran, they look on some saying: Is anyone seeing you? Moreover, they turned away. God has turned from their hearts because they are a folk who do not use their reason. (9:127)

Questions for Classroom Discussion•

Why does the "one who turns away" feel this way?
How is he interpreting his situation?
What led him to that conclusion?
Would you have felt the same if you had been in his circumstances?
Why or why not?
What accounts for the difference?
What could he have thought instead?
Then how might he have felt?

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring their thoughts that underlie their feelings. Students can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. (8:53)

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•

Why was she willing to do this?
Was she scared?
What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?
Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure
and stick with it?

Students can discuss reasons for greed, fear, apathy, and other negative or hampering feelings.

and you consume the inheritance, a greedy consuming. (89:19)

Classroom Questions to Trigger Discussion About Negative Behaviors•

Why are people greedy?
What thoughts underlie greed?
Why do people feel they need more money?
What does less money mean to them? Why?
What assumptions underlie these attitudes?
To what further thoughts do these attitudes lead?

When discussing a case of mixed feelings, the Quranic sign says:

Feel not remorse over them, nor be you troubled about what they plan. (16:127)

Classroom Discussion to Understand Mixed Feelings•

What was he feeling?
What else? (Encourage multiple responses.)
What led to this feeling? That one?
Are these beliefs consistent or contradictory?
How could someone have contradictory responses to one situation?
Is there a way he could reconcile these contradictions?

Students can also generalize about thoughts behind various emotions:
behind anger, for instance:

*Guide us on the straight path, the path of those to whom **You** were gracious, not the ones against whom **You** are angry, nor the ones who go astray.* (1:6-1:7)

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•

Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.
Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.
Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now.
This won't bother me anymore.

D. Developing Intellectual Curiosity

Principle•

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment. They need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

So journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those who were before them? (12:109)

The following questions may help the students in understanding point of view, frame of reference, perspective.

Questions to Ask the Students

Whenever we think, we think within a point of view.
What is the Quranic point of view in these signs?
Does the Quran follow the nine standards in these signs?

We see things from an angle, form a position, from a sense of place, a frame of reference.
What is it to look at things Quranically?
You seem to be approaching this issue from x perspective.
Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 113:1-113:5 and write them in their own words.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing mes negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes Ie worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

2. Generate Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective (Consider: *ra'a*)

One of the goals of the Quran is to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

Students begin developing their reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, they learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

In this section, four strategies specific to this element of reasoning are developed. Each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions that can be asked of the students at each point along the way.

The four strategies are:•

A. Clarifying Issues, Conclusions or Beliefs;
B. Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases;
C. Reading Critically: Clarifying or Critiquing Texts; and
D. Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

A. Clarifying Issues or Conclusions

Principle•

When there is a clear statement given about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before students can agree with or disagree with a statement, they must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

Application•

Teachers should encourage students to slow down and reflect on the Quranic signs before coming to conclusions.

Have you not considered those who were given a share of the Book? They are called to the Book of God to give judgment between them. Again, a group of people among them turn away and they, they are ones who turn aside. (3:23)

Questions to Ask Students•

The sign 3:23 asks: *Have you not considered those who were given a share of the Book?*

Is the purpose of this sign clear?

What do we know about them:

They are called to the Book of God to give judgment between them.
What would someone who disagreed with this do?
Again, a group of people among them turn away and they, they are ones who turn aside.
The sign 2:80 says: *They* [the ungrateful] *said: The fire will never touch us, but for numbered days.*
Is the purpose of this sign clear?
The Quran tells the Prophet to ask how they know this:
Say: Took you to yourselves a compact from God?
The response from God: *If so, God never breaks His compact or say you about God what you know not?*
Does this rhetorical question clarify the issue?

Students should be encouraged to continually reformulate the Quranic purpose in light of new signs. Other Quranic examples to explore in learning to clarify issues, conclusions and beliefs:

Or ascribe they associates who laid down the law of the way of life for them for which God gives not permission? Were it not for a decisive word, it would be decided among them. Truly, the ones who are unjust, for them is a painful punishment. (42:21)

Questions to Ask Students•
Has the above Quranic stated its purpose in this sign (42:21) fairly?
Does our understanding assume one answer is correct?
Would everyone involved accept this as a fair and accurate statement of the Quranic statement?
Are the Quranic words clear? Do we have to analyze any concepts?
Do we know when the key Quranic words and phrases apply and don't apply?

Thus, We revealed to you the Spirit of Our command. You had not been informed what the Book is nor what is belief, but We made it a light by which We guide whomever We will of Our servants. Truly, you, you have been guided to a straight path—the path of God, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. Truly, will not all affairs come home to God? (42:53-42:53)

Questions to Ask Students•
How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect? (45:23)

Questions to Ask Students•

Does this description stick to the facts?
Or, is reasoning or response included?
Is this something that can be directly seen?
Or would you have to interpret what you saw to arrive at this statement?
Is this how anyone would describe the situation?
Or would someone else see it differently?
What alternative descriptions or explanations are there?

Is he who had been on a clear portent from his Lord like him for whom his wrong actions were made to appear pleasing to him and to those who followed their own desires? (47:14)

Students could then examine the assumptions and inferences underlying the alternatives.

Questions to Ask Students

What does 47:14 assume?
What does it imply?
What does its opposite imply?
Is there a clearer way to say this?
Is there a more accurate way to say this?
Can it be rephrased?
Do the different ways of putting it say the same thing?
Why would someone agree? Disagree?

B. Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases

Principle•

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept.

On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

Application•

Teachers can use a number of techniques to help students learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just asking for a definition of a word or asking them what a certain word means, the teacher can paraphrase the word or concept to something that the students already understand. The teacher can also supply examples asking students to add to the list.

The class should clarify and analyse the purpose of the words and concepts in the following Quranic signs:

What will there be as a reminder for them? A clear Messenger drew near them. (44:13)

Questions to Ask Students•

Does the Quran see itself as the "reminder"?
What does the concept of "reminder" tell us?
What other reminders do we have in our daily lives?

> God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjusted off the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.[5]

It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you so that they may meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition may recollect. (38:29)

Questions Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of the Words•

Give examples of a recollection and the opposite of it.
What does 'imbued with intuition' mean?
Why would this expression be used?
Why would the Quranic message want to bring it to our attention?
What are the practical consequences of saying this?
How do we feel about it? Why?

When giving examples and discussing them, teachers should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once the class has dis-

cussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

Meditate they not, then, on the Quran (the Recitation) *or are there locks on their hearts*? (47:24)

Questions to Ask Students•

What other words could be used in place of "meditate"?
Could "reflect," "ponder," "consider," or "take seriously" be used instead?
What does "locks on their hearts" mean?

When clarifying a concept expressed by a phrase rather than a single word, discuss cases in which the phrase applies, instead of merely discussing the individual words. For example, when clarifying the concept of "locks on their hearts" though a general discussion of "heart" may be helpful, the more specific idea "locks on their hearts" should be discussed and contrasted with its opposite, i.e. "open hearts".

Ask the students if they can think of a way to use the term for situations lacking this or that listed idea. Students may see that many of their associations are not part of the concept. They are left with a clearer understanding of what is relevant to the concept and will be less tempted to confuse mere association with it.

When a text confuses two distinct concepts such as "locked" and "unlocked" hearts, students can clarify them. Students can distinguish concepts by discussing the different applications and implications of the concepts. Can you think of an example of "locked" when its opposite is "unlocked"? What's the difference?

Students could rewrite passages, making them clearer. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

*When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how **You** shall give life to the dead.*

*He said: Shall **you** (Abraham) not believe?*

He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest.

He (God) *said: Then take four birds and twist them to **yourself**. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach **you** coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:260)

Questions to Ask Students•

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?
What example does it give?
Is this an example of everyone having to agree?
What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

C. Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text

Principle•

Critical thinkers have a healthy skepticism. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error*:

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake —his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the

senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.

Then I said: My reliance on sense-data has also become untenable. Perhaps, therefore, I can rely only on those rational data which belong to the category of primary truths, such as our asserting that: Ten is more than three, and one and the same thing cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied, and one and the same thing cannot be incipient and eternal, existent and nonexistent, necessary and impossible.

Then sense-data spoke up: What assurance have you that your reliance on rational data is not like your reliance on sense-data? Indeed, you used to have confidence in me. Then the reason-judge came along and gave me the lie. But were it not for the reason-judge, you would still accept me as true. So there may be, beyond the perception of reason, another judge. And if the latter revealed itself, it would give the lie to the judgments of reason, just as the reason-judge revealed itself and gave the lie to the judgments of sense. The mere fact of the nonappearance of that further perception does not prove the impossibility of its existence.

For a brief space my soul hesitated about the answer to that objection, and sense-data reinforced their difficulty by an appeal to dreaming, saying: Don't you see that when you are asleep you believe certain things and imagine certain circumstances and believe they are fixed and lasting and entertain no doubts about that being their status? Then you wake up and know that all your imaginings and beliefs were groundless and unsubstantial. So while everything you believe through sensation or intellection in your waking state may be true in relation to that state, what assurance have you that you may not suddenly experience a state which would have the same relation to your waking state as the latter has to your dreaming, and your waking state would be dreaming in relation to that new and further state? If you found yourself in such a state, you would be sure that all your rational beliefs were unsubstantial fancies.

I knew, of course, that undertaking to refute their doctrine before comprehending it and knowing it in depth would be a shot in the dark. So I girded myself for the task of learning that science by the mere perusal of their writings without seeking the help of a master and teacher.

I devoted myself to that in the moments I had free from writing and lecturing on the legal sciences—and I was then burdened with the teaching and instruction of three hundred students in Baghdad.

As it turned out, through mere reading in those embezzled moments, God Most High gave me an insight into the farthest reaches of the philosophers' sciences in less than two years. Then, having understood their doctrine, I continued to reflect assiduously on it for nearly a year, coming back to it constantly and repeatedly reexamining its intricacies and profundities. Finally I became so familiar with the measure of its deceit and deception, and its precision and delusion, that I had no doubt about my thorough grasp of it.[6]

As can be seen from the writings of al-Ghazzali here, critical thinkers do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect understanding from what they read so they check and double-check their understanding. They ask themselves questions, wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn. They learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.•

Application•

Students should feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs they read. Students can discuss their interpretations of what they read. Small groups of students can compare their paraphrases and interpretations and write better ones.

Assumed you that We created you in amusement and that to Us you would not be returned? (23:115)

Questions to Ask Students•

What does this passage say?
What does it imply?
Assume? Is it clear? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way?

D. Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

Principle•

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether students are listening to the Quran in a language they understand or listening to their teacher's lesson. They know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another

person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into their own.

When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar.

Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, students have to take the words they are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. They have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. They have to be attentive to what the other person is saying.

All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions. Practice questions are such as:

Questions to Ask Students•

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is .... Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying.

They [the ungrateful] *said: The fire will never touch us, but for numbered days. Say: Took you to yourselves a compact from God? If so, God never breaks His compact or say you about God what you know not?* (2:80)

Questions to Ask Students•

Why does an ungrateful person say this?
What examples could I give to illustrate that point?
What is the main point?
How does this detail relate to the main point?
Is the ungrateful using this concept as I would, or somewhat differently?

Application•

Critical thinking is best taught by a teachers who model it, who themselves are active listeners who show students the patience and skill required. Being patient as students learn means taking them seriously as they try to express their thoughts by asking them relevant questions.

We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. (41:53)

Questions to Ask Students•

What did you understand from this Quranic sign?
So-and-so, did you follow what your classmate said?
Could you put what she said in your own words?
Or: So-and-so, could you give us an example from your own experience of what your classmate has said?
Do you recall when seeing an outward sign reflected a sign within yourself?

It often happens that students do not understand an assignment. It is an opportunity for teachers to make their assignment an example of critical listening.

On the earth are signs for the ones who are certain and in yourselves. Will you not then perceive? (51:20-51:21)

Questions to Ask Students•

Is the Quranic purpose clear? Write a paragraph, or do a research project, or give an oral report, about the purpose as you understand it?
Is the purpose significant or trivial or somewhere in between?
Is the Quranic purpose realistic?
Is it an achievable purpose?
Does the overall goal change, or is it consistent?
Does it have contradictory purposes?

When the Quran is recited, it is to be listened to and pay heed so that perhaps you would find mercy. (7:204)

Questions for a Class Discussion•

So-and-so, did you listen to what your classmate said?
Could you put what she said in your own words?
Or we can say: Could you give us an example from your own experience of what your classmate has said?
Has anything like that ever happened to you?

Those are they whom God knows what is in their hearts. So turn aside from them and admonish them and say to them concerning themselves penetrating sayings. (4:63)

Questions to Ask Students•

What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs?
Are there multiple points of view?
What do you mean by?
What is your main point?

When your Lord proclaimed to Moses saying that: Approach the unjust folk, a folk of Pharaoh saying: Will they not be Godfearing? (26:10-26:11)

He said: My Lord! Truly, I fear that they will deny me (26:12) *and my breast be narrowed and my tongue will not be loosened. So send for Aaron.* (26:13) *They charge an impiety against me. I fear that they will kill me.* (26:14)

He said: No indeed! Both of you go with Our signs. Truly, We will be with you, ones who are listening. (26:15)

Questions for a Class Discussion•

I'm not sure I understand you when you explained the Quranic signs.
Could you explain it further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of the signs?
Would you also say ...?'
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is... Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection? Why does she say that?
What examples could I give to illustrate that point?
What is the main point? How does this detail relate to the main point?
That one? Is he using this word as I would, or somewhat differently?

These highly skilled and activated processes are crucial to learning.

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should summarize a sign from this section. Then, they should analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

3. RAISE QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

(REFLECT: *TAFAKKARA*)

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. There are many issues that end with a question, many rhetorical, the answer to which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to understand how the Quran raises questions.

In addition to understanding how to raise questions, four strategies have been included in this part that are specific to raising questions. As previously stated above with the element of purpose, each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions for the students and classroom discussion.

The four strategies are:•

A. Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
B. Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
C. Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations
D. Questioning Deeply: Raising and Pursuing Significant Questions

Assessing skills of mastery of raising questions test the ability of students:

How to Raise Questions•

Formulate a question in a clear and relevant way
Choose from among alternative expressions
Discuss the advantages of different types of the question at issue
Recognize key common elements in statements of different questions
Structure the articulation of problems so as to make a possible solution more apparent.

Had you considered one who denies this way of life? That is he who drives away with force the orphan and urges not to give food to the needy. So woe to ones who formally pray, ones who are inattentive to their formal prayers, those who make display, yet they repulse giving the assistance. (107:1-107:7)

Students Ask Themselves

What is the key question in this Quranic message?
How does the Quranic message reply to its own question?
Details are very important. Who are ones who deny this way of life?

Critical thinkers learn to be skilled at analyzing questions to determine what, precisely, it is asking and how to go about rationally responding to it.

Have you yourself considered he who prohibits a servant when he invoked blessings? Have you considered if he had been on guidance or commanded

God-consciousness? Have you considered if he denied and turned away? Knows he not that God sees? (96:9-96:14)

Reminder to Students Regarding Questioning the Above Sign•

What are the questions we are asked?
What are the questions we are not asked?
What questions did you ask?
Should you have asked?

A. Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations

Principle•

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

Questions Help Students Learn:•

How to think
How to expand their ideas before they are evaluated
How to confront new ideas
How to relate new ideas to their own experience
How to determine the implications of their ideas and their consequences

Another important point to note for students is that Quranic critical thinkers are not made uncomfortable by questions. They do not consider someone asking them questions to be offensive or even intimidating. They actually welcome questions.

Ways for Students to Learn to Question•

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what they are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what they are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question themselves and others.

For Classroom Discussion•

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.
Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.
Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a

way to get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.

Do not negate or embarrass the students.

Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.

Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Assumes he that none has power over him? (90:5)

He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. (90:6)

Assumes he that none sees him? (90:7) *Make we not two eyes for him* (90:8) *and a tongue and two lips* (90:9) *and guided him to the two open highways?* (90:10) *Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent.* (90:11)

What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? (90:12)

It is the liberating of a bondsperson (90:13) *or feeding on a day possessing famine* (90:14) *an orphan, possessor of kinship,* (90:15) *or a needy, possessor of misery.* (90:16)

Any thought-provoking questions can start a discussion. To follow up responses, use questions like the following:

Questions for a Classroom Discussion•

Why does he assume "We have no power over him"?

If that is so, what follows?

Are you assuming that...?

How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...?

For example?

Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?

Can I summarize your point as ...?

What is your reason for saying that?

What do you mean when using this word?

Is it possible that...?

Are there other ways of looking at it?

How else could we view this matter?

Will they not, then, look on the camel, how it was created? (88:17) *Of the heaven, how it was lifted up?* (88:18) *The mountains, how they were hoisted up?* (88:19) *The earth, how it was stretched out?* (88:20) *Then, remind, for you are only one who reminds.* (88:21)

Right after a classroom discussion, have the students write a 5-minute summary of the key points, raising new questions and adding examples or clarifying points mentioned. Or, divide the students into pairs and have them practice questioning each other about the points raised. It helps if the teacher summarizes and rephrases the main points from time to time during the classroom discussion.

But he who would say to ones who are his parents a word of disrespect to both of them: Do you promise me that I will be brought out when generations before me passed away? They will both cry to God for help: Woe unto you! Believe! Truly, the promise of God is true. But he said: This is only the fables of the ancient ones. (46:17)

Ask the Students•

Why would one say this to his parents?
How would you follow up?
What would that tell you about your question?

If you want to teach them how to ask a question of clarification, explain to them that whenever they are dealing with a complex problem, they should form the question in several different ways until they find the most precise question to ask. Or whenever the class is going to discuss a Quranic sign, write out beforehand the most significant questions. Be prepared to change the question if the discussion moves in another direction. Lead the discussion in such a way that the dialogue among the students moves towards an answer that makes sense.

B. Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations

Principle•

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example below shows. Have the students deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. They should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where they study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as they move between multiple points of view. Students should engage in an inward dialogue with themselves or an outward one with other students. They need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with their dialogue.

Application•

Quranic Studies teachers who often raise root questions and ideas in a classroom discussion express may raise questions from varying points of view. Students should be continuously asked how one point relates to other points that are being made in the discussion as well as how the points relate to their own experience.

Consider they not the birds above them ones standing in ranks and closing their wings? Nothing holds them back but The Merciful. Truly, He is Seeing of everything. (67:19)

Who is this who would be an army for you to help you other than The Mer-

ciful? Truly, ones who are ungrateful are not but in delusion. (67:20)

Or who is this who will provide for you if He held back His provision? Nay! They were resolute, turning in disdain and aversion. (67:21)

Then is whoever walks as one who is prone on his face better guided, or he who walks without fault on a straight path? (67:22) *Say: It is He who caused you to grow and assigned you the ability to hear, sight, and minds. But you give little thanks!* (67:23) *Say: It is He who made you numerous on the earth and to Him you will be assembled.* (67:24)

They say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere? (67:25)

Say: The knowledge of this is only with God and I am only a clear warner. (67:26)

Questions to Ask Students•

What would someone who disagreed say?

Why? How could the first respond? Why?

Students could list points from multiple perspectives for reference, then write dialogues of people arguing about the issues as the dialogue between Pharaoh and Moses:

*Pharaoh said: Did we not raise **you** up among us as a child? Had **you** not lingered in expectation with us for many years of **your** lifetime?* (26:18) *And **you** had accomplished **your** accomplishment that **you** had accomplished and **you** are among the ones who are ungrateful.* (26:19)

Moses said: I accomplished it when I was of the ones who go astray. (26:20) *So I ran away from you when I feared you. Then, my Lord bestowed on me critical judgment and made me among the ones who are sent.* (26:21) *Beyond this past favor with which **you** reproach me, **you** enslaved the Children of Jacob (Israel).* (26:22)

Pharaoh said: What is the Lord of the worlds? (26:23)

Moses said: The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two of them if you had been ones who are certain. (26:24)

Pharaoh said to whoever was around him: Listen you not! (26:25)

Moses said: Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers, the ancient ones. (26:26)

Pharaoh said: Truly, your Messenger who was sent to you is one who is possessed! (26:27)

Moses said: The Lord of the East and the West and whatever is between the two of them if you had been reasonable! (26:28)

*Pharaoh said: If **you** took to **yourself** a god other than me. I will, certainly, assign **you** to be imprisoned!* (26:29)

*Moses said: What if I drew near **you** with something that makes it clear?* (26:30)

Pharaoh said: Bring it, if you are among the ones who are sincere. (26:31) *So he cast his staff; that is when it was a clear serpent.* (26:32) *He drew out his hand and that is when it was shimmering white to the ones who look.* (26:33)

Questions About Other Views (Pharaoh and Moses)•

What did the other (group of people) think? Why? (Take specific statements from the Quranic signs here.)
Would others see it this way?
Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?
What does X think is the cause? Y?
Why do they differ?

Class Discussion

The above signs teach dialogical thinking. Have students discuss perspectives in this Quranic message. Such discussion should be integrated with other Quranic signs so that the ideas are synthesized. Rather than separate activities or discussions about different perspectives, you can have students move back and forth between the points of view of Pharaoh and Moses.

C. Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations

Principle•

As opposed to dialogical thinking, dialectical thinking is such that it tests the strengths and weaknesses of differing points of view. It puts idea against idea or reasoning against counter-reasoning. The goal is to reach the truth of an issue under discussion. Ideas that are inconsistent with one another are eliminated and reconciled.

In order for students to develop integrative thinking, they need to learn to evaluate conflicting ideas and determine which are strong and which are weak. As students develop dialectical reasoning skills, their thinking easily moves between different points of view.

Quranic Examples

If you are in doubt, ... then,[7]
Do they say ... ? Rather,[8]
Bring forward your witnesses[9]
Bring your proof[10]
Have they not considered?[11]
Let the human being consider ...[12]
Clear Proof (*bayyinatun*, *nazar*)...[13]

Application•

Dialectical thinking is practiced whenever two conflicting points of view,

arguments, or conclusions are being discussed as in the case of Pharaoh and Moses above. The teacher could have students who are proponents of conflicting views argue their positions and have others evaluate them.

Remember Abraham in the Book. Truly, he had been a just person, a Prophet. (19:41) *That is when he said to his father: O my father! Why will you worship what hears not, and perceives not, and avails you not anything?* (19:42) *O my father! Truly, I, there drew near me of the knowledge of what approaches you not. So follow me and I will guide you to a path without fault.* (19:43) *O my father! Worship not Satan. Truly, Satan had been rebellious towards The Merciful!* (19:44) *O my father! Truly, I fear that a punishment should afflict you from The Merciful so that you become a protector of Satan.* (19:45)

He said: Are you one who shrinks from my gods, O Abraham? If you will not refrain thyself, certainly, I will stone you, so abandon me for some while. (19:46)

He [Abraham] *said: Peace be to you. I will ask for forgiveness from my Lord for you. Truly, He had been One Who is Gracious to me.* (19:47) *I will withdraw from you and what you call to other than God and I will call to my Lord. Perhaps I will not be disappointed in my supplication to my Lord.* (19:48)

So he withdrew from them and what they worship other than God. We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We made a Prophet. (19:49) *We bestowed on them from Our mercy and We assigned them the tongue of lofty sincerity.* (19:50)

Questions to Ask Students

What was Abraham's argument to his father?
Is there another view one could have to object to his reasoning?
What?And the answer to that objection?
Does Abraham use language appropriately and consistently as he dialogues within his father?
Is the evidence he gives from both sides relevant?
Is it questionable, or acceptable?
Which argument is more trustworthy?
How can we know which of these conflicting assumptions is best?
Is there a way of reconciling these views? The evidence?
What is this side right about? The other side?
Which of these views is strongest? Why?

D. QUESTIONING DEEPLY: RAISING AND PURSUING SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS

Principle•

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the

basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

Knowledge

According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge.[9]

Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.

> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.
>
> The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[14]

Wisdom

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought. This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The Quranic usage of wisdom (*hikmah*) reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa galb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[15]

Wisdom* as a human ideal stands for the human being's search for knowledge or truth. It is something which is distinguished from conjecture or imperfect knowledge: *There is no knowledge with them about it but they are pursuing an opinion.* (4:157)

Different stories are related in the Quran,[16] several similitudes[17] and signs pointing to reality are detailed[18] and explained,[19] so that people may reflect and ponder over things. It is the characteristic of the God-conscious that they not only celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, but also contemplate and ponder over the different phenomena of nature. *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of night-time and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this*

in vain. Glory be to Thee! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:190-3:191) The people are, therefore, advised repeatedly to look at and observe the phenomena of nature, pondering over everything in creation to arrive at the truth.

None can grasp the message of revelation except people of understanding and those firmly grounded in knowledge. *And none recollects, but those imbued with intuition.* (3:7)[20] Lack of true knowledge leads people to revile the true God: *And offend not those who call to other than God so that they not offend God out of spite without knowledge.* (6:108) invent lies against Him, and worship other gods besides Him.[21] The only safety lies in following the revelation which is replete with the knowledge of God: *Know that it was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God*(11:14)

Whosoever has been given knowledge has indeed been given abundant good: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269) Those who dispute wrongly about God are the ones who are without knowledge, without guidance, and without a book of enlightenment.[22] Only those people will be promoted to suitable ranks and degrees who have faith and are possessed of knowledge,[23] and only those who have knowledge really fear God and tread the path of God-consciousness.[24]

When Solomon asked the people of his Court who would be able to bring the throne of the Queen of Sheba, it was only the one possessed of knowledge who offered himself to bring it and later actually did bring it.[25]

The Quran advises the Prophet to pray for advance in knowledge. *And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge!* (20:114) The mysterious teacher of Moses who tried to help him have a glimpse of the working of the unseen had knowledge proceeding from God, i.e., *ilm al-ladunni. Then, they found a servant among Our servants to whom We gave mercy from Us and We taught him knowledge which proceeds from Our Presence* (ilm al-ladunni). (18:65) Saul (Jalut) was appointed king of the Jacobites because he was gifted by God abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess.[26] Noah, David, and Solomon possessed knowledge[27] and judgment.[28] Jacob had a lot of knowledge and experience[29]; Joseph possessed abundant power and knowledge,[30] and so also was Moses given wisdom and knowledge.[31] It was through knowledge and reflection on the phenomena of nature, the heaven and the earth, that Abraham was able to arrive at the ultimate truth.[32] It was through his personal experience and knowledge that Joseph refused to follow the path of the unbelievers and adopted the path of Abraham.[33]

Application•

This Quranic Studies program has been developed to clarify and settle questions peculiar to itself. Teachers should use such questions to organize and unify details covered in Quranic studies. The basic questions everyone faces include the nature of right and wrong, how we know things, and so on. In order

to develop a framework for organizing details, both general and specific Quranic ideas should be continuously raised.

Allow students to have extended discussions on thought-provoking ideas. Maintain a focus in the discussion so that multiple issues are discussed. Help students be clear about their objectives and made to feel that they are moving towards them in an affective way.

The class can begin exploration of an important topic in the Quranic sign below. Help them divide up the task of reading and taking notes on the references. The class can then discuss the Quranic signs, and ask questions to guide further understandings. They should then share their research with each other or each student could write an essay putting all of the ideas together.

Say: Journey through the earth; again, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (6:11) *Say: To whom is whatever is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To God. He prescribed mercy for Himself. He will, certainly, gather you on the Day of Resurrection. There is no doubt in it. Those who lost themselves that Day, then, they will not believe.* (6:12)

Helpful Hints About Questioning•

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Help students discover the structure of their own thought.
Help students develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Help students arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Help students note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

For whatever sign We nullify or cause it to be forgotten, We bring better than it, or similar to it. Have you not known that God is Powerful over everything? (2:106)

To Participate Effectively in Questioning, One Must:•

Listen carefully to what the Quranic sign is saying.
Take it seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence in it.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.

Then, after that succeeded successors who inherited the Book. They take advantage of this nearer world, and they say: We will be forgiven. If an advantage approaches them like it, they will take it. Is not a solemn promise taken from them with the Book that they would say about God only The Truth? Did

they not study what is in it, and know that the Last Abode is better for those who are Godfearing? Will you not, then, be reasonable? (7:169)

Questions for Classroom Discussion

Seek Quranic examples and analogies to these signs.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of those who are unjust to themselves.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.

Truly, those whom the angels gathered to themselves—ones who are unjust to themselves—they [the angels] *will ask: In what condition had you been?*

They [those where were unjust to themselves] *will say: We had been ones taken advantage on the earth due to our weakness.*

They [the angels] *will say: Be not the earth of God that which is extensive enough to emigrate in it?*

Then, for those, their place of shelter will be hell. How evil a Homecoming! (4:97)

Questions to Ask Students

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*) and analyze it or them.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I routinely ask questions to fill in the missing pieces in my learning.
I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.

I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

4. Use Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments• (Evidence: *basirah*)

Any questions students ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. Thinking has a goal, agenda, purpose.
2. Questions being asked either explicitly or implicitly.
3. Information is being used.

If students have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers students must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions they draw from them.•

O those who believed! If you are Godfearing of God, He will assign you a Criterion between right and wrong and will absolve you of your evil deeds and will forgive you. (8:29)

Four strategies are pertinent here, each of which will begin with a principle followed by its practical application with students and in the classroom along with Quranic examples and suggested questions relative to the text under discussion.•

The four strategies are:

A. Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
B. Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
C. Distinguishing Relevant from Irrelevant Facts
D. Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence

A. Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards

Principle•

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence

to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

The Criteria Include

Clear evidence[34]
Meditation, pondering, considering[35]
Recollection[36]
Reflection (*tafakkur*)[37]
Taking to heart, taking for granted (*tadhakkur*)[38]
Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises[39]
Bringing your proof, showing your evidence[40]
People of intellect and reflection[41]
Explaining distinctly[42]
Being reasonable[43]
Being just and fair[44]

Application•

Whenever students are evaluating the Quranic signs, the teacher can ask students what they are evaluating, the purpose of the evaluation, and the criteria they used. With practice, students can see the importance of developing clear criteria and applying them consistently. When discussing criteria as a class or in groups, rational discussion, clarity, and fair-mindedness are usually more important than reaching consensus.

Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or were they in doubt? Or be they fearful that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust. (24:50)

Questions to Ask Students•

What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

B. Analyzing or Evaluating Actions

Principle•

In order for Quranic critical thinkers to develop their own point of view on an issue, they have to analyze their actions and then evaluate them. Practice develops into good judgment—judging behavior, explaining and justifying those judgments, hearing alternative judgments and their justifications, and assessing judgments.

When Quranic critical thinkers evaluate the behavior of themselves or that of others, they are aware of the criteria that they use so that the criteria themselves become part of the evaluation. They look at the consequences of their actions and see them as basic to the criteria for assessing behavior and policy. They base their evaluations of behavior on assumptions that have been reasoned through. This allows them to articulate and rationally apply principles.

Application•

The teacher can encourage students to raise ethical questions about actions and policies of themselves and others. Students can become more comfortable with the process of evaluating if they are given a number of opportunities to make and assess moral judgments.

So, then, is he who followed the contentment of God like he who drew the burden of the displeasure of God and whose place of shelter will be hell? Miserable will be the Homecoming! They have degrees with God. God is Seeing of what they do. (3:162-3:163)

Questions to Ask Students•

What comparison is the sign making?
Was this the real reason? Why do you think so?
What are the probable consequences of 'most of them who know not'?
What reasons were your evaluations based on?
Might someone else use a different standard to evaluate? Why?
Do you think the action was fair, smart, etc.? Why or why not?

Who shrinks from the creed of Abraham, but he who fooled himself? And, certainly, We favored him in the present. Truly, in the world to come he will be among the ones in accord with morality. (2:130)

Questions to Ask Students•

Why would you say "shrinks from the creed of Abraham"?
What would such a person do?
What results would they achieve?
Who was helped? Hurt?
Why? Is the stated reason consistent with that behavior?

Was the reason they gave their real reason? Why do you think so?

Students should evaluate the behavior of important people of the past. Such evaluation can be enhanced by having interested students report on the long-term consequences of past actions and policies. Students should also be called upon to generalize, to formulate principles of judgment.

Certainly, We gave Moses the Book and We sent Messengers following after him. We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear portents, and confirmed him with the hallowed Spirit. Is it that whenever a Messenger drew near you with what you yourselves yearn not for, you grew arrogant, and you denied a group of people, and you kill a group of people? (2:87 *)*

Questions to Ask Students•

What makes some actions right, others wrong?
What rights do people have?
How can I know when someones rights are being violated?
Why respect people's rights?
Why be good?
Should I live according to rules?
If so, what rules?
If not, how should I decide what to do?
What policies should be established and why?

C. DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT FACTS

Principle•

Students should learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. Students should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

Application•

Students may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. They need to be shown how to limit their responses with only the relevant facts.

Say: Is it other than God that I should desire as a lord while He is Lord of everything? Each soul will earn only for itself. No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load. Again, to your Lord will you return. Then, He will tell you about what you had been at variance in it. (6:164)

Questions to Ask Students•

How would you answer the Quranic question?
What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear

another's heavy load?
What issues are the sign addressing?
Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Students could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Students could then share and discuss their lists. Students can then discover that sometimes they must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue.

Another technique for developing students' sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and have students compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second.

*He said: O Iblis! What prevented **you** from prostrating **yourself** to what I created with My two hands? Had **you** grown arrogant? Or had **you** been among the ones who exalt themselves?* (38:75)

*Iblis said: I am better than he. **You** had created me from fire while **You** had created him from clay.* (38:76)

*He said: Then, go **you** forth from here for, truly, **you** are accursed.* (38:77) *Truly, on **you** is My curse until the Day of Judgment.* (38:78)

Questions to Ask Students•

Why did Iblis not carry out God's command?
Did Iblis do this? versus Should Iblis have done it?
Which one is best? versus Which do people think is best?
Is this right? versus: Is this convenient?

Students who disagree about the relevance of a particular point to the issue discussed, should be encouraged to argue its potential relevance, and probe the beliefs underlying their disagreement.

When it was said to them to believe in what God caused to descend, they said: We believe in what was caused to descend to us. They are ungrateful for what is beyond it, while it is The Truth, that which establishes as true what is with them. Say: Why, then, kill you the Prophets of God before if you had been ones who believe? (2:91)

Questions to Ask Students•

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using? Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Who does greater wrong than those who prevented access to the places of

prostration to God so that His Name not be remembered in them, and endeavored for their devastation? It had not been for those to enter them, but as ones who are fearful. For them is degradation in the present, and for them is a tremendous punishment in the world to come. (2:114)

Questions for Class Discussion•

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above sign?
Is the information given in 2:114 relevant to the question that is being asked?
What the assumption of those who prevent access to places of worship?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

D. Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence

Principle•

Quranic critical thinkers have learned to examine their reasoning by taking it apart and evaluating the components of the signs. They have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. Evidence and factual claims should be scrutinized and evaluated.

Application•

Teachers should ask students for their reasons when their students come to conclusions.

Every soul is a pledge for what it earned. The Companions of the Right will be in Gardens and will demand of one another about the ones who sin: What thrust you into Saqar?

They would say: We be not among the ones who formally pray and we were not those who feed the needy. We had been ones who engage in idle talk along with the ones who engage in idle talk. We had been denying the Day of Judgment until the certainty of the Hour approached us.

Then, intercession will not profit them from the ones who are intercessors. Then, what is the matter with them that they are ones who turn aside from the admonition, as though they had been frightened donkeys that ran away from a lion? Nay! Every man among them wants to be given unrolled scrolls. No indeed! Nay! They fear not the world to come. No indeed! Truly, it is an admonition. So let whoever willed, remember it. But they will not remember unless God wills. He is Worthy of God-consciousness and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness. (74:38-74:56)

Questions to Ask Students•

What evidence do the above signs give?
Why would the facts be true?
What assumptions are you making?

Do you have reason to think your assumptions are true?

O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not? It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not. (61:2-61:3)

Questions to Ask Students•

Do you talk about what you have not yet done?
Why do you do so?
What evidence do you have?

If the reasons that students give as evidence are incomplete, the teacher should ask some exploring questions in order for the student to give a fuller explanation of how they reasoned an issue. When given written material to evaluate and interpret, students should reference specific Quranic signs that they have used on which to base their interpretation. In this way, students will be able to better clarify their understanding of a sign(s) and their interpretation better understood.

Did they look on for nothing but its interpretation? The Day its interpretation approaches, those who forgot it before will say: Surely, Messengers of our Lord drew near us with The Truth. Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us? Or will we be returned so we do other than what we had been doing before? Surely, they lost themselves. Went astray from them what they had been devising. (7:53)

Questions to Ask Students•

On what evidence is this conclusion based?
Where did we get the evidence?
How could we find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do we need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

O those who believed! Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God. Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful. So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies. They became ones who are masters. (61:14)

Questions that Explore Reasons and Evidence (Information)•

What example do you have in the disciples?

How do you know?
Why do you think that is true?
Do you have any evidence for that?
What difference does that make?
What are your reasons for saying that?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs in this section. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.
I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.
I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

5. Make Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions• (Understanding: *tabassur*)

We further develop our reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding how to make interpretations, inferences (a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning) and/or conclusions based on the Quranic message.

Thinking differs from reasoning. Thinking is simply a succession of thoughts that are not necessarily related to one another. Reasoning, on the other hand is where one thought leads directly to another. When students actively engage in reasoning, it is called 'to infer' or to make inferences.

When students infer something from a Quranic sign from something else that it says, they move from the second thought back to the first thought because they infer that the second thought makes it reasonable for them to believe in the truth of the first thought.

Is he who had been lifeless and We gave him life and We made a light for him by which he walks among humanity (first thoughts) *like he who is in the shadows and is not one who goes forth from them?* (second thoughts) *Thus, it was made to appear pleasing to ones who are ungrateful what they had been doing* (conclusion). (6:122)

Words that indicate that one thought supports another thought are called "inference indicators'. Some examples are: Since, thus, implies, consequently, because, it follows that or given that. Inference indicators may or may not be present in the Quranic signs.

When students express a thought, they do so by making a statement. A statement is a sentence that they use to make a claim that can then be evaluated as being true or false. It is clear from this definition of a statement that questions and commands are not statement.

Statements are the foundation for argument or discussion. An argument is a series of statements that claim that one or more of their statements (called premises) support another statement (particular one) which is called the conclusion.

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, students infer the conclusion.

The following are four strategies that are specific to this element of reasoning, that is, making interpretations, inferences and conclusions. Each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions that can be asked of the students at each point along the way.

The four strategies are:

A. Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
B. Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
C. Recognizing Contradictions
D. Noting Significant Similarities and Differences

Students in Quranic Studies learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs they are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As they study the Quranic signs, they should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

Then, when We decreed death for Solomon, nothing pointed out his death to the jinn, but a moving creature of the earth that consumes his scepter. So when he fell down, it became clear to the jinn that if they had been knowing the unseen, then they would not have lingered in expectation in the despised punishment. (34:14)

To reach a conclusion, students respond with their own conception of what they are studying. They place it in the context of their own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, a student may conclude from the silence of another person towards him or her as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on their own patterns of motivation and behavior that he or she has projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

*They ask **you** about intoxicants and gambling. Say: In both of them there is deplorable sin and profits for humanity. Their sin is more deplorable than what is profitable.* (2:219)

Here, the reasonable conclusion, *their sin is more deplorable than what is profitable,* is arrived at from the premises pros and cons of intoxicants and gambling: *Say: In both of them there is deplorable sin and profits for humanity.*

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever students learn they must integrate into their own thinking and action. What they learn must be given a meaning by them, must be meaningful to them, and therefore involves interpretive acts on their part.

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a

silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing their conclusions as such, they revise and refine them. They do not simply accept or reject; they work to make ideas their own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit their new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

Conclusions are inferences and, in a sense, an inference can be considered a conclusion. An inference is a step of the mind, an intellectual act by which one concludes that something is so in light of something else's being so, or seeming to be so. If someone comes at me with a knife in his or her hand, I would probably infer that the person mean to do me harm. Inferences can be strong or weak, justified or unjustified. Inferences are based upon assumptions.

With inferences, reasoning proceeds by steps in which students logically reason as follows: Because this is so, that also is so (or probably so), or: Since this, therefore that. Any 'defect' in such inferences is a possible problem in our reasoning.

All reasoning contains inferences or interpretations by which:

Students Making Inferences Should:•

Draw conclusions
Give meaning to data
Infer only what the evidence implies
Check inferences for their consistency with each other
Identify assumptions underlying your inferences.

After reasoning (discerning) the main points, students can decide what the best answer or conclusion to the question is.

Say: Will we call to other than God what can neither hurt nor profit us? Are we repelled on our heels after God guided us like one whom the satans lured, bewildered in and on the earth although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying: Approach us? Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance. We were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds. (6:71)

Questions to Ask Students•

What inferences, judgments or conclusions does this sign make?
What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based

on this Quranic sign?
Here is the information.
How are you interpreting it?
What is it telling you?
What meaning would you give to it?

A. Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations

Principle•

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views.

They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth.

When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

Application•

Instead of simply stating why they agree or disagree with a line of reasoning, students should be encouraged to place competing arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another.

They swear by God the most earnest sworn oaths that if a sign would draw near them, they would, certainly, believe in it. Say: The signs are only with God. What will cause you to realize that even if the signs were to draw near, they would not believe? (6:109)

He said: Worship you what you yourselves carve out while God created you and what you do? (37:95-96)

Questions to Ask Students•

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

Students should then be encouraged to argue back and forth, and modify their positions in light of the strengths of others' positions. Students can become

better able to evaluate reasoning by familiarizing themselves with, and practicing:

Evaluating Reasoning by:•

Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
Evaluating evidence
Exploring implications.

After extended discussion, have students state their final positions. Encourage them to qualify their claims appropriately.

Have you yourself considered he who prohibits a servant when he invoked blessings? Have you considered if he had been on guidance or commanded God-consciousness? Have you considered if he denied and turned away? Does he not know that God sees? (96:9-96:14)

Questions to Ask Students•

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

B. Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations

Principle•

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. Students learn to distinguish between what they observe from the Quranic signs and what they conclude. They delve into the facts given in the signs so find the implications as well as the concepts. They separate guessing from clear conclusions. Students normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce their own egocentric or sociocentric world views. They learn to evaluate inferences that are made when their own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. They should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that they interpret every situation in which they find themselves.

Application•

Teachers can have students give examples, from their experience, of making bad inferences, and encourage them to recognize situations in which they

are most susceptible to uncritical thought. The class can discuss ways in which they can successfully minimize the effects of irrationality in their thought by making plausible inferences and interpretations from Quranic signs.

*Had **you*** (Iblis, Satan) *grown arrogant? Or had **you** been among the ones who exalt themselves?* (38:75)

*Iblis said: I am better than he. **You** had created me from fire while **You** had created him from clay.* (38:76)

*He said: Then, go **you** forth from here* (Paradise) *for, truly, **you** are accursed.* (38:77) *Truly, on **you*** (Iblis, Satan) *is My curse until the Day of Judgment.* (38:78)

Iblis said: My Lord! Then, give me respite until the Day to be raised up. (38:79)

*He said: Truly, **you** are among the ones who are given respite* (38:80) *until the Day of the known time.* (38:81)

*Iblis said: By **Your** Great Glory, then, I will certainly lead them one and all into error,* (38:82) *but **Your** devoted servants among them.* (38:83)

He said: This is The Truth and The Truth I say (38:84) *that I will fill hell with **you** and with one and all of whoever heeded **you**.* (38:85)

Questions to Ask Students•

What happened with Iblis?
What does that mean?
Are there other ways to interpret our results? What?
How can we tell which is best?

C. Recognizing Contradictions

Principle•

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fairminded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them.

Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

Application•

When discussing conflicting lines of reasoning, inconsistent versions of the same story, or egocentric reasoning or behavior, the teacher can encourage students to bring out both views and practice recognizing contradictions.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The students can discuss their views on the two different versions and if they interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, ***The Study Quran***)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, ***The Sublime Quran***)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, ***The Study Quran***)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, ***The Sublime Quran***)

Questions to Ask the Students•

What do the different signs say?

Are the two consistent or contradictory?

Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other?

When arguing opposing views, students should be encouraged to find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

Questions to Ask the Students•

What does each sign (4:23 and 2:231) say? Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agreer?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?

The class can explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.

Questions to Ask the Students

Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

D. NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Principle•

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases.

They hesitate before they accept this or that analogy or comparison between 4:34 and 2:231. They recognize the purposes of the comparisons they make. They recognize that purposes govern the act of comparing and determine its scope and limits.

Application•

Quranic signs often call on students to compare and contrast two or more things—objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. For students to merely list similarities

and differences has little value in itself. Rather than encouraging students to make such lists, these activities should be proposed in a context which narrows the range of pertinent comparisons and requires some use be made of them in pursuit of some specific goal. For example, if comparing and contrasting two social practices (marriage and divorce), students should use their understanding to illuminate the relationship between them. Thus, only those points which shed light on the particular problem need be mentioned, and each point has implications to be drawn out and integrated into a broader picture.

Here are two examples of different translations of two Quranic signs for students to compare and discuss in relationship to the Quranic views on marriage and divorce:

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran*)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He

admonishes you with it. Be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

Questions to Ask Students•

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the translations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic? How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

Students can compare various Quranic translations as to what they represent, and so evaluate them. When comparing situations mentioned in the Quran, rather than simply listing differences, students should analyze and use their comparisons.

Students should not over-generalize from differences. The differences in situations may not reflect difference in character as much as differences in situation as the Quranic signs below show. Students should relate differences in feelings and behavior to differences in what the situations are.

He frowned and turned away (80:1) *that the blind man drew near him.* (80:2) *What will cause **you** to recognize so that perhaps he will purify himself* (80:3) *or yet recollect and a reminder profit him?* (80:4)

But as for he who was self-complacent, (80:5) *then, **you** have attended to him* (80:6) *and not upon **you** is any blame if he purifies not himself.* (80:7) *Yet as for him who drew near to **you**, coming eagerly for knowledge* (80:8) *and he dreads God,* (80:9) *then, **you** have paid no heed to him?* (80:10)
No indeed! Truly, this is a reminder. (80:11)

So let whoever willed, remember it (80:12) *in scrolls to be held in esteem,* (80:13) *ones that are exalted and ones that are purified* (80:14) *by the hands of generous writers* (80:15) *and ones who are kindly, generous.* (80:16)

Note: There is disagreement among the scholars in relation to the first signs of this chapter. Some say that it was in reference to the Prophet who frowned and turned away. Others say that the Quran always addresses the Prophet in the second person singular, thou (**you**), and here the Quran says "he." Therefore, it relates to the Quraysh leader who was in discussion with the Prophet who frowned and turned away when the blind man drew near him and not the Prophet. Then the signs say to the Prophet: *And what will cause **you** to recognize so that perhaps he* (the Quraysh leader) *will purify himself or yet recollect and a reminder profit him* (the Quraysh leader)? *But as for he who was self-complacent* (the Quraysh leader), *then, **you*** (Muhammad) *attend to him and not upon **you*** (Muhammad) *is any blame if he purifies not himself* (the Quraysh leader).

Yet as for him (the blind man) *who drew near to **you*** (Muhammad)

coming eagerly for knowledge and he dreads God, then, you (Muhammad) *have paid no heed to him* (the blind man)*? No indeed! Truly, this is a reminder.*

Questions to Ask the Students•

What conclusions am I coming to?
Is my inference logical?
Are there other conclusions I should consider?
Does this interpretation make sense?
Does our solution necessarily follow from the facts?
How did you reach that conclusion?
What are you basing your reasoning on?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 80:1-80:16. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself: What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it? If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

6. UTILIZE CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY• (RECALL: *IDHDHAKARA*)

Quranic thinking offers students concepts and principles that help them analyze, assess and improve their thinking when they better understand the meanings of the Quranic signs.

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them.

Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

What are principles? Principles express the relationship between concepts. A basic Quranic principle is the Oneness of God (*tawhid*). A second principle is submission to the Will of God. Those who, by choice, submit to the Will of God are Muslims.

Quranic thinkers begin developing their reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what it means to utilize concepts, definitions, principles, models and vocabulary.

The following are five strategies specific to this element of reasoning. Each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions that can be asked of the students at each point along the way. The five strategies are:

A. Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframe Insights to New Contexts
B. Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments
C. Making Interdisciplinary Connections
D. Comparing and Contrasting Ideals with Actual Practice
E. Thinking Precisely About Thinking: Using Critical Vocabulary

A. COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAME INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

Principle•

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability students have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Application•

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. Students are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

The Prophet would preserve the form, the container of a custom or idea which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method that he used in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society that apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: He maintained the container of a social tradition, but changed the contents.

He used this method in reconciling social phenomena. He adopted a process and method that is a model for all problem solving. This method can be applied to two problems or two phenomena that in no way resemble each other. Recognizing how important this method is, we cannot fully explore it here. We can only clarify it by a few examples.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders

opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.[45]

Questions to Ask Students•

Was Prophet Muhammad in a position to know?
What would someone need to be in a position to know?
Could the Prophet have directly seen or heard, or would he have to have reasoned to what he knew?
What do we know about the Prophet's expertise and experience?
What experience would you need to have to be an expert?
What must you have studied?
What does he claim about this issue?
Where did he get his information?
Is there reason to doubt him?
Has he been reliable in the past?
Does he have anything to gain by convincing others?

B. Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

Quranic Example

Thus, We cause Abraham to see the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he would be of the ones who are certain in belief.

So when night outspread over him, he saw a star. He said: This is my Lord. Then, when it set, he said: I love not that which sets.

Then, when he saw the moon, that which rises, he said: This is my Lord. Then, when it set, he said: If my Lord guides me not, certainly, I would have been among the folk, the ones gone astray.

Then, when he saw the sun, that which rises, he said: This is my Lord. This is greater. Then, when it set, he said: O my folk! Truly, I am free from the partners you ascribe with Him. Truly, I turned my face to He Who Originated the heavens and the earth—as a monotheist and I am not of the ones who are polytheists.

His folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect? How should I fear what you ascribed as partners with Him while you fear not that you ascribe as partners with God? He sends not down to you any authority for it.

Then, which of the two groups of people has better right to a place of sanctuary if you had been knowing? Those who believed and confuse not their belief with injustice, those, to them belongs the place of sanctuary. They are ones who are truly guided. (6:75-6:82)

Questions to Ask Students•

What thing is most important in life to Prophet Abraham?
What is the difference between important and trivial?
What are his people like? What kinds of people are there?
What is the difference between right and wrong?

Principle•

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the people around Prophet Abraham tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers like Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

Students who learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully, try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic as Prophet Abraham did.

Application•

The perspectives of students are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. Students who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. Students who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what they think, or reflect on new situations or problems. Students can compare what they say they believe with how they act. Teachers can raise basic and important questions about what students learn, having them discover and discuss underlying principles in their thought.

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for students who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.

Students could explain how what they have learned from the Quranic signs has changed their thinking in some way. A written assignment could be used as an opportunity for a student to explore an idea in depth, and either come to conclusions, or clarify issues and concepts.

During classroom discussions, teachers should raise points made during study. Students should relate their general ideas to specifics they have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

C. Making Interdisciplinary Connections

Principle•

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Students who understand the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that they are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science. Quranic thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[46]

Application•

Teachers may ask students questions that make connections to other subjects. This way they show the importance of the students learning to bring in-

sights from many other disciplines as they learn Quranic studies.

Examples of Interdisciplinary Connections

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as *you differ in what you say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Detailed Example of Interdisciplinary Connections

Numbers and Geometry

(God) comprehends whatever is with them and He counts everything with numbers. (72:28)

Have the students use the insights they have from this Quranic sign to inform their understanding of the traditional concept of numbers and geometry that developed over time from this sign.

Numbers

Traditional Perspective: Beginning with numbers, they are important in the traditional perspective because through numbers Quranic thinkers are able to relate multiplicity to Unity and bring to light the harmony which pervades the Universe, developing what has been called "Abrahamic Pythagoreanism" because of the emphasis upon unity and oneness (Abrahamic) and the qualitative as well as the quantitative aspect of numbers (Pythagoreanism). This concept serves as the basis for the creation of Islamic art and architecture.

Comparing the relation of God to the world as that of One to other numbers, the Brethren of Purity (10th century) say in regard to the science of numbers that it is "the way leading to the grasp of Unity as a science which stands above Nature and is the principle of beings...."[47]

It is important to note,

Numbers in Abrahamic Pythagoreanism being both qualitative and quantitative cannot be identified as modern numbers with simply di-

vision and multiplication because numbers are a projection of unity, never separated from their Source. They integrate the entity that they symbolize or with which they are identified with Unity, the Source of all existence.[48]

The Brethren of Purity say,

All that has by nature and with systematic method been arranged in the Universe seems both in part and as a whole to have been determined and ordered in accordance with number by the forethought and mind of Him that created all things; for the pattern was fixed, like a preliminary sketch, by the domination of number pre-existing in the mind of the world-creating God, number conceptual only and immaterial in every way so that with reference to it, as to an artistic plan, should be created all these things, times, motion, the heavens, the stars and all sorts of revolution.[49]

Numbers as the fundamental ordering principles of nature have both a qualitative and quantitative significance. Their qualitative significance is their psychological aspect, the aspect involved in the processes of nature. Traditional numerology is synchronistic, non-linear and non-logical. Numbers are part of the Signs 'upon the horizons and within themselves'. Reading numbers in this sense becomes equivalent to a kind of language.

A traditional scholar writes,

Know that the wise Pythagoras was the first to discourse on the nature of number. He said beings come into existence in conformity with the nature of number. Consequently, he who understand the nature of number, its species and properties, is in a position to know the various genera and species of beings. Necessarily, things are one with respect to Matter and multiple with respect to Form. There must be dyads (matter and form, the subtle and the gross, the luminous and the dark, etc.); triads (surface, line and volume; past, future and present, etc.); tetrads (the four natures, the four elements, the four pillars of the cosmic tent); there must be pentads, hexads, heptads, decads, etc. ....Pythagoras and his followers...dispensed justice where justice was due. They saw very clearly that the One is the cause of number and that all numbers, small or big, even or odd, are constituted by the One. The One gives its name to every number; number persists because the One persists; number grows and augments by the repetition of the One. It is because a dyad is a dyadic unity, for example, that it is different from a triadic unity, and so on.[505]

Geometry

The science of numbers generate the science of Geometry that expresses the personality of numbers permitting the human being a further exploration into the processes of nature.

> ...the triangle and the square are 'personalities' and not qualities. They are essentials and not accidents. While one obtains ordinary numbers by addition, qualitative number results, on the contrary, from an internal or intrinsic differentiation of principal unity; it is not added to anything and does not depart from unity. Geometrical figures are so many images of unity; they exclude one another or rather, they denote different principal quantities; the triangle is harmony, the square stability; these are 'concentric' and not 'serial' numbers.'[51]

Al-Biruni expresses the harmony of nature and the role of numbers and geometry in this harmony:

> ...Among the peculiarities of the flowers there is one really astonishing fact, viz., the number of their leaves, the tops of which form a circle when they begin to open, is in most cases conformable to the laws of geometry. In most cases they agree with the chords that have been found by the laws of geometry, not with conic sections. You scarcely ever find a flower of 7 or 9 leaves, for you cannot construct them according to the laws of geometry in a circle as isosceles (triangles). The number of their leaves is always 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 18. This is a matter of frequent occurrence. Possibly one may find among the species hitherto known such a number of leaves, but, on the whole, one must say Nature preserves its genera and species such as they are. For if you would, for example, count the number of seeds of one of the many pomegranates of a tree, you would find that all the other pomegranates contain the same number of seeds as that one the seeds of which you have counted first. So, too, Nature proceeds in all other matters.[52]

Truly, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alteration of the nighttime and the daytime and the boats that run on the sea with what profits humanity, and what God caused to descend from heaven of water, and gave life to the earth after its death, and disseminated on it all moving creatures, and diversified the winds and the clouds, ones caused to be subservient between heaven and earth, are the signs for a folk who are reasonable. (2:164)

Questions to Ask Students•

Are the above signs evocative? To the point?

How does it illustrate or enhance the point made?

Students can evaluate the psychological, sociological, or historical accuracy of the sign.

D. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Principle•

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

Application•

Teachers can prepare for a classroom discussion on the importance of attaining consistency of thought and action.

When you have not approached them with a sign, they said: Why had you not improvised one? Say: I follow only what is revealed to me from my Lord. This [the Quran] *is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance and mercy for a community who believes.* (7:203)

Questions to Ask Students•

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency. (90:5-90:17)

The gap between ideals with actual practice arises at times by asking students questions that they tend to answer with a yes or no. Instead, teachers should try to ask examples of the following:

Questions to Ask Students•

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?

Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

The more realistic students ideals are, the closer they can get to achieving them. As an example, rather than assuming the ideal that everyone should always do everything they can for everyone anytime, give students the opportunity to express a spectrum on moral qualities such as generosity.

Consider they the earth, how much We caused to develop in and on it of every generous pair? (26:7)

Questions to Ask Students•

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

E. Thinking Precisely About Thinking: Using Critical Vocabulary

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking. God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of 'Say" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of night-*

*time and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! **You** had not created this in vain. Glory be to **You**! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to **you**, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Barriers or Obstacles to Quranic Thinking

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, **your** Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If **you** have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause **you** to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be **you** harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God*

will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)[53]

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

And when the division is attended by those imbued with kinship and the orphans and the needy, then, provide for them from it and say honorable sayings to them. (4:8)

Just think about the Signs:

Thus, The Truth came to pass and proved false what they had been doing. (7:118)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

There are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21 same as 7:175)

Application•

When conducting discussions, participating students could be encouraged to explain the role of their remarks in the discussion:

Supporting a point
Raising an objection
Answering an objection
Distinguishing concepts or issues
Questioning relevance, etc:
    Why were you raising that point here?
    Are you supporting your classmates's point or ... ?

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of God's signs in the universe functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the

universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth.

By the winnowing winds of ones that winnow by the burden-bearers, the ones who carry a heavy burden and the ones that run with ease and the ones who distribute the command, truly, what you are promised is that which is sincere. Truly, the judgment is that which falls. By the heaven that is full of tracks, you are ones who are at variance in your sayings. He is misled there by he who was misled. Perdition to those who guess, ones who are inattentive because of obstinacy. They ask: When will the Day of Judgment be? A Day when they are tried over the fire: Experience your test. This is that for which you had been seeking to hasten.

Truly, the ones who are Godfearing will be in the Garden and springs, ones who take what their Lord gave them. Truly, they had been before this—ones who are doers of good. They had been slumbering little during the night. At the breaking of the day, they ask for forgiveness. There is an obligation from their wealth for the one who begs and the one who is deprived. On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? In the heaven is your provision as you are promised by the Lord of the heaven and the earth. It is, truly, The Truth just as you yourselves speak. (51:1-51:23)

The following questions may help the students in utilizing concepts, theories, definitions, axioms, laws, principles, models and/or vocabulary.

Questions to Ask the Students•

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are. . . ?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs in this section. Then, they should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

7. MAKE ASSUMPTIONS, PRESUPPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: *ZUNUN*)

Principle•

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability

to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)

In understanding their own assumptions as they try to exercise Quranic thinking, students begin to realize that they can't figure out everything simultaneously. They have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. They know that they can always question assumptions as they move forward in their thought process. At the same time, students should think about the assumptions that they are making. They should try to make them with some awareness by asking themselves: Do they make sense?

Students are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. They base both their reasoning and their behavior on beliefs they take for granted. They are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that they can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know. *Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

Application•

Teachers should encourage students to make assumptions explicit as often as possible—assumptions made in what they read or hear and assumptions they make. Teachers should ask questions that elicit the implicit elements of students' claims. Although it is valuable practice to have students make good assumptions

explicit, it is especially important when assumptions are questionable.

Those who refuse God's message are ones who follow assumptions, conjecture and opinion without examining or evaluating them. The assumption that is questioned here is the accusation made by those ungrateful for God's blessings, the same accusation made by Satan when he refused to bow down to Adam, namely, that it is the fault of God's Will that they ascribed partners with God (or, as in the case of Satan, it was God Who willed that Satan not bow down to Adam). The Quran asks the ungrateful: *Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to Us*? (6:148)

God's revelation clearly states not to associate partners with God, but the ungrateful refuse to believe and prefer, instead to make excuses for their behavior rather than admit to their error. This sign teaches critical thinkers to question and distinguish between that which is conjecture and opinion and that which is the truth.

Have students analyze group influences on their life: Closely analyze the behavior that is encouraged, and discouraged, in the groups to which they belong. For any given group, what are they 'required' to believe? What are they 'forbidden' to do? Every group enforces some level of conformity. Most people live much too much within the view of themselves projected by others. Discover what pressure they are bowing to and think explicitly about whether or not to reject that pressure.

Next consider how they could integrate analyzing group influences on their life into their practice. One of the main things that groups do is control us by controlling the definitions they are allowed to operate with. When a group defines some things as 'cool' and some as 'dumb', the members of the group try to appear 'cool' and not appear 'dumb'. When the boss of a business says: 'That makes a lot of sense,' his subordinates know they are not to say: 'No, it is ridiculous.' They know this because defining someone as the 'boss' gives him/her special privileges to define situations and relationships.

Assumed you that We created you in amusement and that to Us you would not be returned? (23:115)

In this sign, the Quran itself challenges assumptions.

Questions to Ask Students•

Have you assumed that God created us in order to amuse Himself
(much as the ancient Greek concept of the gods)?
Or that there was something else behind our creation?

Have you assumed that all the favors and comfort that we enjoy means
we have been successful in providing for ourselves
without considering any grace from God? Or that it is all
temporary and it is to God that we will return?

This sign (23:115) reminds us that critical thinkers examine and evaluate their assumptions as well.

There are no rules for determining when to have students evaluate assumptions. Students should feel free to question and discuss any assumptions they suspect are questionable or false. Students should also evaluate good assumptions. Doing so gives them a contrast with poor assumptions.

The following are some of the probing questions teachers may use when a class discusses the worth of an assumption.

Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while approaches you not the likeness of those who passed away before you? Desolation and tribulation afflicted them. They are so convulsed that even the Messenger says, and those who believed with him: When will there be help from God? No doubt, truly, the help of God is Near. (2:214)

Questions to Ask Students•

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express
and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?

Those who ascribed partners with God will say: If God willed, neither would we have ascribed partners with God, nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything. Thus, denied those who were before them until they experienced Our might. Say [on God's behalf]*: Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to Us? You follow not but opinion and, then, you only guess.* (6:148)

The following questions may help the students in making assumptions, presuppositions, taking for granted.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are....?
What you are taking for granted.
What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning?
What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic
revelation?
What are you assuming?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs in this section. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

8. Generate Implications, Consequences (ponder, evaluate: *tadabbur*)

Principle•

Implications follow from our thoughts. Consequences follow from our actions.

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

When students spell out the implications of their reasoning:

Have they succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?
Have they confined themselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?
Have they enunciated the implications of their views clearly and precisely enough to permit their thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?
Can they trace the implications and consequences that come from their reasoning?

An example is the dream of Abraham and the implications it had for Abraham and his son and the consequences:

So We gave [Abraham] *the good tidings of a forbearing boy. When he reached maturity endeavoring with him,* [Abraham] *said: O my son! Truly, I see while slumbering that I am sacrificing* ***you****. So what do you think?*

[His son] *said: O my father! Accomplish whatever* ***you*** *are commanded.* ***You*** *will find me, if God willed, of the ones who remain steadfast.*

Then, when they both submitted themselves to God and he flung him on his brow, We cried out to him: O Abraham! Surely, ***you*** *established the dream as true! Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. Truly, that was, certainly, the clear trial. Then, We redeemed* [Abraham] *with a sublime slaughter and We left for him a good name with the later ones: Peace be on Abraham! Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. Truly, he is one of Our believing servants.*(37:101-37:111)

Questions to Ask Students•

If Abraham decides to act on the implications of his dream, what would happen?
If Abraham decides not to act on the implications of his dream, what would happen?
What is Abraham implying from his words to his son?
What is likely to happen if Abraham does this as opposed to not doing it?
Is Abraham's dream implying that he should sacrifice his son?

How significant are the implications of Abraham's decision?

Following this general discussion of implications, two strategies specific to this element of reasoning, namely, generating implications and consequences are presented. Each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions that can be asked of the students at each point along the way.

The two strategies are:

A. Generating or Assessing Solutions
B. Exploring Implications and Consequences

A. Generating or Assessing Solutions

Principle•

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length.

Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found.

As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

Application•

When presenting problem-solving lessons or activities, the Quranic text tends to provide lists of problem-solving steps that do not limit the process. For example, it encourages students to consider how the Quranic message solved or tried to solve the same or a similar problem. It does not generally begin by solving the problem, but first analyzes the causes.

The best way to develop insight into problem-solving is to solve problems. If the first attempt fails or causes other problems, students should consider why and try again. Thus, they can learn the practical difficulties involved in discovering and implementing a workable solution.

It is recommended that the teacher first have students state the problem. If that has not been done, students should explore the causes at length, exploring

and evaluating multiple perspectives. Encourage them to integrate the strong points within each view. As the process of exploring solutions proceeds, students may find it useful to reformulate the description of the problem.

Students can evaluate the Quranic text's statement of the problem and its causes, evaluate the solution tried, and propose and evaluate alternatives. Students should be encouraged to explore the beliefs underlying various choices of solutions.•

Truly, you and what you worship other than God are fuel material for hell. If these had been gods, they would never have gone down to [hell]. (21:98-21:99)

One of the implications stated in 21:98-21:99 is that those who worship gods besides God are both fuel for hell, the ones who worship them and what they worship. However, in regard to the gods that they worship, the implication is: *If they had been gods*. The consequence of the implication is: *they would not have gone down to hell.* Therefore, one can conclude that what those who worship gods besides God themselves go to hell and what they worship are not gods, otherwise they would not have been fuel for the fire.

Questions to Ask Students•

What is the best solution for someone who does not want to be fuel for the fire?

What is the proof that what is worshipped besides God are not gods?

Reflect they not? There is no madness in their companion. He is but a clear warner. (7:184)

With the clear portents and the ancient scrolls, We caused to descend the Remembrance to you that you will make manifest to humanity what was sent down to them and so that perhaps they will reflect. (16:44)

Rather than simply asking students if a given solution is good, the teacher could encourage an extended discussion of such questions as:

Questions to Ask Students•

What solution does 16:44 offer?

What are the effects?

Who is affected?

Did it have the desired effects?

Undesirable effects?

What should be done differently?

What should we do now to rectify the problems that action caused?

B. Exploring Implications and Consequences

Principle•

Quranic thinkers learn to recognize the implications of Quranic signs that are made and what follows from them. In this way they develop a more complete understanding of the meaning of a sign. Quranic thinkers recognize that if they are to accept the statement in a Quranic sign, they also have to accept its implications. There is no limit to the extent of this process.

When taking beliefs into consideration, beliefs that relate to actions or behavior, they consider the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

Application•

The teacher can ask students to state the implications of Quranic signs. The process can help students better understand the meaning of a sign.

That is the Book —there is no doubt in it, a guidance for the ones who are Godfearing: Those who believe in the unseen and perform the formal prayer, and they spend out of what We provided them, and those who believe in what was caused to descend to you, and what was caused to descend before you, and they are certain of the world to come. Those are on a guidance from their Lord and those, they are the ones who prosper. (2:2-2:5)

Questions to Ask Students•

What does this imply? mean? If this is true, what else must be true?
What were, or would be, the consequences of this action?
How do you know? Why wouldn't this happen instead?
Are the consequences desirable? Why or why not?

Teachers can have students explore the implications and consequences of their own beliefs. During dialogical exchanges, students can compare the implications of ideas from different perspectives and the consequences of accepting each perspective:

How would someone who believes this act?
What result would that have?

By time through the ages, truly, the human being is, surely, in a loss except those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, and counseled one another to The Truth, and counseled one another to having patience. (103:1-103:3)

Questions to Ask Students•

What is the Quran implying by that?

What effect would that have?
Would that necessarily happen or only probably happen?
If this and this are the case, when what else must also be true?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should explore the implications and consequences in the Quranic signs 103:1-103:3. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

How would you evaluate yourself at this point? I am at:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)
Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking
Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice
Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice
Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice
Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of an author using an analytical tool called SOAPS?
S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)
O = occasion: What is going on at the time?
A = audience: To whom is it addressed?
P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?
S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

Chapter III. Seven Quranic Moral Traits

Seven essential Quranic moral traits that are included in critical thinking methodology are:

1. Belief in One God (*TAWHID*)
2. God-Consciousness (*TAQWA*)
3. Integrity through Moral Discipline (morally obligated: *QANATA*)
4. Empowering Courage (*BATASHA*)
5. Persevering in Goodness (steadfast: *SABARA*)
6. Empathic Altruism (love, mercy, compassion: *IHSAN*)
7. Being Fair and Just (*ADL*, right-minded: *RASHAD*)

Moral traits are interdependent affective strategies. They are described as having:

The traits of mind and character necessary for right action and thinking;
The traits of mind and character essential for fair-minded rationality;
The traits that distinguish the narrow-minded, self-serving critical thinker from the open-minded, truth-seeking critical thinker.

Each moral trait is best developed while developing the others as well. They cannot be imposed from without; they must be cultivated by encouragement and example. People can come to deeply understand and accept these principles by analyzing their experiences of them: learning from an unfamiliar perspective, discovering they don't know as much as you thought, and so on.

To teach for the moral traits, one must recognize the significant differences between the higher order critical thinking of a fair-minded critical thinker (believer) and that of a self-serving critical thinker (ungrateful, hypocrite and so forth). Though both share a certain command of the skills of critical thinking, they are not equally good at tasks, which presuppose the moral traits. The self-serving (weak sense) critical thinker would lack the insights that underlie and support these traits.

Insight refers to the ability to see and clearly and deeply understand the inner nature of things. In the Islamic perspective, this is something that extremists would disagree with whereas instruction for Quranic critical thinking fosters insight rather than mere performance; it cultivates the achievement of deeper knowledge and understanding through insight. Thinking one's way into and through a sign (*ayah*) leads to insights as one synthesizes what one is learning, relating one sign to other signs and all signs to personal experience.

Only when one gains analyzed experiences of working and reasoning one's way out of prejudice can one gain the higher order abilities of a fair-minded Quranic critical thinker. What one gains is somewhat 'procedural' or sequential

in that there is a process one must go through; but one also sees that the process cannot be followed out based on a formula or an algorithm, it depends on principles. The somewhat abstract articulation of the moral traits will take on concrete meaning in the light of analyzed experiences. Their true meaning to us will be given in and by these experiences. We will often return to them to recapture and rekindle the insights upon which the moral traits depend.

Generally, to develop moral traits, students must create a collection of analyzed experiences that represent to them intuitive models, not only of the pitfalls of their own previous thinking and experiencing but also processes for reasoning their way out of or around them. These model experiences must be charged with meaning for them. They cannot be indifferent to them. They must sustain them in their minds by their sense of their importance as they sustain and guide them in their thinking.

Intuition can be defined as the direct knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning. Students sometimes seem to know or learn things without recognizing how they came to that knowledge. When this occurs, they experience an inner sense that what they believe is true. The problem is that sometimes they are correct (and have genuinely experienced an intuition) and sometimes they are incorrect (having fallen victim to one of their prejudices or their imagination). A critical thinker does not blindly accept that what one thinks or believes but cannot account for is necessarily true. A critical thinker realizes how easily they confuse intuitions and prejudices. Critical thinkers may follow their inner sense that something is so, but only with a healthy sense of humility.

What does this imply for teaching? It implies a somewhat different content or material focus. Our own minds and experiences must become the subject of our study and learning. Indeed, only to the extent that the content of our own experiences becomes an essential part of study will the usual subject matter truly be learned. By the same token, the experiences of others must become part of what they study. But experiences of any kind should always be critically analyzed, and students must do their own analyses and clearly recognize what they are doing.

This entails that students become explicitly aware of the logic of experience. All experiences have three elements, each of which may require some special scrutiny in the analytic process:

1. Something to be experienced (some actual situation or other);
2. An experiencing subject (with a point of view, framework of beliefs, attitudes, desires, and values); and
3. Some interpretation or conceptualization of the situation.

To take any experience apart, then, students must be sensitive to three distinctive sets of questions:

1. What are the raw facts? What is the most neutral description of the sit-

uation? If I describes the experience this way, and another disagrees, on what description can we agree?

2. What interests, attitudes, desires, or concerns do I bring to the situation? Am I always aware of them? Why or why not?

3. How am I conceptualizing or interpreting the situation in light of my point of view? How else might it be interpreted?

Students must also explore the interrelationships of these parts:

How did my point of view, values, desires, etc., affect what I noticed about the situation?
How did they prevent me from noticing other things?
How would I have interpreted the situation had I noticed those other things?
How did my point of view, desires, etc., affect my interpretation?
How should I interpret the situation?

If students have many assignments that require them to analyze their experiences and the experiences of others along these lines, with ample opportunity to dialogue among themselves about which interpretations make the most sense and why, then they will begin to amass a catalogue of critically analyzed experiences. If the experiences illuminate the pitfalls of thought, the analysis and the models of thinking they suggest will be the foundation for their moral traits and character.

They will develop moral traits because they had thought their way to them and internalized them as concrete understandings and insights, not because they took them up as slogans. Their basic moral traits or values and their thinking processes will be in a symbiotic relationship to each other. Their intellectual and affective lives will become more integrated. Their standards for thinking will be implicit in their own thinking, rather than from teachers, or the authority of a peer group.[54]

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)[55]*

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief in the divine causality and the presence of moral order in the universe where people are judged according to the merit of their deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

They are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Alter a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first alter what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to*

his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds. (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. Be Godfearing of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)[56]

How does one reach belief through reason?

> The human reception of the Quranic signs depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable either of comprehending the signs or of responding to their message....
>
> The connection or nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect (cognition) and emotions (affect) are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth.
>
> The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)[23]

PROOF OF BELIEF IN THE ONE GOD IS THROUGH PERFORMING GOOD DEEDS

Oneness or Unity in Our Inner Self*

Unity, as one of the human ideals, implies unity in our internal self. That is, a co-ordination of our reason, will, and action. It requires disciplining our passions and lust. It also stands for the unity of profession and practice. Belief in God is the necessary prerequisite of moral life, but it should not be mere verbal acceptance: *Truly, We caused the Torah to descend wherein is guidance and light. The Prophets give judgment with it, those who submitted to God, for those who became Jews and the rabbis and learned Jewish scholars who committed to memory the Book of God and they had been witnesses to it.* (5:44)

It must be accompanied by good deeds: *But for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We place no burden on any soul beyond its capacity. Those will be the Companions of the Garden. They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (7:42)[58]

Performing good deeds implies an attitude of mind which is motivated by a complete submission to God's will: *When his Lord said to him: Submit! He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds.* (2:131)[59]

Performing Good Deeds Indicates Unity in Our Society*

The ideal of unity in our society demands that people should develop a healthy social organization which traverses the middle path of moderation, integrity, goodness and morality, avoiding all forms of extreme: *Thus ,We made you a middle community that you be witnesses to humanity, and that the Messenger be a witness to you.* (2:143)

The God-conscious (*muttaqi*) are advised to get together and strive so that tumult, oppression, and mischief are removed from the face of the earth. *If you accomplish not allying with other believers, there will be persecution on the earth and the hateful sin of corruption.* (8:73)

Unity also implies that members of a national or ideological group should develop ties of intimate relationship among themselves so that the ideal of an organic whole may be realized in a broader context. The Quran says that all Muslims are brothers: *Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters, so make things right between your two brothers/sisters. Be Godfearing of God so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (49:10)

Have great love and affection among themselves: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* (48:29) No excuse should be allowed to stand in the way of doing good or making peace between different persons: *Make God not an obstacle with your sworn oaths to your being good, and being Godfearing, and making things right among humanity.* (2:224)

Every effort should be made to bring about conciliation between people: *No good is there in most of their conspiring secretly, but for him who commanded charity or one who is honorable or makes things right between humanity. And whoever accomplishes that—looking for the goodwill of God—then, We will give him a sublime compensation.* (4:114) Yet we should co-operate in God-consciousness, not in sin and rancor.[26] We should be kind to those in need, to neighbors, and to the wayfarers.[27]

It is to see our society through reasoned judgment. That is, any belief or conclusion reached on the basis of careful thought and reflection, distinguished from mere or unreasoned opinion on the one hand, and from sheer fact on the other. Few people have a clear sense of which of their beliefs are based on reasoned judgment and which on mere opinion.•

Family Unity*

This ideal of unity also implies peace and harmony among members of a family. A woman is a mate for man so that both may dwell in tranquillity with an attitude of mutual love and kindness;[28] Each is like a garment for the other.[29] For mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection. It is the duty of a man and woman to live with each other on a footing of kindness and equity.

Unity with People of Other Faiths*

This attitude of toleration is to be cultivated in our relation to people of other

faiths. The Quran aims at establishing a peaceful social atmosphere where people belonging to other faiths can enjoy freedom of conscience and worship: *There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable.* (2:256)

The believers are urged to purposefully rise and fight against the oppressors so that monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure may not be pulled down. *Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. Truly, Powerful is God to help them, those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him.* (22:39-22:40)

It unreservedly praises some of the people of the Book for their faith: *You had been the best community that was brought out for humanity. You command to that which is honorable and prohibit that which is unlawful and believe in God. If the People of the Book believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are the ones who believe....* (3:110)

It is as a consequence of this attitude of tolerance that according to the Quran all those who believe in God and the Last Day and practice God-consciousness, whether they are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians or Sabaeans, shall get their reward from their Lord: *Truly those who have believed and those who have become Jews and the Christians and the Sabeans, whoever has believed in God and the Last Day and is one who acted in accord with morality, then for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:62) And, *Truly, those who believed and those who became Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians and those who ascribed partners—truly, God will distinguish between them on the Day of Resurrection.* (22:17)[30]

The Quran gives an open invitation to the people of the Book to come together and work conjointly for the establishment of peace and social harmony based on the idea of the unity of God. *Say: O People of the Book! Approach now to a word common between us and between you that we worship none but God and ascribe nothing as partners with Him, that none of us take others to ourselves as lords besides God.* (3:64)

Unity of Humanity*

Above all, this ideal of unity leads to the conception of unity of the whole of humanity. Humanity was created from a single pair of a male and a female[31] and from a single breath of life. [32] All people are equal members of the human community.[33] The only distinction recognized by the Quran is based on the degree of God-consciousness possessed by people: *O humanity! Truly, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and types that you*

recognize one another. Truly, the most generous of you with God is the most devout. Truly, God is Knowing, Aware. (49:13)

Questions to Ask Students

What is your understanding of inner Unity?
Of Social Unity?
Of Family Unity?
Of Unity with People of Other Faiths?
Of the Unity of Humanity?
What are the Quranic arguments for each kind of unity?
Have any of you experienced this sense of Unity for yourselves?

Obstacle to Unity: Irrationality

Irrationality is defined as:

1. Lacking the power to reason.
2. Contrary to reason or logic.
3. Senseless, absurd.

Irrational, uncritical thinkers have failed to develop the ability or power to reason well. Their beliefs and practices, then, are often contrary to reason and logic, and are sometimes senseless or absurd.

If you find that you continually conclude that a rational person would behave just as you behaved you are probably engaging in self-deception.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Under what circumstances do you think with a bias in favor of yourself?
Did you ever become irritable over small things?
Did you do or say anything "irrational" to get your way?
Did you try to impose your will upon others?
Did you ever fail to speak your mind when you felt strongly about something and then later feel resentment?
What would a rational person feel in this or that situation?
What would a rational person do?
How does that compare with what I want to do?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each les-

son, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational'
to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind
when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS *(*TAQWA*)

God-consciousness is the whole pursuit of a person's principles or standards of behavior, judgment of what is important in life, moral code, code of behavior and avoidance of the unethical in general. It is designated by the Quran as *taqwa*. It is dependent on and is the result of faith in God: *O humanity! Worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you so that perhaps you will be God-conscious.* (2:21)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be Godfearing.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction[68] and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life,[69] in sacrifice,[70] in different aspects of social life,[71] and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations.[72]

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) is to believe in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Books, and the messengers. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms (*zakat*); to fulfil the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

Principle•

Critical thinkers recognize that there is a limit of their knowledge. They are sensitive to their being self-centered and egocentric as they know that this will only increase their self-deception. They are aware of bias and prejudice in their views. The basis of humility is to be able to avoid claiming to know more than they actually know.

The presence of humility implies a lack of arrogance, conceit or pretentious-

ness as well as implying that we have insight into the basis for our beliefs. Students learn to know what evidence they have, how they came to believe something and what additional evidence they would need. This indicates that as Quranic critical thinkers they know what they know as well as what they do not know.

It had not been for a mortal that God should give him the Book and critical judgment and the prophethood and, again, he say to humanity: Be you servants of me instead of God! Rather, he would say: Be you masters because you had been teaching the Book and because you had been studying it. (3:79)

They bring about humility by continually asking themselves: How could I know whether or not this is true? To suspend judgment until they find out more about a situation does not make them uncomfortable.

Humility, therefore, is suspending judgment and having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including a sensitivity to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice, and limitations of one's viewpoint. Humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.

And of the servants of God the most gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace'; those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrating and standing; those who, when they spend, are not extravagant nor miserly, but hold a just balance between these two extremes; those who invoke not, with God, any other god, nor slay such life as God has made sacred, except for just cause, nor commit fornication; those who witness no falsehood, and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable avoidance; those who, when they are admonished with the signs of their Lord, do not show indifference to them like the deaf or the blind; and those who pray: Our Lord! give us the grace to lead the God-conscious.[73]

If this insight and this humility is part of our goal, as the Quran encourages it, the extent and nature of Quranic coverage for most grade levels and subjects does not imply that bits and pieces of knowledge be easily attained, without any significant consideration of the basis for the knowledge claimed in the sacred text.

The speed with which content is covered should not contradict the notion that students must think in an extended way about content before giving assent to what is claimed. As the Quran fosters critical thinking, it does not foster intellectual arrogance in students.

In the Quranic context, humility is fostered through the concept of repentance. Though the human being is by nature after the pattern of God's nature[74]

and, therefore, capable of approximating to the ideal embodied in the most beautiful names,[41] yet being prone to different weaknesses[42] he is often led to wrong his soul in spite of his best efforts to follow moral discipline.[43]

Application•

Teachers can take advantage of any situation in which students are not in a position to know the Quranic signs, to encourage the habit of exploring the basis for their beliefs. The teacher might first ask for the Quranic evidence or reasons for the claim and have students probe its strength. Students can be encouraged to explain what they would need to learn in order to be more certain.

In exposing students to concepts within the Quranic field, it can help students to see how all concepts depend on other, more basic concepts and how each field of knowledge is based on fundamental assumptions which need to be examined, understood, and justified. Teachers can help students to discover experiences in their own lives which help support or justify what the sacred text says. Teachers should always be willing to entertain student doubts about what they understand from the sacred text.

Teachers can model humility by demonstrating repentance and a willingness to admit limits in their own knowledge and in human knowledge generally. Routinely qualify statements by saying:

I believe; I'm pretty sure that;
I doubt, I suspect, perhaps, I'm told, it seems, etc.

This trait can be encouraged by frequent discussion in which Quranic ideas new to the students are explored for evidence and support.

Students should discuss such experiences as:

Getting a bad first impression, then learning they were wrong;
Feeling certain of something, then later changing their minds;
Thinking they knew something, then realizing they didn't understand it;
Thinking they had the best or only answer or solution,
then hearing a better one.

The teacher can have students brainstorm questions they have after study of a Quranic sign or section. Students could keep question logs during the course of research projects, periodically recording their unanswered questions. Thus, they can come to see for themselves that even when they have learned what is always expected of them, there is more to learn.

A good practice for students is to think of a question each day. At the beginning of each day (perhaps driving to work or going to school) they should choose a question to work on when they have free moments. They need to figure out the logic of the question by identifying its elements. In other words, systematically think through the questions:

Questions to Ask Students•

What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?
How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as they can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question they are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things they are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which they have some control from questions over which they have no control. Set aside the questions over which they have no control, concentrating their efforts on those questions they can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information they need and actively seek that information.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information they collect, drawing what reasonable inferences they can.

5. Figure out their options for action. What can they do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under their control from questions beyond their control. Recognize explicitly their limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate their options, taking into account their advantages and disadvantages in the situation they are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When they act, monitor the implications of their action as they begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise their strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift their strategy or their analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to them.

Questions to Ask Students•

What am I sure of?
What questions do I have?
What must I qualify?
How can I divide my ideas into intelligible parts?
What are the relationships between the parts?
How can I show those relationships?
How does this detail fit in?
How does that claim illuminate my main point?
What form of expression best gets this idea across?
Would the reader accept this?
What questions would the reader have?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to come up with questions and state each one clearly.
I figured out what things I had to do to answer it.
I was able to distinguish between questions over which I had control and ones over which I did not have control.
I was able to figure out the information I needed and I actively sought that information.
I carefully analyzed and interpreted the information I collected and was able to draw reasonable inferences from it.

3. INTEGRITY THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE*
(MORALLY OBLIGATED: *QANATA*)

Integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind,[78] to pay the purifying alms,[79] to spend in charity secretly and openly[80]—a beautiful loan to God[817]—a bargain that will never fail,[82] involving a glad tidings for the believers[83] and a cause of prosperity[84] and spiritual joy.[85] Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord.[86] They remove the stain of evil from the people[87] and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds.[88]

It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. *Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth, they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms and they commanded to that which is honorable and they prohibited that which is unlawful. And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.* (22:41)

Principle•

Moral discipline or integrity involves the recognition of the need to be true to one's own thinking, to be consistent in the standards one applies, to hold oneself to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which one holds one's antagonists, to practice what one advocates for others, and to honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in one's own thought and action. This trait develops best in a supportive atmosphere in which people feel secure and free enough to honestly acknowledge their inconsistencies, and can develop and share realistic ways of ameliorating them. It requires honest acknowledgment of the difficulties of achieving greater consistency.

Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. Students learn to practice what they advocate for others. They are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in their own thought and behavior. They are fervent believers in what has been justified by their own thought and experience. They bring together the person they want to be with the person that they are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. People cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like them and underate those who do not. If their ego dominates them, they become blind to their understanding. They promote whatever serves their needs and disregard whatever does not support what they want.

Application•

Sometimes parents say: Do as I say, not as I do. There is often a lack of integrity in human life. Hypocrisy and inconsistency are common. As educators, we need to highlight the difficulties of being consistent in an often inconsistent world.

As teachers, we need to be sensitive to our own inconsistencies in the application of rules and standards, and we need to help students to explore their own. Peer groups often pressure students to judge in-group members less critically than out-group members. Students need opportunities to honestly assess their own participation in such phenomena.

Questions to Ask Students•

When have you found it difficult to listen to others?
Or: Why are people often unfair?
Would you have done otherwise?
Would it have been easy?
Why or why not?
Why do so few people do this?

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, have students assess both themselves and others, noting their tendency to favor themselves.

Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

Other signs of an affective or emotional response to a situation showing a lack of wisdom and integrity are:

Contradiction (a combination of statements, ideas, or features of a situation that are opposed to one another),
Contrariety (opposition or inconsistency between two or more things),
Insatiability (incapable of being satisfied),
Importunity (insistent solicitation and entreaty when you beg someone to do something) and
Impossibilities.

The first two (contradiction and contrariety) have to do with reason. It often happens that when we least expect it, while we are thinking and reasoning in our minds, an emotion or feeling finds its way into our mind and carries us beyond all control. The cause of these systems not working is because we become incapable of reflecting.

Each week, have students develop a heightened awareness of one of the universal standards (clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, logicalness, importance, fair-mindedness). Focus one week on clarity, the next on accuracy, etc. For example, if they are focusing on clarity for the week, try to notice when they are being unclear in communicating with others. Notice when others are unclear in what they are saying.

When they are reading, notice whether they are clear about what they are reading. When they orally express or write out their views (for whatever reason), ask them whether they are clear about what they are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what they are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on their meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what they mean from experiences they have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what they mean. In other words, they will frequently: **state, elaborate, illustrate** and **exemplify** their points. They will regularly ask others to do the same

Obstacles to Developing Integrity

Error*

Error and conjecture are obstacles to integrity which the Quran at several places denounces as equivalent to untruth or lies[89] and which do not lend support to an individual in his moral life.[90] *I will turn away from My signs those who increase in pride on the earth without right. If they see every sign, they believe not in it. If they see the way of right judgment, yet they will not take that way to themselves. But if they see the way of error, they will take themselves to that way. That is because they denied Our signs and had been ones who are heedless of them.* (7:146)

Questions to Ask the Students•

How would someone else interpret them?
How can I adjust or support my interpretation?
What implications does the Quran want the reader to draw?
How can I help another reader to see that I mean this and not that?
Which of all of the things I'm saying is the most important?
How will another reader know which is most important to me?
Why is this detail important?

Have I assumed as a Quranic reader that I know something my classmates may not know?

Hypocrisy*

Hypocrisy is another obstacle to developing integrity. A hypocrite is one who says with his tongue what is not in his heart,[91] who is distracted in mind, being sincerely neither for one group nor for another.[92] Hypocrites are liars.[93] They expect people to praise them for what they never do,[94] compete with one another in sin and rancor,[95] and hold secret counsels among themselves for iniquity, hostility, and disobedience.[96] Hypocrites—men and women—enjoin evil and forbid what is just,[97] and if by chance they come into possession of a position of authority, they make mischief in the land, break ties of kinship,[98] and yet claim to be peace-makers.[99]

You command humanity to virtuous conduct and forget yourselves while you relate the Book? Will you not, then, be reasonable? (2:44)

Questions You Can Ask to Discipline Your Thinking*

What precise question are we trying to answer?
Is that the best question to ask in this situation?
Is there a more important question we should be addressing?
Does this question capture the real issue we are facing?
Is there a question we should answer before we attempt to answer this question?
What information do we need to answer the question?
What conclusions seem justified in light of the facts?
What is our point of view?
Do we need to consider another?
Is there another way to look at the question?
What are some related questions we need to consider?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

4. EMPOWERING COURAGE* (*BATASHA*)

Principle•

To be independent Quranic thinkers who are fair, they often have to deal with unpopular ideas, beliefs and points of view. This requires courage on their part not to fear the reproach that others may use against them.

Courage as a human ideal implies that the human being has the potentiality of assuming responsibility undertaken by him of his own accord. He has all the faculties that are necessary for his physical and spiritual development. He is given the power of courage to distinguish between good and evil: *Truly, We guided him on the way, whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3) and, therefore, he alone is responsible for what he does. *No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.* (6:164) He is endowed with freedom of action, but his freedom is limited by the free causality of God. *No indeed! Truly, it is an admonition. So let whoever willed, remember it. But they will not remember unless God wills. He is Worthy of God-consciousness and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness.* (74:54–56) His responsibility is proportionate to his powers; he has been shown the path of God-consciousness and it is up to him to accept its lead or reject it. *Truly, We guided him on the way, whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3)

In order to develop courage, students need to question what they learn. It take courage on their part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to their own thinking, questioning beliefs that they hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that they know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *and those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them,* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which students have strong negative emotions and to which they have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan.[100] But it is within his power to resist and overcome them.[101] Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance

of revelation,[102] and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses.[103] or be cowardly in their behavior.[104]

The struggle against the forces of evil and oppression demands that its participants must be characterized by perseverance, courage, fearlessness, and trust in God—the moral qualities which are described by the Quran as characteristic of the righteous in the social context. *And have you patience, for, truly, God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good.* (11:115)[105]; those who are firm and steadfast will never lose heart, nor weaken in will, nor give in before the enemy. *And how many a Prophet whom, along with him, many thousands fought, but none lost confidence with what lit on them in the way of God, nor were they weakened nor were they to give in. And God loves the ones who remain steadfast.* (3:146)

To determine for themselves which is which, they must not passively and uncritically 'accept' what they have 'learned'. Courage comes into play here, because inevitably they will come to see some truth in some ideas considered dangerous and absurd, and distortion or falsity in some ideas strongly held in their social group. They need courage to be true to their own thinking in such circumstances. The penalties for non-conformity can be severe.

Similarly, trust in God is the moral quality of all believers. *The ones who believe are only those whose hearts took notice when God was remembered. When His signs were recounted to them, their belief increased and they put their trust in the Lord*— (8:2) After you have taken all possibilities into consideration and made a decision, put your trust in God. ... *when you are resolved, then, put your trust in God. Truly, God loves the ones who put their trust in Him.* (3:159)

Application•

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. Students should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. Students who disagree with or doubt their peers should be given support. The teacher should raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which students have hitherto been discouraged from considering. The teacher should model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

Students Ask Themselves•

Why is it hard to go against the crowd?
If everyone around you as sure of something?
Why is it hard to question it or disagree?
When is it good to do so? When might you hesitate?
When should you hesitate? Is it hard to question your own beliefs? Why?

Students who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Students should be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anx-

iety they may experience so they may work their way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. Teachers should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs.

If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, students can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events:

Questions to Ask Students•

How did this seem at first? Why?
What made you change your mind about it?
Have you had other similar experiences?
Why did those ideas seem crazy or stupid at first? "

Have the students keep an intellectual journal. Each week, they should write out a certain number of journal entries using the following format (keeping each numbered stage separate):

1. Situation. Describe a situation that is, or was, emotionally significant to them (that is, that you deeply care about). Focus on one situation at a time.

2. Their Response. Describe what they did in response to that situation. Be specific and exact.

3. Analysis. Then have them analyze, in the light of what they have written, what precisely was going on in the situation. Dig beneath the surface.

4. Assessment. Assess the implications of their analysis. What did they learn about themselves? What would they do differently if they could re-live the situation?

Help them get in touch with their emotions: Whenever they feel some negative emotion, systematically ask themselves:

What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if they are angry, ask themselves, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can they think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it? If they can, concentrate on that thinking and their emotions will (eventually) shift to match it.

They will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. They will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. They will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables them to get in touch with their emotions. They may then recognize that the way they think (that is, define things) generates the emotions they experience. When they think they are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening'), they feel fear. If they define a situation as a 'failure', they

may feel depressed. On the other hand, if they define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' they feel empowered to learn. When they recognize this control that they are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

Cowardice*

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. *It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe.* (3:175)

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. *The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: *Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it.* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth,: *And they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption.* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not **your** cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster.* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height.

Arrogant and obstinate transgressors: ... *those who dispute the signs of God without any authority having approached them. It is troublesome, repugnant with God and with those who believed. Thus, God sets a seal on every heart of one who increases in pride, haughtiness,* (40:35) vainglorious people: *Truly, God loves not ones who had been proud, boastful,* (4:36) those fond of self-glory: *Nay! Those who were ungrateful are in vainglory and breach.* (38:2) people rebellious and wicked: *And He caused to be detestable to you ingratitude and disobedience and rebellion.* (49:7) and vying with one another in pomp and gross rivalry: *Know that this present life is only a pastime, a diversion and an adornment and a mutual boasting among you and a rivalry in respect to wealth and children as the likeness of plenteous rain water. The plants impressed ones who are ungrateful. Again, it withers; then, **you** have seen it yellowing. Again, it becomes chaff while in the world to come there is severe punishment and forgiveness from God and contentment. And this present life is nothing but a delu-*

sion of enjoyment. (57:20) are held out as examples of those who misuse their power. Satan is condemned to everlasting punishment for abusing power and becoming haughty.

Some people try to cover their misuse of power under the cloak of determinism: *And those who ascribed partners with God said: If God willed neither would we have worshiped other than Him anything, we nor our fathers, nor would we have held sacred anything other than what He forbade.* (16:35) but the Quran repudiates this stand as totally unrealistic. *Say: God has the conclusive disputation. And if He willed, He would have guided you one and all.* (6:149) The human being has the power to shape his destiny in the light of the truth of revelation. *And whenever guidance approaches you from Me, then, whoever heeded My guidance, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:38)

Questions to Ask the Students•

How can I answer those questions?
If I word it this way, would the reader understand it the way I intended? How can I clarify my meaning?
How could someone judge this idea or claim?
How can it be supported? How would others refute it?
Which of those criticisms should I take into account?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS* (STEADFAST: *SABARA*)

Principle•

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when teachers and others continually provide the answers, do students' thinking for them or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: *do good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good : *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.*(35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34)

It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

Application•

Perseverance can be developed by reviewing and discussing the kinds of difficulties that were inherent in previous problems worked on, exploring why it is necessary to struggle with them over an extended period.

Students should come to see mental struggle as crucial to Quranic learning by discovering its reward in genuine understanding. Students should have some experiences slowly reading difficult Quranic signs or sections. Prove to them that if they are careful and stick to it, examining it one word, phrase, and sentence at a time, they can master it. Such in-depth reading can be done as a class, sentence by sentence, with students interpreting and explaining as they go.

Raise difficult problems again and again over the course of the year. Design

long-term projects for which students must persevere. Of course, it is important to work with students on skills of breaking down complex problems into simpler components, so that they will see how to attack problems systematically.

Students can discuss experiences they have had wherein they came to understand something that at first baffled them, or seemed hopelessly confusing and frustrating.

Questions to Ask Students

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

The Quranic way of life is not divided into the simple and the hopeless. To help students develop the sense that they can begin to attack even complex Quranic issues, you could divide the class into groups and have them discuss various ways in which the problem could be approached, seeing if they can break the problem down into simpler components. It is important to devote considerable time to problem analysis, in order to develop student confidence in their ability to distinguish hard from easy problems and to recognize when a longer term commitment will be necessary.

Students will not develop perseverance unless they develop confidence in their ability to analyze and approach problems with success. You should not overwhelm students with the task of solving problems so difficult that they have little hope of making progress, nevertheless, they should be expected to make some progress toward understanding and sorting out complexities.

Take a basic idea within the Quran. Have students write their ideas on it and discuss them. Every month or so, have them add to, revise, or write another paper. At the end of the year, they can assess the changes in their understanding from repeated consideration over the course of the year, graphically illustrating their own progress and development achieved through perseverance.

For students to recognize the need for further study of a Quranic idea, they need to have some sense of how their present knowledge is limited. Presenting some problems that are beyond their knowledge can be useful, if the class can come to see what they would have to learn to solve them. In this context, students can successfully uncover what they don't know, thereby fostering intellectual humility as well as laying the foundation for intellectual perseverance.

Illustrate how getting answers is not the only form of progress, show students how having better, clearer questions is also progress. Point out progress made. Sympathize with students' natural frustration and discouragement.

Have students discuss the importance of sufficient thought regarding sig-

nificant decisions and beliefs, and the difficulty of becoming rational and well-educated, fairminded people.

When study and research fail to settle key questions, due to the inadequacy of available resources, the class could write letters to appropriate faculty of one or two colleges. Have students describe their research and results and pose their unanswered questions. The teacher may have to explain the replies. Students can then reopen the issues for further, better-informed discussion.

Have students choose one moral trait—persevering in goodness, empathic altruism, courage, humility and repentance, etc.—to strive for each month, focusing on how they can develop that trait in themselves. For example, concentrating on humility, begin to notice when they admit they are wrong. Notice when they refuse to admit they are wrong, even in the face of glaring evidence that they are in fact wrong. Notice when they become defensive when another person tries to point out a deficiency in their work, or their thinking. Notice when their arrogance keeps you from learning, for example, when they say to themselves:

I already know everything I need to know about this subject.
Or: I know as much as he does.
Who does he think he is forcing his opinions on me?

By owning their 'ignorance,' they can begin to deal with it.

O those who believed! Pray for help with patience and formal prayer. Truly, God is with the ones who remain steadfast. (2:153)

Wrong-doing*

The Quran denounces the obstacle to persevering in goodness which is wrong-doing i. e., doing wrong and shameful deeds. The Quran forbids—all shameful and evil deeds and uses a very comprehensive term *zulm* to cover them all. The Quran refers to Satanic tendencies in the human being such as ungratefulness,[106] hastiness,[107] impatience,[108] despair, and unbelief in times of adversity, and pride and conceit in times of prosperity;[109] quarrelsomeness,[110] arrogance,[111] greed of ever more and yet more,[112] miserliness,[113] transgression of the bounds of propriety,[114] and false sense of self-sufficiency: *No indeed! The human being is, truly, defiant. He considered himself self-sufficient.* (96:6) These tendencies often lead to different forms of wrong-doing and, therefore, must be counteracted by all right-thinking people.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?

How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

Students Summarize a Sign

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM* (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: *IHSAN*)

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*).

Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Principle•

Emphatic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Application•

Students live in a world, both personal and social, in which every situation is 'defined,' that is, given a meaning. How a situation is defined determines not only how they feel about it, but also how they act in it, and what implications it has for them. However, virtually every situation can be defined in more than one way. This fact carries with it tremendous opportunities. In principle, it lies within their power to make their lives are more happy and fulfilling than they are. Many of the negative definitions that students give to situations in their lives could in principle be transformed into positive ones. They can be happy when otherwise they would have been sad.

They can be fulfilled when otherwise they would have been frustrated. In this strategy, they practice redefining the way they see things, turning negatives into positives, dead-ends into new beginnings, mistakes into opportunities to learn. To make this strategy practical, they should create some specific guidelines for themselves. For example, they might make themselves a list of five to ten recurrent negative contexts in which they feel frustrated, angry, unhappy, or worried. They could then identify the definition in each case that is at the root of the negative emotion. They would then choose a plausible alternative definition for each and then plan for their new responses as well as new emotions.

This is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance and mercy for a folk who believe. (7:203)

Hatred and Unkindness*

Against the moral trait of altruism are the obstacles of hatred, harshness, or unkindness to others. People are advised not to speak any word of contempt to their parents, to orphans, and to beggars. Believers are not to revile even those whom the ungrateful call upon besides God. The Prophet is described as safe from severity and hard-heartedness towards others.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

7. BEING FAIR AND JUST* (*ADL*, RIGHT-MINDED, *RASHAD*)

Justice

Justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to equity* (7:29)*; truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you.* (42:15) and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) for He loves those who judge equitably.

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfil all obligations.

Principle•

Developing into a fair and just person requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense

to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Application•

The best fair and just thinkers don't believe any and everything they hear or read. They use standards to decide what to believe. They use standards to keep their thinking on track. Here are some of the important ones to introduce to students. When they use them every day, their thinking improves.

Standards for Students to Understand•

Be clear! Can you state what you mean? Can you give examples?
Be accurate! Are you sure it's true?
Be relevant! Is it related to what we are thinking about?
Be logical! Does it all fit together?
Be fair! Am I considering how my behavior might make others feel?
Be reasonable! Have we thought through this problem thoroughly and with an open mind?
Be Relevant: Something is relevant when it relates directly to:
the problem you are trying to solve.
the question you are trying to answer.
whatever you are talking about or writing about.
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is relevant:
How does what you say relate to the problem?
How does this information relate to the question we are asking?
What will help us solve the problem?
How does what you say relate to what we are talking about?
How does this relate to our purpose?
Be Logical: Make Sure Everything Fits Together
Thinking is logical when everything fits together, when everything makes sense together.
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is logical:
This doesn't make sense to me .
Can you show me how it all fits together?
The sentences in this paragraph don't seem to belong together.
How can I rewrite this paragraph so that the sentences all fit together?
What you are saying doesn't sound logical.
How did you come to your conclusions?
Explain why this makes sense to you.
The messages I am getting from this TV show don't seem sensible.
Should I follow along with these ideas, or should I reject them?

Think About Purpose:

Your purpose is what you are trying to achieve or make happen.

Questions you can ask to target purpose:

What is our purpose in doing what we are doing?
What is my purpose in doing what I am doing?
What is your purpose?
What is the purpose of this assignment?
What is the purpose of the main character in this story?
What is my teacher trying to accomplish?
What is my friend's purpose?
What is the purpose of this textbook?
Should we change our purpose?
Is my purpose fair to everyone?

Injustice*

Opposed to the value of justice is the disvalue of injustice and violation of the principle of the mean. It is forbidden by the Quran to be influenced by people's vain desires and to deviate from the truth while judging between them. It is also forbidden to distort justice or decline to do justice: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor; then God is Closer to both than you are. So follow not your desires that you become unbalanced. And if you distort or turn aside, then, truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:135) or to withhold justice from people merely because they are your enemies. It would be perfectly unjust to oneself and to others to pile up wealth, to bury gold and silver, and not to spend them in the cause of God and God-consciousness.

The Quran equally forbids as violation of the principle of justice the squandering of wealth like a spendthrift and recommends the middle way of prudence which is neither extravagance nor miserliness. It advises one neither to make one's hand tied to one's neck nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach so that one becomes blameworthy and destitute. One should eat and drink but not waste by excess for that would be violating the principle of justice. Excess in any form is forbidden whether in food or in religion: *O those who believed! Forbid not what is good that God permitted to you and exceed not the limits. Truly, God loves not the ones who exceed the limits.* (5:87) Usury is forbidden, for it means devouring other people's substance wrongfully and involves injustice on both sides: *God eliminates usury, and He causes charity to increase. And God loves not any sinful ingrate.* (2:279)

The Selfish Critical Thinker•

Selfish critical thinkers are unjust and unfair, egocentric people who use their thinking to get what they want, without considering how their actions might affect other people. They are good at thinking, and they know it. But they

are also very selfish. They may be greedy and unkind as well.

Here is the voice of the selfish critical thinker: I think a lot! It helps me get what I want. I believe whatever I want to believe as long as it gets me what I want. I question anyone who asks me to do what I don't want to do.I figure out how to get other people to do what I want them to do. I even figure out how to avoid thinking if I want. Sometimes I say 'I can't!' when I know I could but don't want to. You can get what you want from people if you know how to manipulate them. Just the other night, I talked my parents into buying me a really expensive new computer gadget I knew they couldn't really afford. But hey, they work don't they? They can always make more money. I'm their kid so they should give me what I want. It helps to tell people what they want to hear. Of course, sometimes what they want to hear isn't true, but that doesn't matter because you only get into trouble when you tell people what they don't want to hear. You can always trick people if you know how. Guess what, you can even trick yourself if you know how."

Those who believed in God and His Messengers, those, they are the just persons. The witnesses to their Lord. For them is their compensation and their light. (57:19)

Who is fairer in the way of life than he who submitted his face to God and he is one who is a doer of good and followed the creed of Abraham, a monotheist? And God took Abraham to Himself as a friend. (4:125)

Give judgment fairly among humanity and follow not your feelings, for it will cause you to go astray from the way of God. (38:26)

Develop Questions About the Question•

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.
Question: How does the Quran teach us to think critically?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

Notes to the Preface, Acknowledgements and Prelude

1. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Reading the Signs".

2. Abu Hamid Abu Sulayman's essay has been excerpted from his *The Quranic World View*.

3. McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning, Princeton University. "Ask questions that require students to defend their positions."

4. The Center for Critical Thinking has worked with the College Board, the National Education Association, the U.S. Department of Education, as well as numerous colleges, universities, and school districts to facilitate the implementation of critical thinking instruction. See http://www.criticalthinking.org/ pages/center-for-critical-thinking/401.

5. Information in this prologue has been taken from Paul, R. & Elder, L. 2001, *The Thinker's Guide to How to Study and Learn*, Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation For Critical Thinking with changes by the author to relate the revelant information to Quranic Studies.)

6. Toshiko Izutsu, *Structure of Ethical Terms*, Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc. 2000.

7. Multilogical (multi-dimensional) means: Problems that can be analyzed and approached from more than one, often from conflicting, points of view or frames of reference. For example, many ecological problems have a variety of dimensions to them: historical, social, economic, biological, chemical, moral, political, etc.)

8. See 18:29.

9. See 4:123

10. See 3:106

11. See Abdul Haleem, *The Study Quran* for more examples.

12. ibid.

Notes to the Introduction

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Aqqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Aqqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-

Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635;

and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. See the Introduction.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. al-Ghazzali, *On Knowing Yourself*, Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1999.
5. See the Introduction.
6. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance from Error*.
7. See 22:5.
8. See 23:70; 32:3; 52:33.
9. See 6:150.
10. See 2:111; 21:24; 27:64; 28:75)
11. See 34:9; 20:89; 21:44; 13:41; 16:48; 17:99.
12. See 80:24; 86:5.
13. See 7:185.
14. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Maqasid al-Shariah Made Simple*, pp 2-3.
15. See Introduction.
16. See 7:176.
17. See 59:2.
18. See 6:98.
19. See 10:24.
20. See also 3:18; 6:105; 22:54; 34:6.
21. See also 22:71.
22. See also 22:8; 31:20.
23. See 58:11.
24. See 35:28.
25. See 27:40.
26. See 2:247.
27. See 28:14.
28. See 21:79.

29. See 12:68.
30. See 12:22.
31. See 28:14.
32. See 6:75–79.
33. See 12:37–39.
34. See 6:104; 7:203; 12:108; 17:102; 28:43; 45:20.
35. See 38:29
36. See 6:80.
37. See 30:21.
38. 2:219.
39. See 21:24.
40. See 27:64.
41. See 16:10-11.
42. See 6:97-98.
43. See 16:12.
44. See 5:8.
45. Ali Shariati, *Shariati on Shariati*, p 104.
46. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. see Osman Bakar, "Reflections on Islamic Environmentalism," http://www.cilecenter.org/en/videos/dr-osman-bakar-reflections-on-islamic-environmentalism/
54. Taken from Paul, R. (1993). Critical Thinking: What Every Student Needs to Survive in A Rapidly Changing World, Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation For Critical Thinking.
55. * Indicates B. A. Dar. "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," *History of Muslim Philosophy* edited by M. M. Sharif. http://www.al-islam.org/history-muslim-philosophy-volume-1-book-2/chapter-8-ethical-teachings-quran and "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," in the same source. M. M. Sharif wrote this second article.
56. See also 3:81-3:87; 5:13, 5:15, 7:172.
57. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Reading the Signs," in the Preface here.
58. See also 10:4; 13:29.
59. See also 9:112.
60. See 5:3.
61. See 2:83, 2:177, 2:215; 4:36; 17:26.
62. See 30:21.
63. See 2:187.
64. See also 5:72.
65. See 2:213; 4:1; 6:98; 10:19; 39:6; 49:13.
66. See 4:1; 39:6.
67. See 3:195.
68. See 27:53; 41:18.
69. See 2:24; 4:129.
70. See 5:30; 22:37.

71. See 2:177.
72. See 25:63–74.
73. See 25:63–64; 25: 67–68, 25:72–74.
74. See 30:30.
75. See 7:180; 17:110; 59:24
76. See 14:34; 17:11, 17:83.
77. See 7:23; 11:21, 11:101; 16:33.
78. See 2:238.
79. See 98:5. t
80. See 25:29.
81. See 72:20.
82. See 25:29.
83. See 22:34; 27:2.
84. See 31:5
85. See 20:139.
86. See 31:5; 97:5.
87. See 11:114.
88. See 29:45.
89. See 6:148; 10:66
90. See 4:157; 6:116; 53:23.
91. See 2:167; 4:81; 47:11.
92. See 4:143.
93. See 59:11; 63:1.
94. See 3:188
95. See 5:65.
96. See 57:8.
97. See 9:67.
98. See 47:22.
99. See 2:11.
100. See 15:36–40.
101. See 6:99.
102. See 2:36.
103. See 3:175.
104. See 3:122.
105. See also 16:127; 40:55; 46:35; 50:39; 73:10.
106. See 7:10; 36:45–47; 74:15–25; 100:1–8.
107. See 16:37; 17:11.
108. See 70:19–21.
109. See 11:9–10; 17:83.
110. See 16:4.
111. See 75:31–40; 90:5–7.
112. See 74:15.
113. See 17:100 .
114. See 96:6.

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